

Meeting Minutes of
The Havana Public Library Board
Special meeting - April 23, 2020

The meeting was called to order by President Mark McGrew at 4:54 PM. This meeting was held through an online Zoom Conference.

Those in attendance were board members Mark McGrew, Jan Hurley, Brian Lesemann, Mary Layton, Mary Ellen Simpson, Cathy Toncray and Stephanie Howerter, librarian director Vanessa Hall-Bennett and business administrator Marty Balbinot. Staff members attending the meeting were Luke Baker, Harley DeFord, Jessica Lesemann, Karen Elliot and Ellen Mibbs, with one member of the public Amanda Zueck.

New Business:

Discussion & Action Regarding Continued Employment of Staff During Library Closure - Treasurer Mary Layton reported that the current operating account contained an estimated amount for 3 months of operation and that by the end of July we would be in the negative by about \$1000. Also, it is possible that tax distribution payments will be delayed, as the first collection date may be pushed back to August 4, meaning that it would be the 3rd week in August before we get any money. RAILS will be due in July again as well costing \$3000 as well. Also, if the staff were furloughed for an estimated 7 pay periods, it would result in a savings of about \$31,000. We do have \$36,000 in reserves in reserves but a good portion of that is designated. Stephanie asked what the breakdown of that reserve fund and how much was designated for use. Marty noted that a portion of the reserves that was donated was given for books, remodeling, and library improvement; the rest is money we have had over and above our expenses for the last 2 fiscal years. It was estimated that if we kept the staff on until we ran out of funds to the end of the fiscal year then continued to pay them through the 3rd week in August, the cost to pay the staff would be at least \$14,000 plus any other expenses.

Concerns were expressed about the unemployment website; however, examples were given which showed that it seemed to be working adequately for staff to apply. It was noted that off hours seemed to be the best time to apply. Also, there is a fax number listed on the website where they can send the forms and will return a request for a call. Discussion followed concerning the additional benefits being offered by the unemployment. Estimated turnaround from application to receiving a check would be 4-6 weeks, as checks are cut every 2 weeks. Basically, there would be a possible 4 week break from their last library check to the receiving of 1st unemployment check. Also noted that during the Covid-19 epidemic there is an additional amount given to those receiving unemployment, making it advantageous to receive it as soon as possible.

IMRF consequences –

If we furlough the staff, the library will have a form to fill out to keep staff benefits. (Life insurance and disability and no credits would be lost toward retirement.) We would only be paying 11% of their pay to IMRF during furlough which is normally 16%. However, the employee would be responsible to pay the remaining % incurred during the furlough to IMRF thereafter. The employee would lose their “service credit” depending on their decision. This would cost the library less and the employee the same amount.

Budget Requirements –

There was a question on whether the budgeted amount for salaries can be used for other financial needs. Only the funds set aside for IMRF must be spent on that specific need. The salary budget is not restricted and may be used for other needs. It was pointed out that the money not used for salaries should be reserved for unexpected costs yet to be seen due to the shut down and virus consequences.

Summer Reading Program/Summer Programming –

Vanessa pointed out that if we are closed, the implementation of this would be difficult. There are also software options but that is expensive. We could do things online, but that necessitates staff. Summer reading is going to look different for ALL libraries this year.

Vanessa suggested that we make clear to the board and staff who would be furloughed and who would not. All staff would be furloughed except Vanessa to direct the library and Marty to pay the bills.

Public Comment:

Amanda Zueck stated that she and her family were avid library patrons, spending at least 3 hours a week at the library when open and sometimes up to 12. Even with the current circumstances, they are using what online resources that have been made available. Because of this, she advocated that the work needed for summer reading be considered—if members of the staff are furloughed, they can not prepare for it. Vanessa would not be able to plan for the programs without the staff. Amanda has helped in the past with “Nerd Con” and knows that it and other such programs are labor intensive. She would like services to continue in the summer. Mark interjected that if the staff would be furloughed, it would fall onto Vanessa to 'take up the slack' on the webpage and Facebook and agreed that Summer Reading takes a lot of planning. He would prefer to discuss this at our next regularly scheduled meeting and would have no problem asking staff to work on it. We can furlough them now and then ask them to come back to work on it. Amanda clarified that she believed they needed to start planning now for it. Mary noted that this would be something that Vanessa would need to examine as to what could be offered online, Facebook or how much if any the software would cost. Mark mentioned online book possibilities and that this is something we need more information on and that we should talk later about it. Vanessa noted that eBooks would have an extra cost but also wanted to make sure Amanda's questions had been answered. Amanda expressed a desire for the board to at least employ staff part time so that the summer reading program could be implemented. A discussion on unemployment and hours followed.

Staff Comments:

Ellen – Ellen expressed her thanks to Amanda for her kind words and for the efforts of the board concerning the problem, especially with the option of furlough instead of layoffs. However, she wanted to emphasize that work on the summer reading program is year around and also that other staff members (as well as board members and volunteers) contribute. She wanted to know if the board is considering part time work instead of furloughing. She personally would prefer to work part time instead of furloughing. Mark said that the board had not talked about it but expressed that it could be addressed at the next meeting but it depended on whether we can do summer reading and hours involved. Ellen later clarified that she was willing to work part time now on the Facebook, etc. if it was an option.

Jessica – Jessica said that she was willing to go part time instead of furlough so that the Summer Reading program could be developed in a digital way. She also expressed that many her age do much more online anyway and that there were options that could be developed. Pay was not an issue to her rather the program was what was important. (During this discussion, the staff was encouraged to do

what planning they could to see what may be possible.) Mary asked any letters had been sent out for summer reading funding. Vanessa answered no, considering the current circumstances. Jessica also later expressed her desire to work part time now if it was an option to keep online services available. Luke Baker – He expressed no comments at this time but appreciated the work of the board.

Harley – He expressed that he had no opinion at this time as well.

Karen – Karen expressed concern whether anyone knew how long it would take to get a check? Mark shared with her the same information presented earlier in the meeting. He also noted that most providers (cell phone, internet, electric etc.) have given customers the option of delaying monthly payments.

The board resumed “Discussion & Action Regarding Continued Employment of Staff During Library Closure.” Mark expressed the concern that until more information about the summer reading program is available the board cannot make a decision whether to have it or about part time work. Mary Ellen also expressed the need for PPE before any talk of staff working in the library. Staff members noted that the library already has some PPE and that much of the summer reading prep could be done at home. Stephanie emphasized that a summer program takes an extensive amount of work to prepare for even and especially now since an online program has not been done before. After an extended discussion, the board understood that Vanessa could be given the task (with the help of the staff) to examine the possibility of a summer reading program, its staff requirements, possible costs and various options so that the board could examine the issue at a special or the next regularly scheduled meeting.

At the conclusion of this discussion, Mark made the motion to furlough the staff as of Tuesday April 28 indefinitely, except for Vanessa and Marty with the understanding that we may bring them back part time. Cathy seconded the motion. Mark – yes, Cathy yes, Mary yes, Mary Ellen yes, Stephanie – no, and Brian yes, Jan – no. Motion passed.

Vanessa then said that she would 'zoom' meet with Jessica and Ellen to hash out the numbers and possibilities. Also, she wanted to inform the board that our lawyer will be asked to draft the appropriate letter to the staff. Mark wanted to also add that the staff had the right to ask to be paid for their vacation time since we are furloughing them. He also encouraged them to try to do what they could with the unemployment website.

Adjournment:

Cathy motioned to adjourn, with Mary Ellen second. Motion passed and the board adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Lesemann – HPLD Secretary