

**Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees
Virtual Special Meeting – 6:00 p.m. April 28, 2020
Held Online Via Zoom**

Board Members Present: Bomarito, Hahn, Huyck, Largent, Montgomery, Murphy, Rae, White

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Members Present: Grover, Carlton, Shereda

Staff Members Absent: None

Guest Speakers: Mary Beth Klawender, Steve Koponen, Lisa VanStone, Lauren, Maddy Lank, Emma DeCenso, Karen Terrabassi, Eugene Greenstein, Claudia, Eric Bruins, and Theresa Rich

Zoom Guests: 100 in attendance

CALL TO ORDER

The Board Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Board President White.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Largent to approve the Agenda for the April 23, 2020 Board meeting with the amended comments bringing Correspondence up just after Approval of Procedure for Public Comments, supported by Bomarito.

Vote: Aye: All in favor

Opposed: None

Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

MOTION by Largent to develop a procedure for public comment. A three minute time limit allowed per person, supported by Montgomery.

Vote: Aye: All in favor

Opposed: None

Motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Introductions of Board members.
- White clarifies furlough vote and definition. This was a board decision with the vote of 5-2 made without Trustee Bomarito being in attendance and is not the decision made by Director Grover. Furlough does imply temporary and we are not allowed to guarantee anything made clear by our legal counsel. A furlough is not intended to be about termination but allows employees to pursue the maximum amount benefits available.
- Posted on the Libraries Homepage:

The Board previously voted to continue paying ALL full-time staff, part-time staff and Pages after the Library closed to the public to mitigate the spread of Covid19. Staff has continued to be paid for 6 weeks. At the Board meeting on 4/23/20, the Farmington Community Library Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to furlough staff. This temporary furlough was necessary to preserve public funds going forward. The COVID-19 crisis is developing every day with no clear endpoint, and while some employees are continuing to serve the community in this changing landscape, the difficult truth is that fewer staff are needed to perform critical functions while the Library buildings are closed to the public. With large capital projects on the horizon the Board made the difficult decision to furlough the staff who are not directly serving critical functions to ensure the future of Library. Although these projects are currently budgeted, we cannot predict our tax base will remain stable in the next 12-18 months and therefore must plan for that contingency. Our intent is that this action is a temporary response until we can more fully serve the community. In this uncertain time we intend to continuously evaluate the situation and return additional staff as soon as possible. Impacted staff have been placed on temporary furlough. No one has been terminated. [Read more information on the State of Michigan's term "temporary furlough"](#). The initial communication indicated that staff would be placed on COBRA benefits but we have received further communication that that was incorrect. Because the Board decided on a temporary furlough for impacted employees, and has continued to pay premiums, the BCN benefits will continue. See page 15 on the [Blue Cross COVID-19 Overview](#). Our [Digital Library](#) is still open 24/7. All digital resources, services and online programming that have been provided by FCL during the stay at home orders will continue uninterrupted. We are exploring additional opportunities to increase and enhance our services.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Beth Klawender – FH resident. Addressed the furloughing of non-essential Library employees. “I respectfully disagreed with the term non-essential. Libraries are the cornerstone of the community. Library employees still providing resources virtually with connections to the community. We need our Library employees reinstated now. As a teacher providing students with meaningful remote lessons has required a full range of support staff. The library is no different. In fact, it is more difficult given the wide range of people the library serves. We need our entire team back in order to keep our library open whether it is physically or virtually. We need an engaging summer program created by Library employees for Adults, Teens, and Youth to ensure we are ready to start the school year. This cannot be accomplished with a Skelton staff. We need our entire team back in order to keep our Library open whether it's physical or virtually. Please consider bringing back all of Library employees.”

Steve Koponen – Concerned with the matter of the decision to furlough Library employees. “Initially nothing on the FCL page and saw nothing of an agenda or a way for the public to access the meeting. A more professional approach could have been to provide an agenda and make a good faith effort to notify people who would be impacted by the discussion of the board. The surprise of the Boards decision was disappointing.” On a personal note – Steve informed his wife works at the library and was initially really upset even though she will get more on unemployment than she would at the Library facility.

Lisa VanStone – Many of us are here due to the Farmington Community Library Board's rushed decision to solve an “economic crisis” that does not exist through the “temporary furlough” 100 + FCL staff members. This vote to furlough occurred right after the Library Board voted to pay a \$6000 penalty fee so FCL would not have to sign on with a new vendor's human resources suite for two years instead of

one. Let it be known that FCL will not incur any loss of funding until June 30th, as our new fiscal year begins July 1st. The Library Board is unaware of any loss of future revenue. The Library is not broke. The Library Board's furlough vote directly opposes instruction from both the MLA and ALA to continue paying staff during these unprecedented times. Instead, the Board has made the unethical move to sit on taxpayer dollars, so the money will roll into a general fund, and can be spent however the Board wants in the coming fiscal year instead of being allocated toward its original intent; employee payroll. The Board advised staff to go collect unemployment—i.e. more taxpayer dollars—so that furloughed staff can continue to be paid. I have consulted with many of our Metro Net consortium directors, and they and their library boards all have continued to pay their staff. Even those that could be argued as the poorest of them, why? Because they value their employees. I've requested before that all Library Board members acquaint themselves with the Library Board Manual. Clearly, the Board has not, and are still unacquainted with what the role of Library Board trustee is. As stated in Chapter One, Parts A & B, Trustee Rights & Responsibilities, as well as many other sections; The Library Board has overstepped its role by even putting forth a motion to furlough. The operations of the Library fall SOLELY on the library director's shoulders. It is Ms. Grover's duty to create an assess FCL's budget and present her findings to the Library Board. Ms. Grover should be deciding what library cuts need to be made and where. It is then up to the trustees to assess the Library Director's findings and sign off on them, or return suggestions to her. Why have you not empowered the Director you chose to handle any potential budgetary concerns? This overt overstep by the Board goes against the ethics code outlined in Appendix E of the Michigan Public Library Trustee Manual. Ultimately, one could call this furlough an unethical ploy to fill the coffers on the backs of the employees that will ultimately cost the taxpayers even more money.

Lauren – Resident of FH. It is really disappointing this is how the Library Board is proceeding. I am a Librarian in another city and think that Lisa made a lot of great points. You have a millage that does not expire until 2024/2025 which means you do have secure funding for the next several years and do not need to worry about. You're good until June 30th and there really is no reason why you can't continue paying employees. This is how you lose good employees and drive people away from apply to your library. I am not going to choose a library that unnecessarily furlough's their employees. Library budgets are set and you are not losing money by being closed.

Maddy Lank– The Farmington Community Library furloughing is an outlier among its peers. Among 39 library only 2 laid off staff. Among the 9 libraries of similar size only 2 laid off staff. This decision seems to be short-sighted. Summer Reading – there are a lot of preparations that need to be put into place. The Board has cited large capital projects on the horizon. I am curious to know what these projects are.

Emma DeCenso – I feel honored to work at FCL. The Library Board that chose to furlough us with no warning, in a matter of days. I am in contact with my demographics. (Out Reach Program). *The United for Libraries* are vehemently against furloughing any staff. I am grateful you are taking these comments. I love the Farmington Community Library!

Karen Terrabassi – Retiree, having worked for the Library for over 34 years I am very concerned how all of this is being handled. In the past we had financial crisis that was always handled with cutting the budget before cutting staff. Always handled by the Director with the support of the Board. There has been no communication about any of this to me or other retirees. We are still very much a part of the support. This is not acceptable. It does not appear there was real thought put into it. I am wondering if you looked at any other ways of cutting the budget. I did not understand what you were doing with the furloughed people's health care. I am wondering what will happen to the retiree's health care. I am not very happy about the way the Board handled this. It is almost as though it was all done in secret.

Eugene Greenstein – These are very difficult times and this situation is a major dilemma. We don't know when the Library can reopen. The Library Board has a physical responsibility to spend the money wisely. They have to preserve the Library. No one knows what the tax base is going to look like in August. A lot of taxes are not going to be paid because people are hurting. What is the right decision? I support the Board. I think the Board has been generous with 6 weeks, it's not a charity. The Board has the right to make sure that the economics of the tax payer are protected.

Claudia – There is no blueprint on how to handle the challenges that the Library is facing.

- 1) What research did you do with other Libraries to see what they are doing before making the decision to furlough employees?
- 2) Did the Board have knowledge of the work and programs being done by the employees before making the decision to just furlough employees?
- 3) Did the Board include the Library Director for possible solutions to keep the employees and programs before taking this drastic action?
- 4) I would like to see evidence by the Board of a well-researched decision.

Eric Bruins – I want to echo previous speakers. From the public perspective none of this seems to be handled with any foresight or thought that went into it. There does not seem to be any sort of a plan. Initial communication with employees – they had to file for a change of status with Cobra. Completely untrue. I don't understand all of the secrecy about this. There is no clear foresight. You are not losing money. Tax numbers will dip and that will effect next year's budget. So short sighted. This is not within your jurisdiction or authority to make these decisions. Very disappointed.

Theresa Rich – Thank you for letting the Community be heard. I am concerned there is a sufficiently thought out strategy for what is happening with the staff. The decision being made without the input of the Director you just hired. I would like see more transparency. The tax payers approved the funding and the money is there to pay the staff. The Library system is the jewel of this community. I encourage you to have additional thought and conversation before making your final decision.

Mike Blum is an Attorney with Foster Swift. He has been advising the Personnel Committee.

White commented that the Board will be responding to the comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Montgomery to approve the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting on April 23, 2020, was supported by Huyck.

Roll Call Vote: All in favor of approving the Minutes from Thursday night meeting.
Murphy-approve, Largent-approve, Hahn-approve, Huyck-approve Montgomery-approve,
Bomarito-abstain, White-approve.

Motion passed.

Largent commented the delay in hosting a regular board meeting was due to waiting on guidance with being in compliance with the Open Meetings Act in an on-line meeting.

Mike Blum commented that a Roll Call vote should be done and the Minutes need to be approved before posting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Committee

Largent - Capital projects: A building health assessment was completed 1 ½ year ago with an outside company. 2 million dollars in capital improvements consisting of (new roofs, basements, parking lots, chillers, and landscaping). The building has been cleaned and disinfected. Donald has purchased gloves, face shields, Hepa filter, and protective gear.

White commented that MLA has taken the position that no library should start curb-side service at this point. Donald will be involved in how we take in materials and how we move forward in terms of keeping people safe.

Grover commented on the John Hopkins initial study that stated Libraries are not a high risk environment. We are based on resource sharing and the sheer amount of people on-site (35-40,000/month) cannot be considered low-risk. White shared that report was revised and Libraries are now considered medium to high risk.

The complete Facilities Committee Report has been filed.

Finance Committee

Huyck shared that an individual donor has donated supporting obtaining a 3D printer. The printer has been obtained.

Personnel Committee

Montgomery commented on the annual payroll budget is \$3,267,000. Annual budget \$6,620,000 total. Bi-monthly payroll is \$115,000 – \$139,000 per pay period with a total of 130 people getting paid. Furloughed 82 people with 17 remaining active. All of the services are active on line. Grover was consulted and was present at all of the meetings. The savings will be about \$65,000 savings every pay period. This is the most fiscally responsible way to move forward and preserve the tax payer's funds. No change to benefit status.

Strategic Plan Committee

Changes made due to the crisis. Grover listed: e-reference, direction given to resources available 24-7, increased check out limits for Hoopla (5 to 8 per person per month), introducing Tutor.com, Hoopla content through Hoopla Bonus, Ancestry, Leap, eCards, Zoom, 3D printer arriving, Wi-Fi hotspots placed on windows with login information, and enormous numbers of community engagements conducted by staff. The board did not recommend which services remain but Grover was given the task of what services remain.

Ad-hoc Bylaws Committee

There was no report from the Bylaws Committee.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS

Paid time off or sick time accrual during furlough. Mike Blum stated that it is a fringe benefit and it is a Board decision. Can be made retroactive during a furlough.

(Withdrawn) MOTION by Largent to table discussion on fringe benefits until further legal review and opinion, supported by Murphy.

MOTION by Montgomery that PTO and sick time not accrue during furlough, supported by Huyck.

Roll Call Vote: All in favor of approving

Rae-opposed, Murphy-approve, Largent-opposed, Hahn-opposed, Huyck-approve, Montgomery-approve, Bomarito-opposed, White-opposed.

Motion failed.

Current policy states PTO and sick time do not accrue during furlough.

MOTION by Ray to examine by May 12, 2020 the fringe benefits that would accrue had the furlough not have happened, supported by Bomarito.

Roll Call Vote: All in favor of approving studying the amount of fringe benefits.

Murphy-approve, Largent-approve, Hahn-approve, Huyck-approve Montgomery-approve, Bomarito-approve, White-approve.

MOTION by Bomarito to give Grover authority to recall additional staff as needed to insure future Library services, supported by Largent.

Roll Call Vote: All in favor of approving giving Grover the authority to recall staff.

Murphy-approve, Largent-approve, Hahn-approve, Huyck-approve, Montgomery-approve, Bomarito-approve, White-approve.

BOARD TRUSTEE COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Tuesday, May 12th, 2020 will hold a Special Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Largent to adjourn the Board Meeting, was supported by Montgomery.

Vote: Aye: All in favor

Opposed: None

Motion passed.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m. by President White. The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for Thursday, May 28th, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Rae, Secretary
Library Board of Trustees
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