

Wheaton Library Advisory Committee
February 27, 2023

Minutes

Attendees: Dianne Whitaker (ex-officio, Wheaton Library Manager), Yesvy Gustasp (chair), Grace Manubay (board representative), Carol Bender, Diana Dubrawsky, Barbara Freidman, Mhambi Musonda, Thelda McMillian, Melanie Newbrough, Hoa Nguyen, Andrew Rein, Carolyn Teich, Ania Waller

The meeting was called to order at 8:03pm.

Minutes from January 23 meeting were approved with one correction (typo in Yesvy Gustasp's name). Carolyn moved to approve; Yesvy seconded.

Membership Report: There are two new members: Hoa (Helen) Nguyen and Melanie Newbrough; there are two prospective members Mhambi Musonda and Barbara Friedman.

Dianne gave the Manager's Report:

- Facilities: There are outstanding work orders for the plexiglass in the children's area and the meeting room door. The library staff will follow up with facilities on the status of these items which has been going on 2-3 months. Vandalism (graffiti) in the garage was reported over the weekend; it will be painted over. A request was made to place "No Parking" signs on Hermitage but no action has been completed yet.
- Programming: Weekly family story times continue. On March 5 the library will celebrate "Read Across America Week" - children will be able to read with an Inter-Ages volunteer. The children can bring their own books or borrow one from the library. Adult programming continues with chats on Thursday, Crochet, Introduction to Gmail, Book Club.
 - In February, various Black History month programs were held including a special display "It Happened in Rockville" which will be in the library through February 28.
 - March is Women's History month. On March 11 there will be a program "Divided Nation, Divided Town, One Woman's Story" based on a story a woman wrote to her mother as confederates came through Rockville.
 - TheVita tax aid program will continue through March into the first week of April, for people who make less than \$58,000/year. Sessions are primarily by appointment but there are a few walk-ins.
- Collections: The travel collection is still being updated. There will be a small reference display with pamphlets and flyers for services offered to senior citizens by the County Office of Aging.
- Staffing: Wheaton has a new children's librarian Cindy Gill, who transferred to Wheaton from Praisner to replace Fran Kaplan. Robert Thompson (the other children's librarian) has left the Montgomery County library system.
- Services: in response to a question Dianne mentioned that the Senior Center is up on the second floor, affiliated with the Rec Center. Registration is required for Senior Center activities.

Library Board Liaison Report: Grace gave the report. The Board met on Feb 8. There was discussion about personnel changes and Black History Month programs. An electronic resource librarian will be hired for the Central Office.

Grace has been receiving feedback about the review of the library circulation and computer policies. She is still compiling comments so feel free to continue passing them on. Some of the comments discussed were:

- More information on how to register for and use the online library card; how to issue temporary library cards for visitors (3-6 months).
- Clarification about borrowing limits; defining Launchpad.
- Some formatting comments.
- Since overdue fines are not being levied, why are fines listed?
- Does the library have sufficient quantities of books and electronic items, in view of the automated renewals?
- Ania commented that while the policy addresses suspending holds, when you go to adjust a hold the term is “freezing” rather than suspending.
- Carolyn suggested that when people obtain a library card a one page summary of policies should be provided, or a link to a location where people can find the policy information.

There was extended discussion about automated renewals resulting in very extended loan periods. Dianne said the automated renewals are part of the Fine Free Movement which is intended to improve equity. Since a renewal counts as a circulation, it also shows improved circulation. Three weeks is still the limit for items with holds pending and “lucky day” selections. Dianne said people are keeping books past even the extended due date because no fines are levied until 8 weeks, at which point the book is deemed lost.

Dianne mentioned that the library website will be upgraded and redesigned soon, so there may be focus groups requesting feedback.

Grace said the committee’s next assignment is to review the policy section on “Facilities Use,” which can be found near the bottom area with About Us. Please send her your comments.

Other Business

Dianne said she may not be able to attend the May meeting and asked whether the group wants to continue meeting virtually at 8:00pm on the 3rd Monday of the month? To meet in person at the library, meetings would need to start at 7:00. Some members have concerns, even if meeting attendees would be masked. Results of a zoom vote were: 6 members prefer virtual, 5 prefer in person. One member asked whether hybrid meeting could be an option but special equipment would be needed for hybrid meetings. Grace suggested a solution being tried by another group: alternating virtual and in person every other month, then re-assessing to see what works best for the group. Ania said maybe in the summer meetings could be held in person (outside?) but Carolyn said the committee does not usually meet in the summer. In response to a vote on changing the meeting time, the majority voted to start at 7:30pm. The next meeting will held the 3rd Monday of March at 7:30pm via zoom.

Carolyn asked the two potential members to introduce themselves.

- Mhambi is 18, a recent graduate of Einstein who is currently attending Montgomery College (MC). He believes libraries are crucial to the community and our democracy and he wanted to get more involved. He is interested in elected office one day.

- Barbara Friedman is retired after various jobs, one as a teacher for challenged individuals from K-12 and most recently with federal government as statistician. She loves reading in the library and borrowing books from it. Barbara believes the library can be an important aspect of the community.
- Hoa (Helen) Nguyen is a Wheaton resident and a big fan of the library; she brings her 20-month old to the library. Her dream house would be near a library. Helen said she wants to give back after receiving so much from the library system. She is Chair of the Business Department at MC.

Carolyn mentioned that “The Reading List” is the most recent book read by the library book club. Everyone in the group enjoyed it and she highly recommends it. It is about the importance of the library to a community. The book club meets via Zoom, 3rd Tuesday at 11:00.

Grace mentioned to the new members affiliated with MC that the library board meetings are open to the general public and include a representative from MC.

Thelda asked whether anyone in the group is interested in a community project to collect books and donate them to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated persons. Are other LACs doing this? Yesvy mentioned that the Montgomery County Library has a correctional branch. Hoa thinks it is a wonderful idea, sometimes MC faculty who retire leave their books there so she would be willing to participate if the project takes place. Grace will ask if there is a process for doing this, to see if the LAC can do it on its own or whether it should go through another channel. Dianne agreed that is the best way forward.

At 9:04 Carolyn moved to adjourn. Yesvy seconded the motion.

Other Notes (after formal adjournment): For Library Lovers Month Dianne was named Hero of the Week by Jamie Raskin. More information can be found on Raskin’s YouTube for Feb 24.

Diana asked how things are going for librarians in general. Dianne said the recent Olney Library drag queen story time was about inclusivity, fun and that it’s ok to be different. There was a lot of support from the top down and a lot of participation. In general, librarians are adjusting to the post-COVID world like everyone else; it is a challenge for everyone.