

# PORTAGE DISTRICT LIBRARY BOARD

Special Board Meeting held on

**Tuesday, November 17, 2020**

via Zoom at 6:00 PM

## I. Start of Meeting

## II. Roll Call

Board Chair Welsh reminded trustees of the new requirement for virtual meetings. Board members must now state their full name and where they are currently attending the virtual meeting from.

### *Board Members Present:*

Hello, Carol Bale here and I am participating virtually from my home in Portage, MI.

This is Michele Behr and I am attending virtually from my home in Portage, MI.

Hi, this is Jeanne Friedman and I am participating virtually from my home in Portage, MI

Hi, Cara Terry and I am participating virtually from my home in Clermont, Florida.

I'm Tom Welsh and I am also participating virtually from my home in Portage, MI.

*Board Members Absent:* Donna VanderVries (*excused*), Ted Vliek (*excused*)

*Library Staff Present:* Library Director Christy Klien, Rolfe Behrje, Quyen Edwards, Rob Foti, Lawrence Kapture, Doran Lefaive, Olivia Pennebaker, Abby Pylar, Andrea Smalley, Rachel Stickney, Colin Whitehurst, and Laura Wright

*Guests Present:* Ken Baker, Tom Vance, and Linda Whitlock

## III. Comments or Requests from the Public, Board Members, or Library Staff

Library Board Chair Welsh welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened the floor to comments from staff or attendees.

### A.) Comment from Kenneth Baker – Mr. Baker asked for clarification regarding the purpose of the meeting.

Board Chair Welsh said that purpose of the meeting is to discuss how the library has temporarily closed the building and moved to curbside service only. They need Board action to continue that service model long term.

### B.) Comment from Library Director Klien – Klien said that she was contact by a patron with a comment about the library building closure. The patron wished to respectfully disagree with the building closure as the new order from the Michigan DHHS did not directly impact libraries directly. She asked for the metrics the library used to make the decision, which Klien shared and emphasized that we did not make this decision lightly. The patron was not able to attend tonight's meeting, but asked to have their opinion expressed.

### C.) Comment from Trustee Friedman – Trustee Friedman asked if the library is impacted by the limit of 25 people for indoor gatherings. Klien responded that the library has been operating under a guideline of 50% capacity. Under the new orders from MDHHS, the guideline has been lowered to 30%.

## IV. Adoption of the Agenda for the Special Meeting of November 17, 2020

Library Board Chair Welsh asked if there were any changes needed to the brief agenda for the November 17, 2020 special board meeting before its adoption. None were requested. Welsh asked for a motion to adopt the agenda.

PORTAGE DISTRICT LIBRARY  
Agenda for the Regular Library Board Meeting

MOTION: It was moved by Trustee Behr and supported by Trustee Bale that the Library Board adopt the agenda for the special meeting of November 17, 2020. Roll Call Vote: Bale – yes, Behr - yes, Friedman - yes, Terry - yes, Welsh – yes. 5-Yes, 0-No, 2-Absent (VanderVries, Vliet). Motion carried.

V. Governance

A. Discussion regarding Library Service During a Rise in COVID-19 Cases in Kalamazoo County

Board Chair Welsh asked Library Director Klien to give an update on the events that have led to this special meeting tonight. Klien said that she has been watching the COVID-19 cases rising in our county. Over the last two weeks, our Library Administration Team has met to discuss what they felt were the appropriate metrics to use to consider taking a step back and returning to curbside service only. It was decided we would be looking for 1.) a MDHHS ordered closure, 2.) a continuous increase in reported cases in our county, 3) staffing availability due to illness and/or quarantine, and/or 4.) conversations and coordination with the other libraries in our area regarding their plans. Klien said she was also having conversations with Board Chair Welsh to gauge his opinion before knowing about any change in orders from the health department.

Klien said that Kalamazoo Public Library announced that they would be closing their building on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> for a week to prepare for curbside service (which they had not implemented during the previous closure). On Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup> Klien and Admin staff watched the press conference featuring the Governor and the MDHHS Director who announced the orders for stepping back throughout the state. Klien said that she met virtually that night with the Admin Team following the announcement to discuss what the library should do and the group was in agreement that the library should close the building and go back to curbside service only for the safety of staff and patrons. Library Director Klien was in contact with Board Chair Welsh. He had the strong opinion that the building should not be closed to the public without some notice to patrons.

Klien said her one concern was, and continues to be, the lack of computer access which is a hardship for some in the community. Staff are brainstorming and testing ways that we can make computer access for the public possible while the building is closed. There is wireless internet access available from the parking lot for those who have their own devices.

Klien said trustees should be aware of a few other factors. Portage Public Schools have pivoted to virtual learning for all students for a three-week period, slated to last until Dec. 9. Many other libraries in the community have also made the decision to close to the public. The Michigan Library Association is encouraging libraries to voluntarily step back services to protect staff and patrons.

Board Chair Welsh asked Trustee Michele Behr (who is a librarian at Western Michigan University) what the plan is for Waldo Library. Behr said they are restricted to a capacity of 70 in the building which is only open to students and staff and not to the community. WMU already had plans for all classes going virtual. Behr said that they aren't changing any of the policies at WMU at this time because students are already going home and those that are in the library have to sit individually and wear a mask, so it isn't a place where people linger like they have in the past.

Klien said that starting today, the library has increased the number of curbside appointments and staff is doing their best to facilitate excellent customer service. We have staff in the building answering calls at all the public service desks and all the regular operating systems for quarantining materials, checking them in, and reshelving are continuing.

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## Agenda for the Regular Library Board Meeting

Trustee Bale asked what remote computer usage might look like for patrons. Klien said that staff are working on a way to check out laptops and hotspots to vehicles via curbside service. These laptops would also have remote print capabilities. Staff could deliver prints via curbside service as well. We would be using different sets of laptops for each time period so that they can be sanitized and charged between uses. Computer assistance will be a struggle, but we want to take steps to try to provide as much service as we can. Klien said we hope to have up to eight laptop computers available. They need to be reconfigured and some testing will take place tomorrow. Klien said that if everything works as expected, we could start this service as early as next week. We have been taking contact information for patrons who expressed an interest in computer access.

Trustee Behr said she had a few questions. She wondered how long the curbside computer loan period would be? Klien responded that we would start with 1 hour, which is what the time limit was for patrons using computers in the building. Behr wanted to know approximately how many people were in the building on average. Klien said that it varied from time of day to day of the week, but roughly 40 patrons plus staff are in the building at any given time. Staff at the Greeter Station were keeping track of the number of patrons in the building every half hour. Klien said that, for the most part, patron visits were only 10-15 minutes to grab their holds and browse the new materials. Individuals using the computers were in the building around 60 minutes and families with children would stay around 30 minutes.

Behr asked about the number of staff required to be in the building for curbside services and Klien responded that it is approximately the same as when we are open, but some are now performing different functions. The staff at the Checkout Desk will be moved to curbside. Adult and Youth Information Desks and shelvers will be answering the phones, pulling holds and taking them to curbside, and reshelving. Business Services staff will remain in the building as a large portion of their work can't be done at home. Klien stressed, however, that any work that can be done from home will be done from home.

Klien shared that several staff members expressed concern about having public in the building for increased exposure. They have a concern for their safety and Klien takes that very seriously. There are some staff who were not happy about the building being open to the public on Monday.

Trustee Behr said that in this situation it feels like there are no good choices. There is not a way to make everyone happy. Trustee Terry said she had the opportunity to come back in the building and volunteer doing scanning and she chose not to due to the added exposure to the public. She acknowledged the feelings of staff who have concern for their health and safety at this time.

Trustees wanted to know if mask compliance was an issue in the library. Klien said that the vast majority of patrons have been compliant, but we have had incidents of people who were not and have caused a difficult scene with staff. There are also ongoing issues of people not wearing their masks correctly over their nose and people pulling them down after they have passed the Greeter Station.

Board Chair Welsh shared again that he felt that the community needed at least one day notice before the building closure. He apologized if the staff felt uncomfortable with that decision.

With no further discussion, Library Director Klien requested that the Library Board allow the building closure and curbside service only to continue. The MDHHS order goes through Wednesday, December 9, 2020 and she asked that the Board keep the building closure in place until the next Board meeting on Monday, December 14, at which time they can reconsider depending on what new information is available.

PORTAGE DISTRICT LIBRARY  
Agenda for the Regular Library Board Meeting

MOTION: It was moved by Trustee Terry and supported by Trustee Bale that the Library Board support the closure of the Library building and for staff to provide curbside service only until Monday, December 14, 2020. Roll Call Vote: Bale – yes, Behr - yes, Friedman - yes, Terry - yes, Welsh – yes. 5-Yes, 0-No, 2-Absent (VanderVries, Vliek). Motion carried.

VI. Assessment of Meeting and Additional Comments

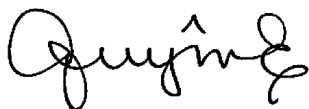
- A.) Board Chair Welsh reminded trustees to turn in the library director evaluations by November 20<sup>th</sup>.
- B.) Trustee Bale asked if there would be work related to the renovation project inside the library building at this time. Klien said there would be no work done on the building until 2021. The staff Building Committee will be meeting virtually with the architect and interior designer at C2AE to discuss offsite floor layout tomorrow (November 18) and Friday (November 20). Klien said that no contract has been signed yet, but she hopes to have a letter of intent before the next board meeting.
- C.) Library Director Klien said that there are still no official results for the Library Board election. Library Board Secretary Edwards said that she has been in contact with the City Clerk and that they are still waiting for the Canvass of Votes to be completed. It takes time for them to go through the write-in votes as they are handwritten and must be individually certified. Edwards said she would be in touch as soon as she has information to share.
- D.) Tom Vance wished the group a Happy Thanksgiving.

VII. Adjournment

Library Board Chair Welsh said if there was no further business to be considered, that he would adjourn the special board meeting of November 17, 2020.

DISPOSITION: The special board meeting of November 17, 2020 was adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Recorded and Transcribed by,



Quyen Edwards  
Library Board Secretary