

**DRAFT MINUTES – Aspen Hill Library Advisory Committee (AHLAC)  
November 15, 2021** (Zoom Meeting Platform)

**Present:** AHLAC Members: Betty Bell, Elliot Chabot, Althea Grey-McKenzie (AHLAC Chair), Babette Margolies, Eileen Smith, Chris Swan; AHLIB Attendee: Christine Freeman, Aspen Hill Library Manager; MCPL Board Attendee: Tim Lighter, MCPL Board Liaison to AHLAC; Community Guests: Alice O'Donnell, Bertha Brightmarke, and Ismaelle Brunache.

**Call to Order:** AHLAC Chair, Althea Grey-McKenzie called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

**Welcome:** Althea shared Zoom protocols and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**Aspen Hill LAC Secretary / Temporary Scribe:** Althea asked for a member to volunteer to be the scribe during the meeting. Babette Margolies volunteered to take the minutes for this meeting on the condition that others share their notes. Althea said she would be soliciting for a permanent Secretary.

**Approval of Minutes:** Althea asked if everyone received the Minutes from the October 18 meeting. Minutes were reviewed with two corrections noted. Elliot made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and Betty Bell seconded the motion. The October 18, 2021 minutes were approved at 7:47PM.

**AHLAC Chair Report:** Althea noted that Daniel George was approved as a member by the Library Board, but he declined because of other obligations.

Althea presented formatting changes for our LAC meetings. She hopes the change in our meeting format will attract new members to our AHLAC. The first half of the meeting will be business as usual. The second half of the meeting will be devoted to current AHLAC Member and general community questions and thoughts impacting Library operation that they would like to convey to the Library Manager, MCPL Director and/or the LAC Board.

Althea thanked everyone for providing feedback on the final draft of the D. Bonner Letter. Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Montgomery County Library Board Administrative Specialist, will be sending the letter to D. Bonner on the MCPL letterhead.

**Library Manager Report:** Christine Freeman sent a statistics report to AHLAC members via email. She reported that Libraries were given the go ahead to schedule indoor programming in December. The first indoor, inhouse program will be on December 1. It will be part of a new oral history program emphasizing Montgomery County experiences during the pandemic. Staffing and collections have remained the same. Ideas were discussed with the Children's Head of Service, Erin Pike, to include passive program ideas such as stations or other types of in-house programming. Other items – Demo for KOHA Aspen Discovery (system) can be scheduled for January. Also, Christine is now able to book reservations for our meetings through June 2022. During a follow-up discussion on room reservations, Althea stated that our AHLAC meetings are planned for the third Monday of each month, but will probably remain on Zoom at least through March. Elliot asked about the Candidates Forums. Christine has the dates on her schedule, but they are awaiting Anita Vassallo's approval.

**Community Voices Discussion:** Christine stated that she was not clear on the purpose of including this segment in our agenda. Althea responded that the purpose was to provide a time and place to regularly include the general community to support her previous request for Aspen Hill Community input. Group discussion ensued, emphasizing that general community input would provide the Library Manager and LAC Board with continued feedback and new ideas from the Community-at-Large. Althea further explained that any questions regarding AHLAC meeting business would be addressed during the General Comments Agenda item. Chris Swan requested that "Community Voices" be limited to ideas about the AHLIB only.

**Community Voices:** Alice O'Donnell is a life-long resident of Aspen Hill. She expressed kudos for keeping the Library going during Covid. She said it was important for programs for children. There is a need for a multilingual approach (for instance, streaming services). She, continued, that it was important to make people aware that libraries are more essential than ever. She emphasized that Aspen Hill Library is unique. Christine agreed that people are not aware, and that if anyone knows of groups of interest, that they should let the Library know so the Library can work with these groups. Alice responded with some ideas such as communicating by phone or by text messages; contacting and/or working with Verizon or Comcast to share Library announcements, and by working together as a community to get the word out.

Bertha Brightmarke spoke about the needs for the library: Children are dependent on parents to get them there. It comes down to economics and choosing between work (or activities that generate money) or going to the library. Bertha asked the question, "Is the library for crafts or crafters as well as for books?" Christine Freeman's response was that the library "does crafts, but also with a literacy component; programming is how to get people into the library, such as by doing movement & healthy eating STEM programs." Althea pointed out that Aspen Hill Library has the knitting and crocheting group but does not have other craft activities for adults. Christine responded that at this point, only one librarian is interested in doing more programs with crafts. The question was then asked whether there was a way for someone to share ideas. Brainstorming included having LAC/FOL submit proposals (cost consideration noted). Another possibility: send ideas to Christine Freeman (note: planning three months ahead). Betty Bell commented that the FOL Knit & Crochet group has been going on for many years and has been doing well. They do all kinds of handwork. Through the pandemic, they have been holding sessions on Fridays from 3 to 4:30pm on ZOOM. Christine Freeman shared that we are down one Librarian and one Library Associate. One other individual changed (locations?), so we are down three circulation staff. The Library Assistant vacancies are entry level.

Ismaelle Brunache explained that she just attended to listen. Christine Freeman then noted that there is a place at the bottom of the Montgomery County Library's website to change language and translate. She again emphasized that she can be reached by email.

## **Part 2 of LAC Board Meeting**

**Library Board Liaison Report:** Tim Lighter noted that the Library Board has not met and that there were no changes on the Board. There are still three or four openings. He said that statistics are still not being published. Tim stated that he had not seen the draft of the D. Bonner Letter, so Althea Grey-McKenzie summarized, explaining that the letter has been drafted and separately reviewed by Christine Freeman. After the AHLAC reviews it, the letter will be finalized and sent to the AHLAC Chair, Christine Freeman, Tim Lighter, Anita Vassallo, by way of the Library Dept. and then to D. Bonner. Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Montgomery County Library Board Administrative Specialist, will respond to the AHLAC Chair regarding distribution of the letter on Montgomery County Public Library letterhead. Althea noted that the letter draft was written with a recurring theme emphasizing "good communication". Tim also reported on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. He stated that the Library Board is not currently involved with that Committee, however there may be a meeting with the group's local chairs. As far as System-wide data, Tim believes there is a database where information from other libraries is listed. He will see if we can get more information. This data is still being put together. When available, Tim will email the Director's Reports to the AHLAC Board. He hoped they would prove helpful. Tim reminded everyone about the November 17 Library Board/LAC/FOL Joint Meeting.

**Landscape Committee Report:** Babette Margolies shared that on October 17, the Aspen Hill Garden Club did a Library Garden Clean-up with the assistance of the 4H Lucky Clovers. It was noted that the plaque has been installed. At their November 9 ZOOM meeting, the Club had Melissa Siegel, a Master Gardener, speak about "Butterflies in the Garden." Chris liked the idea of adult gardening and/or talks on adult gardening. There may be an opportunity to speak with Mark Santoro, Adult Services Librarian, about a series. Eileen Smith noted that the Club did not plant bulbs, but the Club Landscape Committee will make a design for the Spring. She also reported that some of our club members saw unfamiliar people in the Library Gardens. Eileen was called by a Garden Club member about the incident and contacted Mark who then checked out the situation.

**FOL Aspen Hill Liaison Report:** Chris Swan reported that there will be no Fall Book Sale. Aspen Hill FOL will ask the County FOL for permission to hold a Spring Book Sale. FOL will have a December meeting on the second Thursday on ZOOM. However, they have cancelled the November meeting.

**Koha Follow-up:** Althea Grey-McKenzie reported that the demonstration may occur at the AHLAC January 2022 meeting and may be scheduled for the beginning of the meeting. Tim Lighter suggested that it should last no more than 30 minutes to allow time for Questions and Answers. Althea suggested that the general community should join in for this demo.

**Other Meetings:** AHLAC Chair asked that if anyone went to any meetings of interest to the AHLAC such as the County Budget Meeting or the Aspen Hill Civic Association meeting, that they share updates and/or notes. Chris mentioned that the Montgomery County Civic Federation is against Thrive, the new County Proposal on Land Use. The Aspen Hill Civic Association hopes to join Civic Federation in opposing Thrive.

**General Comments:** Chris Swan suggested that we should try finding people and invite them to our AHLAC meetings to listen to the Koha Presentation and to contribute any thoughts during the Community Voices segments. Betty Bell made this into a formal motion. Elliot Chabot seconded the motion.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:44 pm. (No December Meeting – Next meeting planned for January 2022)**