

CLINTON-ESSEX-FRANKLIN LIBRARY SYSTEM
Minutes for Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Held July 27, 2020

Call to Order

The Board of Trustees meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, July 27, 2020, at Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System, 33 Oak Street, Plattsburgh, New York, by Mary “Lisa” Minnich, President. Due to the Corona Virus Pandemic, Mary “Lisa” Minnich physically attended at CEFLS while the other members of the Board of Trustees attended online via Zoom.

Roll Call

Present at CEFLS: Mary “Lisa” Minnich

Present via Zoom: Mary Abendroth (entered at 4:54 p.m.), Nicole “Nicky” Bryant, Linda Crosby, Liz DeFonce, Chris Drennan, Margot Gold, Dorothy Latta, Gayla LePage, Tom Mandeville, Scott McDonald, Steve Novacich Darcy Purick and Tim Rowland (entered at 4:53 p.m.)

Excused Absences: Andrew Lomanto

Staff Present at CEFLS: Steve Kenworthy, Director; Michael Spofford, Finance Manager; and Dawn Recore, Administrative Assistant

Staff Present via Zoom: David Fuller, Library Computer Specialist and Anja Bouchard, Library Consultant

Consent Agenda

Margot Gold motioned approval of Consent Agenda, seconded by Gayla LePage. Consent agenda includes:

- Approval of absences
- Approval of today’s agenda
- Approval of the minutes of the June 22, 2020 meeting
- Committees for which there are no reports at this time: Advocacy, Executive, Finance, Health Plan, Negotiating, Nominating, Personnel and Property

Consent agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Communications

There were no communications.

President's Remarks

Lisa Minnich encouraged participation in the Board's Leadership Fund.

Due to a desire to better understand fiduciary responsibilities on the part of several trustees, Lisa announced that Michael Spofford would use this time to present a short lesson on a typical CEFLS balance sheet. He explained many terms, such as current assets, accounts receivable, prepaid expenses, fixed assets, investments, collections, liabilities, compensated leave, equity and reserves. He gave examples of each and fielded questions. The lesson was well received and he will provide another short lesson at a future meeting.

Plattsburgh Public Library Report

Anne de la Chappelle, Director at Plattsburgh Public Library (PPL), was not present but provided a brief written report. Steve Kenworthy reported for her that since March Anne and her assistant have been the only staff working at PPL. They have been providing curbside service. The other employees have been furloughed. They will be returning to work on Friday, July 31.

Director's Report

Steve Kenworthy reported that he will provide training on Sexual Harassment Prevention in August. All staff of CEFLS and member libraries, and all trustees of CEFLS and member libraries, must take this training yearly. The training will be offered virtually via Zoom, as well as live in the Board room at CEFLS as space permits. He will also provide a link to the online course offered by New York City. Whichever way people take the course, they must obtain a certificate of completion. At CEFLS, staff and trustees should provide their certificates to Dawn Recore.

Annual reports are almost done. The State is requiring clarification on 26 out of 30 of the member library reports, so Michael Spofford is helping the libraries to accomplish this. All reports must be resubmitted by this Friday so that the State can in turn submit their report to receive Federal funds.

We are working with North Country Library System and NNYLN, the support system for library systems, at creating a grant proposal that will allow us to put together a program for advocacy and elections. When we have a library that's going for a vote in a public election, we would like to give them the help that they need to make the vote successful.

It is time to secure a contract for snow removal for the 2020-2021 winter season. The contractor that we had last year has expressed interest in working with us again. Due to the CEFLS Purchase Policy, any purchase over \$2,000 must be put out to bid, so Dawn Recore will send letters out to announce it this week, and the top bids will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

We are down to one library, Wead Library in Malone, operating without a director. In the interim, Mary McDonald has been doing a great job there. Beginning on August 3, Rouses Point Dodge Memorial Library will have a new director.

Linda Crosby reported that she read an article in the Malone Telegram that said Franklin County has received a sizable sum of money owed to them from the State. She suggested that we inquire whether they might be able to provide the remaining contracted amount owed to CEFLS for the third and fourth quarters of 2020.

Finance Report

Scott McDonald motioned approval of the finance reports that were prepared by Michael Spofford prior to this meeting, seconded by Mary Abendroth. Michael reported that we are doing pretty well considering the pandemic situation. In the three months of finance reports that were distributed for this meeting, you can see that we are 3 or 4 percentage points below what is average for this time period.

- From our operating budget there are no books, DVDs or things of that nature being purchased.
- In the Spring, we received a \$3,000 grant from NNYLN and we added \$3,000 to it to bolster our eBook and audiobook collection. This increased what patrons could access while libraries were closed early in the pandemic.
- Another person has retired so personnel expenditures are going to be going down.
- He checked on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) at our local bank and was told they were no longer accepting applications. He is now working with the Small Business Administration to find another lender. If successful, the loan (grant) would help to pay for some of our payroll.

Lisa Minnich asked about compensated absences that are 200 percent overspent, to which Michael responded that originally there were only reserve funds in that account. When this budget was made, we thought that there would be a couple of retirements taking place by the end of the year but they happened sooner. In the next budget amendment, the actual amounts will be shown.

Motion to approve the Finance Reports as presented by Michael Spofford was approved unanimously.

Committee Reports

There were no Committee Reports.

Unfinished Business

Potential Budget Cuts: Steve Kenworthy referred to the draft Proposed Operating Budget for 2020 that was distributed for review on July 17. It shows some ways that we may be able to meet a 25 percent cut in funding from NYS. He explained that it is usually at about this time of year when we get the main portion of our NYS funding, so it is typical that our liquid cash is dwindling at this point. If this delays much longer, by September we will probably need to borrow money to keep our financials going. We do have a line-of-credit that was created for this contingency because we know that by August we begin to run out of money. To date, we have never had to use it. We have cut down our spending to things that are absolutely necessary or that are funded by grants outside of the budget. This proposed budget makes some suppositions which may or may not be feasible. We are saving some money in wages because we are not filling positions that have recently been created by retirements, yet personnel is our single biggest expense. It accounts for about 60-70 percent of our budget. One of the things that has been discussed and is reflected in this budget is a 20 percent cut in wages that would be accomplished by furloughing employees one day a week. They would be able to collect unemployment for the one day; however, CEFLS has over the years been betting against this happening, so we are self-funded for unemployment. This means that we do not have unemployment insurance, so if we incur unemployment costs, we will have to pay dollar for dollar, which amounts

to about 55-60 percent of a person's regular wages. Ultimately, furloughing employees would save CEFLS some money, but not as much as we would hope. We are proposing that the van delivery be cut to every other week.

Darcy Purick wonders if employees earning a certain amount in their four days of work would be eligible for unemployment. Michael said he would look further into that. He confirmed that if we obtain PPP funds, this would not be an issue.

Michael Spofford stated that the draft budget is based on a 25 percent funding cut from the State and 50 percent cuts from each of the counties. The draft shows an overage of \$40,000, but there might be money available that was carried over from 2018 to 2019, but wasn't spent. Also, we have received our third quarter payment of \$11,000 from Clinton County. With those two amounts combined, Michael is hoping to show a balanced budget.

A cut of \$71,000 has been proposed from Certified Librarians Salaries by holding one certified librarian's position open (created by a retirement), plus the furlough of certified librarians. A variance has been requested from State Ed to hold that position open through this crisis. A cut of \$33,000 under All Other Salaries is proposed by holding a position open in youth services in the Outreach Department (created by a retirement), plus the furlough of remaining staff.

Steve Novacich asked for an explanation of basic aid. Michael explained that it is a funding stream from NYS based a formula that determines the amount. Last year, the amount was 5.5 percent below what is required by NYS Education Law, and this year's amount didn't increase. It is the foundation of all our aid and can be used for anything that we decide is basic.

Dorothy Latta asked about aid from correctional facilities. Lisa Minnich explained that there is no funding from the correctional facilities. The funding from the State to compensate us for serving the correctional institutions. Michael explained that a census is done yearly to determine our funding for the following year. It is basic on the number of inmates in the seven jails that we serve and we receive \$9.50 per inmate.

In reference to page 5 of the proposed budget, Steve Novacich asked about the \$5,000 that is listed under Unemployment Insurance. Michael said it is a reserve in case we have to pay out unemployment. He explained that in doing all of these cuts, reserves were used to fund basic expenditures. However, if unemployment has to be paid out, funds will have to be moved from somewhere else. Michael said he will work on funding this line item.

Scott McDonald questioned whether the annual audit is required and whether CEFLS can do an internal audit. Michael responded that NYS said it is highly recommended that we do a yearly audit but they did not say that we have to do one. He would like to save money by having the trustees do the audit, then pass it to outside auditors for their review. Dorothy Latta, Nicky Bryant and Margo Gold expressed uncertainty about doing this, stating that financials are provided to the county and the State for consideration for funding. It is also necessary to provide financials to banks and some grantors when applying for loans or grants.

Tom Mandeville remarked that medical insurance contributions for CSEA staff and exempt staff should be level across the board. Right now there are three different levels of contributions. He also brought up travel, lodging, airfare and conferences, stating that those are typically the first things to go when cuts are being made. Michael stated that some of that has already been spent, and NYLA in

Saratoga Springs will be the next conference; however, this year that might be held virtually. Lunches for staff were then questioned. Michael explained that it is in the CSEA contract that when traveling staff will receive \$8.50 for lunches when they are traveling within the three county area (breakfast \$6.50, dinner \$10.50).

A request for our proposed 2021 budget by August 11 was received from Franklin County today. When Michael Spofford has prepared it, he will share it with the board before sending it to Franklin County. Nicky Bryant explained that the counties have to have a budget passed by December 1, so they need budget submissions early from every organization requesting funds. We expect that our proposed 2021 budget will be due at Essex and Clinton Counties by the end of August or beginning of September.

Lisa Minnich wrapped up this discussion stating that Michael will take all of these modifications into consideration when reworking the draft budget.

Policy on Telecommuting: Margo Gold motioned approval of the Telecommuting Policy that the Board was given to review in June, seconded by Gayla LePage.

Nicky Bryant asked how the policy pertains to the exempt employees and who does the director communicate with to get approval to telecommute. Steve Kenworthy responded that the director's requests should at least go to the Executive Committee. Steve Novacich stated that he feels that any other employees' requests should be approved by the Executive Director, probably in consultation with a supervisor.

Steve Novacich also feels that telecommuting should be limited to emergency situations, such as an ice storm, flood, pandemic, etc. He feels that it is difficult to manage everyone in telecommuting situations. Steve Kenworthy stated that for the most part he agrees, adding that we came into this situation because we had to due to the pandemic. He would like a policy so that as we move forward he knows the limits and what needs to be done.

The proposed policy addresses the three different types of telecommuting: *regular*, *occasional* and *special circumstances (emergency)*. Steve Kenworthy stated that because of what the jobs entail, it would be extremely rare to do the *regular* type. A legitimate use of the policy could be an *occasional* project requiring a single focus that is better controlled out of the office. The *emergency* type was necessary due to the pandemic when there was no choice but to work from home. The results showed us that we can be successful at it and it opened eyes a little bit to possibilities, but Steve doesn't think that there is a lot of interest in doing it on a regular basis.

Dorothy Latta suggested that if an employee or employees were quarantined, they could work from home under the *occasional* category even though it wouldn't be a one-day thing. An example of the *regular* category would be if an employee worked from home every Wednesday. Dorothy asked if implementing *regular* telecommuting is under consideration, to which Steve responded that is not his intention at this time.

The Board would like to be assured of accountability. Margo Gold expressed that to implement *regular* telecommuting, certain deliverables should be agreed upon, and specific and ongoing monthly evaluation could help to avoid undesired outcomes. Mary Abendroth inquired about self-assessment forms that are mentioned in the proposed policy, and Steve responded that he will include

them in the next amendment of the policy. He envisions that for *regular* telecommuting self-assessment would be done at the beginning and followed up on weekly.

Dorothy stated that she has seen telecommuting set up for one day a week for a resident student who had a long commute. Steve responded that we do have one employee who commutes quite a ways and she has asked some questions but he has not had much more response than that.

Lisa Minnich recapped that a vote on the proposed telecommuting policy is necessary because a motion was made and seconded. The Board unanimously opposed the resolution to approve the telecommuting policy as it is written, so it will be reworked and presented for reconsideration at a future Board meeting.

New Business

There was no New Business.

Adjournment

Lisa Minnich stated that next month's meeting will be a Zoom meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Lisa Minnich adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayla LePage
Secretary