

Board members in **Attendance** were Christian Mash, Fred Fox, Tina Buckel, Linda Ashby (via Zoom), Karen Malecki, and Clint Bradley. Staff members present were Thomas Vose, Library Director and Nicole McCullough, Executive Assistant. Brian Boal of Boal and Associates was also present for a portion of the meeting.

Christian Mash called the **Meeting to Order** at 4:00 pm.

The Trustees reviewed the **Meeting Minutes** from the October 17th meeting. Karen moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Tina. The motion passed unanimously.

The **Financial Statements** from October 2024 were reviewed by the Trustees. Thomas noted that expenditures to date are at 34.99% of the projected budget, slightly below the expected 36%. A question arose regarding the distribution of salary expenses between salaried and hourly employees. Nicole and Thomas agreed to review this further and provide an update to the Board at the next meeting. Thomas informed the Board that a generous donation of \$10,000 from the estate of Mildred Wucik is anticipated. Clint moved to accept the Financial Statements, seconded by Karen. The motion passed unanimously. The statements were received and filed.

The **Director's Report** was reviewed by the group. Thomas recorded a radio spot highlighting year-end statistics, digitization efforts, the One Maryland One Book initiative, and the Kitzmiller Community Garden. He has an upcoming interview with WKHJ later this year to discuss the Friendsville project. He has also been invited to participate in a meeting with a representative from the Maryland 250 Commission in preparation for Maryland's celebration of America's 250th anniversary (the Semiquincentennial). Thomas reported that asbestos mitigation at the Friendsville project has been completed. The next step is to finalize contract negotiations, which are being handled by Murphy & Dittenhafer. He emphasized the need to submit the final numbers to the state within a tight timeframe. He reported that the sale of furniture and fixtures generated over \$2,000. Thomas provided positive feedback on the "Murder by the Book" play, praising the successful collaboration between the library and Our Town Theatre.

Old Business was discussed:

- *Fine-Free Discussion*- Thomas reported that the Western Maryland Regional Library (WMRL) has been discussing transitioning to a fine-free system, aligning with the trend among most other libraries in the state. However, Allegany County's Board of Commissioners has decided not to proceed with this change due to the potential for further budget cuts next year. In support of Allegany County, Washington County has also agreed to abandon its plans to go fine-free. Thomas presented this decision to the board and recommended that the library follow suit. He acknowledged that collecting fines is becoming increasingly challenging due to the limited number of items subject to fines through legislation. Christian raised the point that fine collection constitutes a statistically insignificant portion of the library's income, while also considering the administrative burden and staff time required to manage fines. Thomas acknowledged that research generally indicates positive outcomes for libraries that have transitioned to a fine-free model. He also noted that the American Library Association (ALA) believes that monetary fines create an economic barrier to accessing library materials and services. Thomas recommended reaching out to the WMRL officials to ensure that a decision for the Ruth Enlow system to go fine-free would not negatively impact or affect the other counties within the consortium.

New Business was discussed:

- *Annual Report*- The Board reviewed the aesthetically pleasing report designed by Jenna. Thomas noted that program participation, Summer Reading Program engagement, and circulation numbers had all increased significantly.
- *Policy #320: Use of AI Technology*- Thomas presented a draft library policy for the Use of AI Technology. He advised he will be conducting a presentation on Maryland Tech Connect to provide an overview and understanding of AI Technology. Given the increasing use of AI technology, both generally and within our library system, Thomas suggested that the Board begin to consider appropriate boundaries for its acceptable use. There was a brief discussion about the general use of AI and its current relevance within the library. Thomas emphasized that this policy is not immediately necessary but wanted to proactively address the potential future implications of AI technology and its increasing use. The Board decided to table the draft policy for further consideration at a later time.

Old Business was discussed:

- *Planned Giving Committee*- Brian Boal from Boal and Associates was invited to join the Board to provide his insights on the creation of an endowment for the library, including the possibility of merging the existing Friends 501(c)(3) organization into the endowment vehicle. Brian acknowledged that Friends is a well-established entity and was, in fact, initially conceived with an endowment approach. However, he emphasized the importance of public perception. Brian recommended that the first step should be to review the Friends organization's bylaws to determine if its original intent aligns with the goals of the proposed endowment fund. He also highlighted the importance of considering control, given the existence of two separate Boards of Directors for the Library and the Friends organization. Brian advised that he would review the bylaws and follow up with the Board. Unrelated to the endowment discussion, Brian also offered Landon's Library for potential partnerships and children's programs, which was enthusiastically received by the Board.

New Business was discussed:

- *Reappointments*- Christian advised that both Linda and Diane have declined reappointment to the Board of Trustees. Thomas presented some names of individuals who have expressed interest in filling the open positions. These individuals include Allison Sweitzer, Tom Carr, Sierra Wigfield, and Becci Glotfelty. Thomas advised that he would follow up with each individual to confirm their continued interest and then present a selection of qualified candidates or the Board to recommend to the Commissioners for final approval.
- *Policy #202: Use of Materials*- Thomas suggested a minor tweak to the Use of Materials policy to accommodate the now available option of paying fines and fees online. Our current policy states: "Patrons must present an original receipt signed by a library staff person in order to receive a refund of payments for lost materials. Refunds will be issued up to six months after the date of the original receipt..." However, when paying online, patrons do not receive a physical receipt. Thomas recommended removing the statement that requires the presentation of a physical receipt and amending the second sentence to: "Refunds will be issued up to six months after the date of the original, verified payment." Tina made a motion to accept the proposed changes, seconded by Karen. The motion passed unanimously."

- *Calendars*- The Board reviewed and approved the proposed calendars for library system holidays and Board of Trustees meetings for the year 2025. Karen moved to approve the 2025 Board of Trustees Meeting calendar, which was seconded by Tina. The motion passed unanimously. Karen then moved to approve the 2025 Holiday staff calendar, which was seconded by Clint. This motion also passed unanimously
- *Hoopla*- Thomas reported that Hoopla has been experiencing issues with "junk content" on its platform. He explained that this includes a significant amount of irrelevant content, potentially content that violates our library's content policy, and the use of algorithms that may promote content with specific viewpoints on certain subjects. While immediate action is not necessary, Thomas felt it was important for the Board to be aware of these concerns that WMRL has raised regarding the Hoopla platform

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, December 12th, 2024 at 4:00pm at the Oakland Branch.

Clint made a motion to **Adjourn the Regular Meeting** at 5:06pm, seconded by Tina. The motion carried.

Minutes taken and respectfully submitted by Nicole McCullough.