

UNICOI COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
January 25th, 2024

The Board of Trustees of the Unicoi County Public Library met January 25th, 2024, at the Unicoi County Public Library in Erwin, TN. Members present were President, Cathy Griffith, Vice President, Jan Bowden, Secretary, Andy Frazier, and members Stana Donnelly, Jenna Lafever and Gail Snodgrass. Treasurer, Shane O'Hare, was absent.

Also present were UCPL Director Morgan Olson, Holston River Regional Library Director Jennifer Breuer and UCPL Foundation Board member Travis Bishop.

- I. Call of meeting to order. Ms. Griffith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
- II. Public comment. None
- III. Approval of November 16th, 2023 meeting minutes. Upon the motion of Ms. Bowden, seconded by Ms. Snodgrass, the minutes of the November 16th, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.
- IV. Treasurer's report. Mr. O'Hare had submitted two reports on the November and December financial statements, since the Board did not meet in December. Ms. Griffith shared that total assets as of time of the report were \$77,948.21. Actual revenue YTD is \$157,790.99, expenditures YTD is \$102,164.50 and \$55,344.76 is what is in the bank. Ms. Griffith complimented Ms. Olson on doing a great job keeping things on track with the budget. Ms. Olson shared that even the few areas where we are over budget like copier expenses, we have corresponding income from fees that have been collected that offset those expenses.
 - a. Approval of November 2023 and December 2023 financial reports. Upon the motion of Mr. Frazier, seconded by Ms. Bowden, the November 2023 and December 2023 financial reports were both unanimously approved as submitted.
- V. Director's report. Ms. Olson jumped right into the biggest topic on everyone's mind and gave some updates on the devastating incident that took place at the library on January 18th. A sprinkler system leak in the ceiling above the children's collection room caused devastating water damage and losses to that part of the building including nearly all the items contained within it. The staff worked very hard to begin the cleanup process, save what they could and inventory the items that were lost, which totaled 2,748 books.

Ms. Olson also mentioned that several people from the Johnson City Public Library, including former UCPL Director Suzy Bomgardner, reached out and offered help almost immediately. A group from that library came by with several book carts that have been very helpful in making it possible to move the children's resources that were not damaged to the main lobby so they can remain available to patrons.

A \$10,000 deductible for insurance will need to be paid before additional funds will be available to begin replacing what was lost. Insurance will not cover the cost of some of the necessary costs, like repairing the sprinkler system. Only the Unicoi County Commission has

approved providing an additional \$5,000 of funds to assist, though the Town of Erwin and Town of Unicoi may also be able to help. The community has responded very quickly and generously, and an estimated \$26,000 of donations have either come in or been committed to as of the time of the meeting. Several people have also expressed interest in donating books or purchasing replacements from our Amazon Wish List, but at this time with limited space we are not able to easily store items, so financial donations remain the most helpful.

Ms. Griffith complimented Ms. Olson for her excellent leadership through the crisis, and the Board appreciated the hard work and flexibility of the staff for their tremendous efforts. Ms. Snodgrass had some additional questions and suggestions related to the sprinkler system and various Board members discussed some possible options for the future as we work toward making the space safe enough to use again in the future.

VI. Holston River Regional Library Report. Ms. Breuer also shared some compliments to Ms. Olson and the library staff for their response to the crisis. Both she and the regional library are happy to provide any support they can. Ms. Breuer mentioned that there is a Construction Grant that might be available from the state that we can investigate as an option for some of the repairs. She also recommends making a point to continue reaching out to local media to communicate what is going on as well as expressing public thanks to supporters. Ms. Breuer also shared a couple of quick updates about programs the regional library is offering. Selena Harmon is leading a workshop called, "Talk Amongst Your Shelves," in the near future that has been well attended in the past.

VII. President's Report.

Ms. Griffith had no additional report beyond what Ms. Olson shared in her report and what she can share from the upcoming foundation reports.

VIII. Toney Foundation report. Ms. Griffith shared some updates on how the upcoming process with building repairs and insurance will work. Since the Toney Board is responsible for the building and holds the insurance policy, funds being donated to UCPL or the UCPL Foundation that are designated for that purpose will need to be transferred to them. This again highlights the confusion created by the multiple Boards that are responsible for different parts of the library but since the Toney Board is also a 501c3 organization, everything will remain tax exempt.

Ms. Griffith also mentioned that the insurance company has been great to work with so far in the process, but with a significant claim like this our future rates will almost certainly go up significantly. The Toney Board was already very limited with funding in the past so this will be a big challenge in the future. Ms. Snodgrass shared that she had heard some feedback from people in the community wondering why the insurance deductible was so high at \$10,000. Ms. Griffith explained that it was the best that the Toney Board could do at the time to provide the most coverage, based on limited funds that were available at the time when the insurance decisions were made.

IX. Unicoi County Public Library Foundation report. Mr. Bishop shared some updates from the UCPL Foundation, reporting that they currently have approximately \$312,000 in total assets. The annual fundraising letter campaign has gone well, raising around \$11,000 so far. The

foundation has already given UCPL \$20,000 of the annual budgeted funds so far, with the remaining \$20,000 planned to come later. The current returns they are seeing on investments are still not high enough to sustainably continue giving even just \$20,000 per year without using up some of the principle. It remains a priority to the UCPL Foundation to try to increase funding from other sources, so we do not deplete all the foundation's assets.

X. Old Business. None

XI. New Business.

A. Additional discussion of damages to the library.

Ms. Griffith mentioned a couple of other items not previously covered related to the building. In the cleanup process, she learned that it may be possible to move and preserve the package scale that was in the Children's area without affecting the historic status of the building. The scale may need to remain on site somewhere, but it could possibly be displayed outside, allowing more space in the future renovations of the Children's room. Ms. Griffith also mentioned that there appears to be some wind damage to the roof after some recent storms that we will have to address in the future. The historic status of the building also plays a role in how that can be repaired and who is available to do the work.

XII. Board comments. None

XIII. Adjournment. Upon the motion of Ms. Donnelly, seconded by Ms. Bowden, all agree to adjourn the meeting at 6:53pm. The next meeting will be Thursday, February 22nd, 2024 at 6:00pm at UCPL.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Frazier', written in a cursive style.

Andy Frazier, Secretary