



SHOREWOOD LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
September 13, 2023 Approved Minutes

Trustees Present: Alex Dimitroff, Ling Meng, Jon Smucker, Kara Espera, and Superintendent Laurie Burgos

Excused: Elvira Craig de Silva and Donna Whittle

Others Present: Library Director Jen Gerber, Library Assistant Director Hayley Johnson, and Library Office Manager/ Confidential Secretary Angela Andre

Guests observing: Halea Fields, Sarah Grummert, Rosa Chambers, Isaac Danzer, and Jean Gurney

1. [Call to order](#): at 5:15 pm, the meeting of the Shorewood Public Library Board of Trustees was called to order by Board Vice President Jon Smucker.

2. [Statement of Public Notice](#): Ms. Andre confirmed that the meeting had been posted and noticed according to law.

3. [Citizens to be heard on items not on the agenda](#)

Shorewood Library Clerk Halea Fields made a public comment.
She stated the following:

“My name is Halea and have worked for the Shorewood Library first as a shelver, and now as a clerk. A few of us clerks have met with Jen to discuss clerk wages, and I am here to use my five minutes to advocate for increasing clerk wages as Jen has suggested I do.

We are part of WI’s Southeast region and based on the data for this region, the lowest average pay is \$15.51 and the highest is \$17.03. Our range is similar but I want to bring attention to the distribution of this range. The Shorewood Library’s range is 14.41-17.19. I believe there are only two clerks earning the highest range and the remaining clerks earn the lowest wage in this range. That would mean 75% of clerks make the minimum amount, which is less than the mean hourly pay for the position within our own organization.

From my research, I have found an example of a circulation aid position at Milwaukee Public Library. The starting wage for city residents is \$16.07-16.75. One key difference between the Shorewood Clerk position and the MPL circulation is that aids do not process new materials. The MPL position’s starting wages range from 11.5% to 16% higher than SPL clerks. One thing that makes SPL stand apart from city branches and other libraries is processing new materials to prepare them to be circulated in conjunction with our library aid, Susan. We must work for at least 6 months before we are trained to process our materials. Learning to process takes

months, so it's a pretty big endeavor to undertake

Another comparable position to ours that is currently hiring is for a Library Circulation Aide in New Berlin with a starting wage range of \$16-21/ hr. At their starting wage, they earn 11% more than SPL clerks, and at their highest, they earn nearly 46% higher than we do."

4. Consent Agenda:

ACTION: Trustee Espera motioned for approval of the entire consent agenda. Trustee Meng seconded. All voted in favor; motion carried.

5. No items pulled from the consent agenda

6. Additional topics not on the agenda

Director Gerber reported that we have received the final payout from Wells Fargo for the Lange Bequest which we have been waiting for since 2018. Jen would like some guidance as to where the money should go in the form of an action by the Board.

Trustee Smucker suggested two paths: 1. To put all of it into the Board Directed Fund at GMF which is the most flexible of the three funds and is a good vehicle for collecting additional dollars. 2. To put 1/3 of the amount in each of the three GMF accounts, which can be used for longer term projects. The benefit of having it in the Board Directed fund is that there is a bit more flexibility in how it can be used. The benefit of spreading it across three funds is to better match the original intent for the money.

Trustees and staff discussed the options and the background of the grant and the guidelines of the policy. Director Gerber recommended that the money go into the Board Directed fund since it is not currently earmarked for a specific project. Trustee Smucker noted that this money could also cover the difference between the original, pre-COVID renovation costs estimates and the actual current costs.

ACTION: Trustee Smucker motioned to put the total received from Wells Fargo which closes and completes the Lange Bequest into the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Board Directed Reserve Fund. Motion seconded by Trustee Ming. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

Shorewood School District Superintendent Laurie Burgos was welcomed and introductions were made.

7. Library Director's Report

- Senior Resources

Director Gerber met with Sue Bronson (President of the Elder Services Advisory Board) to discuss their Board's focus for Shorewood's older adults and the Senior Resource Center (SRC). The Library was identified as a stakeholder to the success of a sustainability plan which is currently being developed at the request of the Village Manager.

- **Statistics**

The Library's statistics are now updated and are being provided in the Library Board packet again. Jen will be taking a closer look at the format presented and working with Circulation Services Clerk Dan Holt to better enhance the document which will be included in the Library Board packets going forward.

- **Schedule**

Staff schedules have been published through the end of 2023; all staff have access to their schedule via their phone, or in-house computer, as well as a printed copy posted weekly on a bulletin board in the staff room. All personnel are very unique in their individual scheduling needs; these needs are being accommodated as best as possible and kept up to date by Circulation Services Clerk Carolyn Curran.

- **New Printer/Copier/Scanner Received**

In July, the Board voted on to accept the new copier bid from Forward TS. The two copier/printer/scanners were received on August 25th. There were several days of moderating the conversation and needs of Forward TS's I.T department, the TBS's (credit card/coin op provider) I.T. department, and the MCFLS I.T. department. This was frustrating from an administrative and staff point of view; however, there was no disruption in service to the public. All I.T. departments are now effectively servicing our needs and the transition is now running smoothly.

- **The Economist (digital version)**

Libby dropped the electronic version of *The Economist* publication from the Library's current plan, which is a loss to our patrons. After much relationship building and perseverance, Librarian Lizzie Hjelle was able to reinstate the publication, this time through PressReader. There is an additional add-on expense now associated with adding *The Economist*; however, our eResource statistics confirm heavy use which warrants the additional expense.

- **The Library's Podcast**

Librarians Lizzie Hjelle and Quinn Brakob have started recording new episodes for the Library's podcast The Shorewood Stacks. Lizzie and Quinn plan to work together to record content, edit, broadcast, and market the podcast beginning this Fall.

- **Clerk Request for Wage Review**

Director Gerber met with three of the Library's clerks who requested a review of their hourly wage. Jen researched and provided to them a report by job description which includes other library's hourly wages based on libraries which have the same size municipal population as the Village of Shorewood as well as hourly wages based on geographic location.

This report and Jen's recommendations will be shared with the Finance Committee at their next meeting, prior to the full Board action item of all staff salary ranges, which has

historically been brought to the Library Board at the December Meeting. Director Gerber noted that she is looking forward to taking a close look at all staff salaries and wages with the Finance Committee, and ultimately the full Library Board, at that time.

- 2024 Library Budget Timeline

Director Gerber just received the Q2 budget report from the Village Finance Department. She was able to compare it against the estimates made for 2024 and this resulted in very minor changes.

The 2023 Calendar for 2024 Budget has been published for the department heads by the Village Finance Manager and the timeline is as follows:

- ✓ Department head review of draft quarterly financial reports (the 2Q) scheduled to be released July 18-22.
- ✓ Baseline operating budget materials will be provided to department heads on August 1.
- ✓ Department head preparation of 2024 budget drafts shall be through August 11.
- ✓ Review and submission of the 2024 budget draft is scheduled for August 15-31.
- The 2024 budget request will be presented to the Village Board on September 18.
- Final public hearing and 2024 budget adoption will be voted on by the Village Board on November 20.

Based on the Village timeline, Director Gerber's priorities are:

- ✓ Review the 2Q financial reports as soon as they are received (actual date of receipt: 09/05/2023) to determine 2023 mid-year spending projections.
- ✓ Meet with the Library's Finance Committee between August 1 (after the 2024 budget planning documents are distributed) and the August 9th Library Board Meeting to discuss an initial draft of the 2024 Library Budget.
- ✓ Meet with the Library's Finance Committee again prior to August 31 (when the budget draft is due to the Finance Manager).
- ✓ Recommend that the 2024 Library Budget be on the September 13th Library Board Agenda.

- Shorewood Today

The Library's program Yoga for All has been published as the feature story in the local magazine *Shorewood Today*.

8. Informational: Personnel Committee Report

Trustee Espera reported that the committee did not meet due to the Labor Day holiday.

9. Possible Action: Youth Services Librarian

Trustee Dimitroff explained to the Board that this item was placed on the agenda by Jen Gerber. Trustee Dimitroff thought it should be a closed session item, but Jen preferred to have it on tonight's agenda.

Director Gerber reported that the current Youth Services Librarian Heide Piehler has announced her retirement after 41 years of valued service and commitment to the community. She will be honored and celebrated next month before her final day with the library.

Director Gerber explained how it came about that Ms. Ott was offered the position of Youth Services Librarian so soon after Ms. Piehler's retirement announcement:

A hiring committee recently went through an extensive process to hire a Librarian for the new Inclusive Services position. Ultimately Quinn Brakob was hired for the position. The runner up for the position was Abigail Ott. Although the panel was very impressed by her, she was not offered the inclusive services position because her experience was heavily focused on Youth Services.

Knowing Ms. Ott was a strong candidate and had Youth Services experience, when Ms. Piehler announced her retirement, Director Gerber went to the original interview panel to discuss the possibility of offering Ms. Ott the soon-to-be-vacant Youth Services Position. The panel unanimously agreed that this would be a good idea. In her enthusiasm for this decision, Director Gerber admitted that she missed some steps in what has been past communication practices at Shorewood Library. The hiring decision should have been communicated first to the Personnel Committee and in a Director's report to the full Board. She apologized for this misstep.

Director Gerber emphasized that the speed of hiring a new Youth Services Librarian is in no way an indication that Ms. Piehler herself is easily replaced. She is not replaceable and Jen apologized if her actions made it appear that way.

Trustee Dimitroff stated that she received Jen's letter announcing the new hire on August 18th. On August 19th, Trustee Dimitroff sent Director Gerber an email pointing out that Village policy for police and library is to get board approval to fill any positions. The purpose, as she sees it, involves Board oversight and is to determine if the funds could be better used elsewhere or whether they should go forward in hiring for the previous position. Trustee Dimitroff sent a second email to Jen suggesting that the job offer be paused or rescinded. And, although Director Gerber interpreted this as a call for an action item, Trustee Dimitroff stated that she sent this email only to get Jen's attention *because* Director Gerber did not respond to the email of August 19. Therefore, no action will be taken on this agenda item.

Trustee Smucker stated that in his view, the Director was hired to be the library's executive and to make executive decisions. Jen was excited about a candidate, saw an opportunity, and acted on it. Trustee Smucker thinks is admirable but he also agrees that a best practice step was skipped. He supports and applauds the proactive approach rather than waiting and risking the loss of an excellent candidate. He stated that if this had not been an extenuating circumstance, there are definite steps that should have been taken to follow best practice.

Trustee Dimitroff reiterated that the hiring of the Youth Services Librarian was done without Board approval as required by Village policy and that best practice would have been to first post the position.

10. Informational: Finance Committee Report

Trustee Smucker announced that the budget is ready to be presented to the Village. He will have more to report next month.

11. Action: Access Enhancement: Elimination of Library Fines

Director Gerber introduced a proposal to reduce barriers to library use by eliminating all fines on Shorewood Library materials beginning January 1, 2024.

In her memo to the Board, Director Gerber noted the economic barrier that library fines can create; disadvantaging many users and limiting access. This barrier can disproportionately harm those having financial difficulties, those who are unemployed, under-employed, patrons experiencing homelessness, and those from historically marginalized communities.

Director Gerber then outlined evidence of increased library usage and, in turn, an increase in reciprocal borrowing payment for libraries that go fine free. Local examples include the Wauwatosa, West Allis, and Cudahy libraries.

This proposal requests that a portion of the annual distribution from the GMF-held Lange Permanent Endowment Fund be used to cover the cost of making Shorewood fine-free.

ACTION: Trustee Smucker moved that in order to provide free, equal, and equitable access to information for all and with the intent to eliminate economic barriers to library services and resources within our community, I move to approve the elimination of library fines at the Shorewood Public Library, beginning January 1, 2024. Motion seconded by Trustee Espera. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

Trustee Smucker further moved that a portion of the annual distribution from the GMF-held Lange Permanent Endowment Fund satisfy the municipal budget line item 200-5110-46710 to reflect no impact on the tax levy. Motion seconded by Superintendent Burgos. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

12. Action: 2024 Proposed Cost of Living Adjustment

The proposed cost of living increase for library staff is 3% which is in alignment with the increase proposed for Village staff.

There are a few reasons for this separate action.

- The Library Board asks the Village Board for a tax levy request, not approval of the library budget.
 - We share the details of the budget and use the Village budget template, but specific budget lines, like the salaries and wages line, are not approved by the Village Board.
 - This is best practice per municipal auditors.
 - Serves to authorize this pay increase in the Village payroll system.
- Therefore, it is recommended that the Library Board move to adopt a designated COLA for the following year.

ACTION: Trustee Smucker moved to increase wages 3.0% for all library staff except shelvers* and the youth services aide* effective January 1st, 2024 pending approval of the requested tax levy amount by the Shorewood Village Board of Trustees. Motion seconded by Trustee Espera. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

*Per the Shelver & Aide Compensation Policy (revised 12/11/2019), shelvers and the youth services aide are compensated on a step system and not eligible for COLA.

**Estimated by U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics July 2023 Report and the U.S. Federal CPI Inflation Calculator

13. Action: 2024 Lange Permanent Endowment Fund Request | 14. Action: 2024 Lange Permanent Endowment Fund Request | 15. Action: 2024 Proposed Library Budget and Tax Levy Request

Using the Lange Bequest Permanent Endowment Fund Request form, Director Gerber outlined the 2024 initiatives. These include past requests such as funding for Professional Development and Collection, Program, and Technology Enhancements. The significant change from past years is the request to fund Patron Access Enhancements which would cover the cost of making Shorewood a fine-free library.

Director Gerber is asking that the Board Directed Reserve Fund be used to replace three staff computers. When asked why she would not ask for more from this fund to purchase additional computers, Jen stated that she does not want to set a precedent that technology upgrades are funded by the enhanced budget. She believes technology is an essential service, not an enhancement.

Superintendent Burgos approved of this approach saying that technology, especially with the high rate of usage in the library, could be categorized as a utility and needs its own line item so that ongoing upgrades can be planned year to year.

Highlights from the proposed 2024 Budget- General Fund:

- The library is requesting a 1.7% increase in tax levy support from the Village in 2024.
- Salaries and wages include a 3.0% increase for COLA for all staff*; the additional 1.4% increase includes staff recognition pay for library staff members.
- Due to the 21.6% increase in county reciprocal borrowing revenue, and additional funds allocated to the Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) through the Governor's Biennial Budget, MCFLS is covering the cost of an additional \$11,000 in shared cataloging and e-Resource costs previously covered at the local level.
- In 2024 the General Fund Budget will allocate \$71,300 toward the collection development of books, periodicals, media, and digital resources. \$4,500 will be allocated toward programming for children, teens, and adults.

Additional items:

- Jen's request in the Memberships budget line will allow all staff have professional memberships and funding to attend conferences and continued education programs.
- E-books and digital materials may appear to have a decrease in funding, however, the budget is reduced in 2024 because that is the line from which Libby is historically paid. Libby is now covered by MCFLS so there is no reduction in digital material offerings.
- Professional Fees were not budgeted for historically, however in 2022 this line was used for legal fees. The 2023 budget that was prepared by the previous Director did include a budget for that line. Trustee Espera wondered if there should again be a budget for that line in 2024. Director Gerber thought that unnecessary. Legal consultation may be needed when renovation gets underway but there is no plan to move forward with the renovation in 2024.

Highlights from the proposed 2024 Budget- Enhanced Fund:

- The Enhanced Fund includes a generous 49.8% increase in annual donation from the Friends

of the Shorewood Public Library, an endowment made possible by the Lange Bequest, and individual patron donations.

- In 2024, the Enhanced Fund Budget will allocate \$82,843 for additional collection development of books, periodicals, media, and digital resources; \$17,950 will be allocated for additional programming for children, teens, and adults.
- In 2024, the Enhanced Fund will allocate \$7,610 for technology hardware and software enhancements.
- In 2024, the Enhanced Fund will allocate \$28,000 to make the Shorewood Library fine-free.

ACTION: Trustee Smucker moved to approve the proposed 2024 Enhanced Fund Budget, as presented, including the Lange Permanent Endowment Fund and the Lange Board Directed Reserve Fund requests. Motion seconded by Trustee Meng. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

ACTION: Trustee Espera moved to approve the proposed 2024 General Fund Budget, as submitted, including a request for \$963,366 in tax levy funds from the Village of Shorewood Board. Motion seconded by Trustee Smucker. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

14. [See above](#)

15. [See above](#)

16. [Informational: DPI Trustee Essentials: TE 15: The Library](#)

17. [Action: Authorize a Closed Session Library Board Special Meeting 9/18/2023](#)

ACTION: Trustee Smucker moved to authorize a closed session special meeting of the Library Board of Trustees on September 18, 2023 under the provisions of sec. 19.85(1)(c), Stats., for the purpose of discussing employment, promotion, compensation, and performance evaluation of employees Motion seconded by Trustee Meng. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

18. [Action: Authorize a Closed Session Library Board Personnel Committee Meeting, date TBD](#)

ACTION: Trustee Espera moved to authorize a closed session special meeting of the Library Board of Trustees on September 18, 2023 under the provisions of sec. 19.85(1)(c), Stats., for the purpose of discussing employment, promotion, compensation, and performance evaluation of employees. Motion seconded by Superintendent Burgos. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

19. [Communications](#)

None.

20. [Items for future consideration](#)

- Moving unspent GMF funds back from village and potential policy change
- Review of Library COVID-19 policy; possible change to "Public Emergency" Policy

21. [Adjourn:](#) Trustee Smucker motioned for adjournment; seconded by Trustee Meng. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:46 PM.

Minutes recorded by Angela Andre October 11, 2023.

Edited and amended with language from Halea Fields and Trustee Dimitroff on October 17, 2023