

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY & INFORMATION CENTER

## MINUTES LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

In order to comply with the N. C. Governor's Executive Order 121, Section 3.A.a., this meeting was available to the public and media live via the Cumberland County website (co.cumberland.nc.us), Facebook page (facebook.com/CumberlandNC). Staff entered and exited meeting room 564 (County Courthouse) so no more than ten people were gathered at the same time in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order.

County Administration staff present in room 564: Assistant County Manager Sally Shutt, PIO and IT staff  
Library staff present in room 564: Interim Library Director Cotina Jones, Programs & Services Division Manager Nora Armstrong and Youth Services Division Manager Elzena Anderson

Trustees present in the Boardroom at Headquarters library: Chair Belinda Wilkerson, Dennis Cedzo and Brian Tyler

Trustee absent: Ann McRae

Staff present in the Headquarters library Boardroom: Admin. Coordinator to the Director Marili Melchionne

Trustees present via GoToMeeting video conference: Vice Chair Irene Grimes, Jeremy Fiebig and Katrina Tiffany

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wilkerson called the regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees to order at 9:05 a.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020 in the Boardroom at the Headquarters library.

- A. Introduction of Special Guest Friends of the Library West Branch Representative Debra Melvin** – Chair Wilkerson welcomed special guest Debra Melvin. She let the group know that the last Friends meeting was in September and that the November books sales have been cancelled so revenue is not coming in. We are still trying to be effective in supporting the work of the library.

### II. APPROVAL OF TODAY'S MEETING AGENDA

**MOTION:** Chair Wilkerson moved to approve today's meeting agenda.

**SECOND:** Trustee Tyler seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

### III. APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 18, 2020 REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**MOTION:** Chair Wilkerson moved to approve the June 18, 2020 minutes.

**SECOND:** Trustee Tiffany seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

### IV. INTERIM LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- A. Introduction of new and newly promoted Librarian staff:** Interim Library Director Cotina Jones introduced Katherine Waltz as the new YS Librarian I at Headquarters. Jones also recognized newly promoted IS Librarian I Joselyn Williams at Bordeaux library.

**B. Interim Library Director's Update:**

**1. Virtual Learning Centers (VLCs):**

You all have heard a lot about our virtual learning centers that are coming and I wanted to give you an update. As of the first survey that went out, there are just over 250 parents that have 262 children that are interested in participating. As of yesterday afternoon, a second survey was sent out to ascertain more interest and to see how many of the 262 plan on attending or will there be more than 262 participants. On Tuesday September 15 we went to Robeson County library to learn about their learning centers. The visit was helpful because we saw that they have their meals provided by their school system. Parks and Rec are the ones doing theirs.

For our VLCs we are looking to have the school system provide lunches and snacks to the attendees. We are also looking at having some of the school system employees come over and assist us.

**2. Arts Council Grant received:**

The library received the 2021 Storytelling Festival grant for \$3,300. Hopefully we will be able to go back to in-person programming by then but if not I am confident that YS Division Manager Elzena Anderson will be able to pull off a virtual Storytelling Festival.

**3. Virtual Programs:**

We continue to provide virtual programming but now we're taking it to Facebook and the library's YouTube channel. Programs include:

- ✓ Preschool Storytime
- ✓ Crafts around the house
- ✓ Creating Wreaths around the house
- ✓ Librari-Con

**4. Curbside Service:**

Curbside service continues and pictures were shown of younger customers happy to receive their items. Another child held his "I Love my Library" bag out of the car window showing that he loves his library.

**5. Staff Service Awards:**

Service awards continue to be passed out to staff acknowledging our long term employees.

**6. School Busses Offers Internet Access:**

The library is working with Cumberland County schools by having school busses that offer internet access park in five library parking lots so students can do their remote learning.

**7. Community Resources For Those In Need (CRFTN) pamphlets distributed:**

Library Awareness Coordinator Traci Cardenas continues to distribute CRFTNs to various agencies.

**8. Summer Reading Program Prizes:**

The library recently wrapped up Summer Reading and the prizes were well received.

**9. Outside Book Drops and Acrylic Desk Guards:**

The new outside book drops are here and are at all locations. Also, acrylic desk guards have arrived and will be installed before the library re-opens.

**Questions/Discussion (transcribed verbatim):**

**Trustee Brian Tyler** – Cotina, do we have any indication as to when the library will open to the public?

**Interim Library Director Cotina Jones** – We do not have any indication at this time. County Administration has our re-opening plan and right now the County Manager has stated that she is not comfortable with the idea of opening libraries to the public because we are so heavily used. They want to protect the staff and our customers as much as possible.

**Tyler:** Is it fair to say that we are closed to the public indefinitely?

**Jones:** Yes, unfortunately.

**Tyler:** The virtual learning centers, as I understand it, will have children visiting our facilities even though it's called "virtual?"

**Jones:** Yes.

**Vice Chair Irene Grimes:** You know there was an article in the *Fayetteville Observer* a couple weeks ago. There are a lot of comments on social media about how we are justifying the virtual learning centers while catering only to children of Cumberland County employees. Because we are a tax payer funded activity, we pride ourselves in being open to everyone. There were a lot of questions about that and to be honest with you I'm not an attorney, I'm not a policy person so I don't know how to answer that.

**Jones:** Ok, one way to look at it is that while we are an essential service, we are not a county mandated service. So it is our role at this point, since we are a facility still in a state of emergency, to step up and assist those county mandated departments. There are quite a few county mandated departments where their staff have not been able to come to work because they have been at home with their children doing remote learning. That is where the library comes into play. When they come in, they would be heavily social distanced with masks in place and everything. It would not be the traditional library use per se but we would still be getting some use and adding value to the county and the community.

**Grimes:** I'm one of these people that happens to think that you all have value regardless of whether you are open to the public or closed. I don't think everybody understands that you all do a lot of stuff that doesn't necessarily involve people walking in the door. I'm trying to view this from both perspectives of the county. On the other hand, I also want to be an advocate for library staff and am concerned about what potential danger we're putting library staff in. Because not every parent of children that will attend will be as vigilant at home with their masking and hand washing. We all know what's out there and all the rumors going around.

My next question would be, is staff volunteering to participate, are they mandated and how are we handling staff that may be in a high-risk group?

**Jones:** The County Manager has said that the staff will be doing this. If they are in a high-risk population, they can do other things within the library. Because as it stands now, we are still doing curbside service, we are still providing telephone reference services.

**Grimes:** That was one of my points that you all are not sitting on your duffs.

**Jeremy Fiebig:** I have a follow-up question. So we have 260 potential students coming into the buildings, do we have a sense about how those are going to be divided up among the branches?

**Jones:** Yes we do. That is a plan that has been sent to County Management. We have met with the task force and shared the plans so that we can ensure that we are within the guidelines of being socially distanced but have a good amount of children at each branch.

**Tyler:** If I may, as a point of order here. Cotina, I'm sorry, this is your presentation and you've obviously hit on an issue that your trustees are concerned about and I think have a lot of questions. Madame Chair, I don't know how far you want to take this discussion or if you want to do this right now. There's no motion on the floor and I'm not even sure – I presume that you will need the trustees approval on this new programming at some point? Maybe not, but I'm not sure how we should proceed here because I have a lot of follow-up questions too. Perhaps we should move to table it at this point. I just want to recognize that we have a lot of questions.

**Chair Belinda Wilkerson:** On Brian Tyler's recommendation, I think we should table this discussion and we'll discuss it further as we learn more about the virtual learning centers.

**Fiebig:** I'm sorry, I agree with tabling the discussion to later in this conversation, but I would not want to wait another month to deal with these issues after the program is already implemented.

**Grimes:** I agree with Jeremy.

**Wilkerson:** Ok, we'll put that under new business.

**Fiebig:** Ok, thank you.

## V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Recommendation from the Trustee Nominating Committee – Nominating Committee Chair Brian Tyler:** On July 16<sup>th</sup> the nominating committee met to review candidates for the seat that I will be vacating at the end of this year. The committee recommends candidate Pamela Story. We are asking the commissioners to approve her first term from 2021-2023. Her appointment was approved unanimously by all members of the committee.

Also, Dennis Cedzo is currently serving the last year of Paige Ross's second term and is eligible for two additional three-year terms. Cedzo is interested in being reappointed and the committee agreed to reappoint him to his first official term from 2021-2023.

Tyler asked for any questions and shared that Ms. Story is well qualified. She knows many commissioners and trustees, and is excited to be appointed to this board. I also confirmed with Mr. Cedzo and he is also excited to be reappointed.

**MOTION:** Committee Chair Tyler made a motion to accept the committee's recommendations.

**SECOND:** Trustee Tiffany seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

**B. Review of FY 2020 Library Goals & Accomplishments Statistical Report – Interim Library Director Cotina Jones:**

Jones shared that the library has had an interesting year. We recently completed year five of our five year plan and we were on track to meet our goals and objectives for FY 20 until COVID-19. Jones listed several of the activities, programs and resources which addressed the library's goals and accomplishments.

**Goal 1, Objective 1.1: Provide access to information to evaluate issues.** Assistance has been a big thing this year and some of our libraries had programs related to the Census. Jones shared the titles of displays created at different branches which meets the objective.

**Objective 1.2: Provide electronic or print resources per quarter related to world, state or local issues.**

Jones shared a sample of the guides that were produced.

**Goal 2, Objective 2.1: Each year, the library will increase the average publication date of the collection on a pre-selected topic by three years.** This year the selection was on alternative health and nutrition. The adult collection was improved by four years with the average publication date of 2016. The juvenile and non-fiction collection was improved by three years with a new average publication date of 2015.

**Objective 2.2: The library's Employment and Small Business Task Force will meet quarterly to evaluate and make recommendations related to the library's economic development initiatives.** The task force did meet and the subjects were Money Wise Boot Camp and Job Seeker's Café.

**Objective 2.3: Annually, the library will meet a target (set by the library director) for the percentage of customers who attend computer skills training, jobs/career classes, and Book-A-Librarian sessions on employment related topics to state that their skills have improved.** This was not met for numerous reasons. COVID-19 closure and we also transitioned to an updated StaffNet so we do not have that information.

**Goal 3, Objective 3.1: Annually, all library staff responsible for programming and services will meet to ensure that these reflect the needs of our diverse community.** A sample of the programs include Senior Geek Squad/Crafting My Way (in Godwin) which is a program for disabled adults and children.

**Goal 4, Objective 4.1: Annually, the library will meet a target (set by the library director) of customers surveyed who will indicate satisfaction with customer service, safety, and the state of library facilities.** Because of the pandemic we were not able to complete the survey. Normally the survey would go out in June and the data would be accumulated and ready for presentation this month.

**Goal 5, Objective 5.3: On an ongoing basis, the Innovation Review Team will explore new ideas for technology, programs and services, and will make recommendations for their adoption and implementation by the library.** This year we added *Freegal* as a new service and I understand that it is heavily used, especially with the library being closed.

**Goal 6: Support and encourage lifelong literacy and creative expression.** We did programming and again because of COVID-19, we missed the mark on that. Normally we would have said at least equal to the FY16 levels, which was 3,202.

**C. 2020 Adult and Youth Summer Reading Program Reports – P & S Division Manager Nora Armstrong and YS Division Manager Elzena Anderson:**

Youth Services Division Manager Elzena Anderson delivered a statistical summary of the YS 2020 Summer Reading Program. "Imagine Your Story" was the theme this year. Due to the pandemic, prizes and reading logs were picked up curbside. 1,225 kids participated this year with a total of 665,340 minutes read and 8,565 books circulated.

Ten virtual programs were presented for kids and a 2,555 teens participated in the Summer Reading Program with a total of 124,980 minutes read and 1,135 books circulated. Three teen programs were presented with a total attendance of 183. Participation was half of what it was last year due to COVID-19 and the libraries being closed no doubt had an effect on the numbers this year.

Programs & Services Division Manager Nora Armstrong reported that while numbers were down this year due to COVID-19, 367 people still managed to complete the adult summer reading program, whose theme was "Imagine Your Story." Participants read a total of 2,575 titles. Each branch selected a winner for its creativity kit, a prize package comprised of an artist's kit with drawing paper, a leather-bound journal with fountain pen, and a guide to writing memoirs. One winner was selected system-wide for the grand prize of a \$50 Amazon gift card. Armstrong thanked the Friends of the Library for their continued support of the SRP and library programs year-round.

**D. Approval of the FY 2021 Library Endowment Trust and Library Endowment Fund, Cumberland County, NC Disbursements – Chair Belinda Wilkerson:**

Wilkerson read the details of the annual disbursements from Cumberland Community Foundation (CCF) to the Friends of the Library: LET: \$28,420 and the LEFCCNC: \$2,760.

**MOTION:** Trustee Tyler made a motion to accept the annual disbursements from CCF.

**SECOND:** Trustee Dennis Cedzo.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

**E. Trustee Annual Donation to Library Endowment Fund – Chair Belinda Wilkerson:**

Wilkerson reminded the trustees about the annual obligation of being a Trustee is to donate to the Library Endowment Fund, North Carolina so that the board can report that it is a 100% giving board. Wilkerson also let the group know that the Friends will match their donations up to \$25,000. Also, something new this year may make board members want to wait to make their donation. The annual "Giving Tuesday" will take place and donations received between November 24 and December 3, 2020 will be matched (up to \$100,000) for donations received by CCF during that time. The minimum donation is \$25 and the checks will need to be made out to CCF with "LEF" in the memo. There is also an option to donate online.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Proposed 2021 Schedule of Dates the Libraries will be Closed – Interim Library Director Cotina Jones**

No discussion was needed.

**MOTION:** Trustee Tyler moved to accept the holiday schedule for 2021.

**SECOND:** Trustee Tiffany seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

**B. Other Business:**

Chair Wilkerson stated that the Virtual Learning Center (VLC) discussion could continue and she asked that the discussion be kept to 15 minutes and if there is a need to go beyond that, there would need to be a motion on the floor to continue. (Comments below were transcribed verbatim.)

**Trustee Brian Tyler:** We have a couple issues here. As trustees we are an advisory board so technically Cotina, you really don't need our approval although obviously if you want to move forward with this, I think you should have our support because we do advise. One of our jobs is to advise you in how to proceed with policies and programming. Nonetheless, your trustees are very concerned about this.

I personally would like to congratulate you on all the efforts you are making in this because you must be relevant today, I do agree with that. Sally I'm sure you can simply confirm that our county is running probably in a deficit, who knows how much but I'm sure we have a severe deficit because of COVID-19; would that be fair to say?

**Assistant County Manager Sally Shutt:** Thank you so much for the chance to speak to that. Yes, our mandated departments have several county employees who are having to be at home with their children. It has affected Child Support, Human Services, Health Department, Tax Administration and other departments.

This plan for the Virtual Learning Center (VLC) was presented to the Board of Commissioners, it was discussed with them and they came to a consensus about moving forward. As you stated, your role as the Library Board of Trustees is in an advisory capacity.

Cotina and our work group – now that work group includes not only the library but it also includes DSS, representatives from the health department, county management, our information services have been working on this plan. We looked at models across the state – this is not only Cumberland County that's being affected. As you can imagine that county governments across the state are facing the same issues with their services and have employees out as well. They are successfully running Virtual Learning Centers in other counties and we looked at those.

We are working to partner with the school system and we're having those discussions. They will be providing staffing at the centers, as well as meals and snacks. Yesterday we sent our employees to get another idea. You asked the question about the numbers; we did an initial survey and yesterday we sent out an application to get additional responses because we found that many employees were on leave and did not access their work email and maybe didn't get the information about the earlier survey.

We hope by Monday to have a greater idea of the actual numbers of children and it is for grades K thru 8.

**Vice Chair Irene Grimes:** Sally from what you just said, I'm getting the impression that the libraries are providing the space and the staffing will be done by somebody else, or am I misunderstanding?

**Shutt:** Thank you for asking, Irene, they will be providing the facilities and staffing but the staffing will also include school staff who will come in and we're working on that partnership now. But library staff and Cotina and the group have been working – there will be drop off, there will be times the children will be spread out of course and they devised a well coordinated plan. They'll have instruction in the morning and then a time for lunch and then there will be time in the afternoon after they've completed their virtual learning – things that they are required to do through the schools; there will be time to do that additional program.

It may be library programs, it may be having folks from our cooperative extension in the 4H program. The schools will provide through to 5:00 they have other employees in the school system to assist in supplemental library staff...library staff will be working with the program as well. It's a great opportunity to be doing and sharing what services and programming will be provided, but I imagine our health educators could come in and also do some programming.

**Tyler:** So the proverbial train has already left the station, do I understand that? The commissioners have already moved forward with this, is that correct?

**Shutt:** They provided a consensus for county management to move forward in the planning and execution of the Virtual Learning Centers.

**Tyler:** So all we can do now is pretty much state our opinions. I have to say personally, I oppose the discriminatory type of use of this. The reason I brought up the budget is because I'm very concerned, I know what's coming down the road for the library and it's going to be cuts, cuts and cuts. We always go to the library when the county is short. We're going to be really short of money very soon. So I think the library is in a very difficult position because while we are making ourselves relevant we're only making ourselves relevant to county employees. There are so many residents in the county like me, I still work, I'm an essential employee but if I had children I would not be included in this and that's just my concern.

What's behind all this is I'm just truly fundamentally concerned for our library and I just don't know the answer for sure but you're right, we have to make ourselves relevant. I think the bigger question is – a bigger problem is coming. With that I'll just rest.

**Shutt:** If I may, the Commissioners, on September 10, approved the plan for the county funding plan for the Corona Virus Relief Funding that the county has received. Within that, they have allocated \$250,000 for Virtual Learning Centers that would be community based. The team is working to get a request for proposal to go out for that. So there is great interest in being able to offer support for community based organizations that do Virtual Learning Centers for the public.

A priority for Cumberland County Government is the execution of our mandated services and in order to do that for all the public, our health department, social services, as I stated before, is to assist our employees so that they can come in and do their job and that our county services are not interrupted.

**Grimes:** I'm very concerned about several things: Library staff are not educators nor are they child care providers. Just like I don't ask my plumber to make my wedding cake or my electrician to fix my toilet, I'm concerned about the clashing of skills. Not all children are angels, we know that, there's going to be situations that come up where librarians might not be trained or equipped to handle some of these situations. Even though there will be school staff, which I think is great, I'm very concerned, very, very concerned. I also recognize that I or anyone in the library has a choice in the matter, that became very clear in our discussion.

I know that nobody needs our approval but I just want to reiterate how concerned I am about this.

**Tyler:** Jeremy, what do you think, being in education?

**Trustee Jeremy Fiebig:** I think it is really dangerous to be honest with you, to be proving our worth as a library this way. For some of the reasons you said, Brian. It tells me everything I need to know that a bunch of commissioners and whoever else is involved, would think of the library as an institution that does not have enough worth on its own that it must be sort of coopted in this way.

The school system is the logical choice for what we are doing here, for what the ask is. They have the facilities, they have the staff, they are trained, that is the answer in my view. But setting that aside for a moment because I do think the train has left the station; I would want the folks who can have an impact on this to hear that I would want a very healthy understanding of how at-risk people could opt out or opt to work where they are not exposed and I'm assuming but in case my assumption is wrong, I would want to hear the plan for dealing with outbreaks, contact tracing and all of that. Should we have an outbreak, I'm sure there is one, I would just love to be informed about it at some point.

The last piece and I understand very well that every organization is going through this at this point. But there is a true cost here. A human resource cost with regard to morale. I understand fully what it means to be a parent of school children at this time and the resources that it takes and the cost in terms of lost productivity. So I get the county's calculation on a deep level. But it is coming at a cost to staff morale and we need to have a plan for addressing that. If we do not, we are putting all of the "essential" folks and the county government...boosting their morale at the cost of our librarians who are not trained to do this.

I get that we are in an emergency and I do think there is some value here. The thing that I am most interested in is the number of people, the number of students that are going to appear at a branch and the exposure there. So I'm glad that you have a plan where that can be managed very well, but I don't like the message here, I don't like it at all. I thought when we were discussing it briefly through email earlier in the month, it seemed like a smaller scale thing. If I were voting on this, my vote would be a qualified no that I hope could be made yes by some of the county management's responses. Thank you.

**Tyler:** Jeremy, thank you for that. I'm also very disappointed where this is at. I think we've lost our focus that if we are opening our doors we need to open our doors differently. We need to open our doors to the public. I'm very disappointed.

**Shutt:** If I may address that, our numbers are not so that any of our departments are open to the public right now. We are still closed except for the health department, our other departments are working with the public through email, appointment based services.

**Tyler:** But Sally, there is nothing in place, we are closed indefinitely at this point so I think we are just....

**Shutt:** And sir we do not have a date when county departments will open, there is not a timeline yet for that.

**Tyler:** I appreciate that.

**Shutt:** I would also like to add that you realize that there are library employees who will have the opportunity to use the virtual learning center so that they may continue to work because their leave may be depleted as well. It's not just county employees from other departments, there are library employees who will benefit by having their children participate so they can report to work.

**Fiebig:** I think that is great, all I am interested in is hearing that our employees have a choice at least with regard to their health about how to engage this initiative.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to discuss, Chair Wilkerson adjourned the meeting at 10:04 a.m.