

CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

MINUTES LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING JANUARY 20, 2022

NOTE: Once the minutes were typed, the various discussions were posted under the appropriate agenda items starting with item VII. New Business.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Grimes called the regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees to order at 9:05 a.m. on Thursday, January 20, 2022 in the Boardroom of the Headquarters library.

Trustees Present: Chair Irene Grimes, Vice Chair Ann McRae, Jeremy Fiebig, Bart Fiser, Ariel Matthews and Pamela Story

Trustee Absent: Dennis Cedzo

Present from the Library: Director Faith Phillips, Community Engagement Division Manager Nora Armstrong; Collection Development Division Manager Pamela Kource, Programs Division Manager Carla Brooks, new staff (see table below); service award recipients (see table below) and Admin. Coordinator to the Director Marili Melchionne

Others Present: Assistant County Manager Sally Shutt and Ivana Washington, *Ponderosa News*

A. INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUEST: The Friends Representative was unable to attend, therefore, Director Phillips gave the following report on behalf of the Friends of the Library:

Membership Report: As of January 18, 2022 there are 242 members for 2022. The annual mailing went out on November 15, 2021 and the Friends have received \$5,326 in membership revenue since then.

Book Sale Revenue Report: With the Overstock Bargain book sales last October and the regular book sales last November/December, the Friends raised \$8,388. The Friends will host book sales starting February 21-22 for Members and February 25-27 for the public. Due to increased Covid-19 numbers, the attendance will be limited.

II. APPROVAL OF TODAY'S MEETING AGENDA

MOTION: Trustee Fiebig moved to approve today's meeting agenda.

SECOND: Vice Chair McRae seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Unanimous

III. SWEARING IN: Director Phillips administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Trustees Ariel Matthews and Bart Fiser. Those in attendance welcomed them with a round of applause.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2021 REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Vice Chair McRae moved to approve the December 9, 2021 meeting minutes.

SECOND: Trustee Story seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Unanimous

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Introduction of new staff: Director Phillips introduced the following new staff member:

Name	Title	Library Location
Denice Enstine	Page	East Regional

B. Service Award Recipients: Director Phillips recognized and honored the following staff members for their years of service with the library:

Name	Title	Branch Location	Years of Svc.
Sabrina Taylor	IS Librarian I	Hope Mills	10
Nydia (Teresa) Johnson	Library Technician	West Regional	15

C. Director’s Update – Director Faith Phillips
Phillips shared the following report:

1. Library Updates:

- a) **Expanding Library Hours:** We are gradually working on expanding library hours and are very cognizant of the COVID-19 numbers in our community and how that is affecting staffing. We are going to expand to Sunday services at Headquarters library only, from 2-6, but we have paused that for at least two weeks due to COVID-19 and staffing numbers. We will reevaluate this after two weeks. However, we have started our extended evening service hours so we were open until 7:00p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings and that has gone well so far.
- b) **Library Statistics:** Before we get into statistics, I want to share a few caveats. With the door counters, we are unsure of the accuracy of previous year’s numbers. Because we did a lot of work when I first came here to update the technology, we now know that the door counts are as accurate as possible. You may see a very large discrepancy in the door count numbers.

You can see the door count for the first part of this fiscal year, compared to other fiscal years. The dark blue is FY 2017, then FY 2018, 2019 and 2020. For FY 2021, we don’t have the statistics then this is FY 2022. Obviously the door counts were going in a downward trajectory, then the pandemic hit and we weren’t sure of the accuracy of the door counts.

We do see that when a new variant comes out, the door count does go down. Once people adjust, the door count goes back up. For example, in October (in the middle of the Delta variant) the numbers were down and then they started going back up. We are working on ways to bring people into the library.

For July through December 2021, our total door count was 190,085. It is not as high as the other numbers but I want to stress that we were unsure of the accuracy of the door counter. This gives us a good benchmark to start; it shows where we are and where we want to go so we can see what the trend is.

I did want to bring out some stats from FY 2021. This is dead in the middle of when everything started and there was a shut down but we were doing what we could. For FY 21, we circulated 241,425 physical materials – that compares to FY 20, (pre-pandemic) at 711,923. This number does not include the consortium numbers. In another category it shows how many items we send out to the consortium and how many we receive. By comparison, we typically send out more than we get back. With inter-library loan and consortium numbers, 68,520 items were circulated during FY 21.

Other non-print items, i.e., DVDs, Playaways, audio books, audio music, other non-print materials. For FY 21, 35,039 items were circulated and it compares to FY 20 which was 213,537. You can see that there is a difference, but you can also see that because of the pandemic, for our electronic materials, eBooks, eResources, that number is up and you can see how it is directly related to the pandemic. The number was 213,111 for FY 21 which is up from 189,518 in FY 20.

I also wanted to show our program attendance. In FY 21, we had 276 recorded programs and we reached an audience of 13,217. By comparison, for FY 20, the number was zero because we started doing recordings due to the pandemic.

Assistant County Manager Sally Shutt commented that those views were through the library's social media. The content is also airing on CCNC TV which is Channel 5 on Spectrum. There is a live feed through the county's website – Cumberland.nc.gov then click on CCNC. There is no way to verify the additional numbers to add to the statistics. We are pushing that content on other platforms but Spectrum doesn't provide us with viewership numbers.

Director Phillips shared that the crux of it is, we are working to get accurate numbers, so you will see a change and a transition. With that, our numbers may be a little bit lower than they have been in the past but we have some strategies to increase door counts, circulation and library cards. I think this is a really good place to start to see what our long lasting change is and what affect our strategies and solutions have. We can look at what is working and what is not because we have accurate technology and a team that is working on ideas and we can look at that return on investment.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Strategic Visioning Session: Director Faith Phillips

Director Phillips shared that the library has been looking at the strategic plan and redeveloping it. We are looking to change our strategic mission, vision and our goals. The following two questions were discussed:

- Where is one area the library excels?
- Where is one area where the library can improve?

Library Excels:

- ✓ Job/business support – getting information out to people
- ✓ Have a variety of tools available
- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Staff treat customers with dignity and respect and remain calm
- ✓ Resourcefulness – great geographic access to the collection – books are sent between branches for customers

Library Needs Improvement:

- ✓ Getting information out about tools/resources
- ✓ Get to the population who cannot visit the library – meet folks where they are
- ✓ Have a library circulation vending machine – maybe have it at a Food Lion or Carley C's
- ✓ Non-traditional approaches
- ✓ Partnerships with the community, i.e., laundromats – barber shops, schools, etc.
- ✓ Annex stations
- ✓ Figure out the digital pivot – what is the identity of the library in 10/20/30 years in regards to digital resources – maximizing that impact in the community. Online trainings and streaming.
- ✓ How well are we serving non-traditional populations – people with mental/physical challenges – sensory rooms/spaces and maker spaces – homeschool population – getting into the digital community
- ✓ Branding – reach out to blend the past with the present while maintaining historical culture. Need to shift so that you don't lose the next generation.
- ✓ How do we reach people digitally to bring them in physically?

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed 2022 Board of Trustee Meeting Calendar – Chair Irene Grimes:

Grimes passed around a page with information from June 12, 1968 which shows the Board voted not to meet in July or August each year unless it becomes necessary to call a meeting.

Grimes stated that so far we have all been meeting every month except for July and August which is a decision that this board made in 1968 based on a motion by someone that was on the board at that time. I would like to change that. I asked you all to read the “Meetings” paragraph in the By-Laws (Article IV) on the back of the agenda and this is the motion that caused the By-Laws to be changed at that time. I think July and August are probably some of the busiest times on the library calendar and for us to take an ad hoc vacation and not participate is a little elitist.

I think we need to be present and we need to be a working board that makes things better. I think that taking a vacation in the middle of the busiest months for the library is not the right thing to do. The By-Laws currently read, “There are no scheduled meetings in the months of July and August...and”

Matthews: It states that, “Special meetings may be called by the Chair, or upon the written request of four members of the Board, for the transaction of business stated in the request. Notice of all meetings shall be given by the Secretary, or the Secretary’s designee, to all members at least three days in advance.”

Grimes: I would like to change that. It says that we meet every month and then if there is nothing on the agenda we can always cancel a meeting but to just assume that we’re not going to show up in July and August is not the right way to go.

Matthews: May I offer a different perspective? I do not see this as a vacation, I see this as thank goodness my daughter is out for the summer and I won’t have to find a place for her for those mornings. I see it as being able to implement all of the things that we discuss throughout the year. This gives us time to implement those things and see how they work rather than a consistent month-to-month change. I don’t view those as elitist vacations.

Grimes: I think that those are valid points but every trustee has four to five meetings that they can miss. And when there’s not enough on the agenda where a vote is required, and if there is no quorum, there’s no quorum.

McRae: I will never be able to make the July meeting with our schedules and things with family that happen every year. If I could have it my way, I would say let’s miss June and July because June is a difficult month for me. Now with school starting so much earlier in August, the August meeting is not a problem for me. I hate missing a meeting but I would have to miss. To rearrange a family trip for which we rarely get at all for a meeting, I’m not going to do that.

Matthews: I think it is allowing priority for family time and I don’t see that as a negative.

McRae: It does say that if there is something that we need to do, then we can have a special meeting if that’s needed. It doesn’t bother me that we don’t have them, because by September we’re able to get a report of the Summer Reading Program because it is during that time.

Director Phillips: I may have a solution for consensus. I’m bringing both of your ideas together. Look in your packet at the proposed library board of trustee planning calendar by topic. This is something that the library puts together and it includes items that we want to focus on and what we want to discuss. A way to marry the two ideas would be – the library board meets monthly unless there is nothing on the agenda to discuss. In the planning process, and this is up to you all, but you could hold it so that for the months of July and August... as you can see we don’t have anything for those months on the planning calendar because we are trying to figure out what to talk about in those months. It might be where those meetings – it’s not verbally or written out, that you don’t meet in those months, but we know as a procedure that we hold those months for special meetings if needed.

Grimes: I think that is a good solution.

Fiebig: I have a couple questions. I think based on the arguments made so far, there is a good argument to be made to not meet in December. I don't know if that could be an option, particularly since our meetings fall later in the month and that is a real crunch time.

Matthews: So maybe miss July and December meetings, rather than July and August. Switching the months so that it is not two back-to-back months where we're missing out on a meeting but we still get family priority time and we don't have to think about having a meeting that week.

Fiebig: In addition to that, I have two more things, one is I think we should make digital attendance an option. Meeting in person is a barrier for some. I think we could do it like where half could attend digitally or something like that is reasonable.

Grimes: Faith and I have been working on that which piggy backs on my interest in recording the meetings.

Fiebig: The last thing I would add is, and this is not a complaint, just an observation, but if you have 10 to 12 full trustee meetings, county commissioner meeting obligations and Friends of the Library obligations, you have 6, 7, 8 people who are attending 40 events per year.

Grimes: Right, we're getting to that point so table that for a minute.

Fiebig: I would table it except to say that the prospect of adding two trustee meetings while all of that remains unchanged is probably a non-starter for most of us. But if there is a chance that that could be visited as part of the...

Grimes: Jeremy just brought up the point that I wanted to discuss next which is the county commissioner's meetings.

Story: Before we go on to that, like many of you, I serve on multiple boards and commissions and working in the school system we realize that the traditional schools are out during the summer but we still have year-round schools. I'm like Jeremy and Irene, I feel like if the library is open every month, we should be meeting and it could be virtual. I agree with Jeremy and I know you are going to address this but we could move some other responsibilities in terms of meetings that we have and if you can't come because you have to be with family just let Marili know and we do have "X" number of meetings we can miss.

Director Phillips: You all will need to go back to the calendar and approve or not approve it.

MOTION: Chair Grimes made a motion that the board will meet monthly on the third Thursday of each month with the exception of December where the board would not meet.

SECOND: Trustee Story seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Matthews: To clarify, we won't meet at all in December? Grimes: Correct.

Trustee Fiebig asked to amend the motion to include attending virtually as an option.

VOTE: The amended motion passed (4-2) (Grimes, Fiebig, Story and Fiser in favor; Vice Chair McRae voted in opposition and Trustee Matthews abstained).

B. Appointment of 2022 Trustee Nominating Committee Members (4) – Chair Irene Grimes:

Grimes stated that she is supposed to appoint board members to the nominating committee. We only have two people whose term expires at the end of this year. One of them is Ann McRae and the other one is Jeremy Fiebig. Since we are not interviewing outside people for admittance to this board, I propose that we dispense with naming the nominating committee and just send a notice to Ann and Jeremy to ask them if they want to come back.

Fiser: So both of them are in their first term?

Grimes: Right.

Fiser: So there's no second term?

Grimes: Correct. [Chair Grimes will clarify/correct this point at the February meeting.]

Director Phillips: So you're essentially saying that because of that you want to bypass the formal operating procedure that the board has had in the past?

Grimes: Correct.

Fiser: So it is not part of your charter?

Grimes: No, it is not even that formal, it's just that we've done it this way for so many years. I would like to simplify the process.

McRae: If the nominating committee is not named, is there potential for there to be a problem by not having it? It's not a problem this time because Jeremy and I both are up for reappointment but is there a potential problem that could come up in the future if we don't identify the committee members now?

Fiser: Having it established but having it dormant isn't harmful, so that if you do need to call upon them, at least you have them.

Grimes: As most of you know, I grew up in a country where boards and commissions were not common, so I've learned from these organizations that there are by-laws and then there are standard operating procedures so that the by-laws don't have to be changed every time you change a procedure. I think we could do something like that where we could say, let's do a standard operating procedure that has a couple paragraphs that describes how we nominate or re-nominate board members.

Matthews: Could we transition from a nominating process to an invitation process so that it is a formal invitation? It could be all of us voting on sending an invitation.

McRae: On the years that its, not like it is this year.

Grimes: Right, where we have returning board members.

Story: I have a question, with that, would we have to notify the county?

Grimes: No.

Assistant County Manager Shutt: You would just make a recommendation, the board of commissioners are the ones who nominate and then approve.

Melchionne: As far as the nominating committee goes, we would need to follow the same process that is done in September for board members that are being reappointed. I believe at that time a nominating committee is needed for that specific task.

Grimes: To give you a more complete answer, for the county commissioners, nothing would change because they would still get the recommendation from us and then do their part. For us the procedure will change.

Fiser: I see no harm in maintaining it. I think it just gives you another level of filtering for any questions of liability in case someone says, it's a closed group, you can't get in. To your point, you could vote to establish it in August when it is coming up in September. You don't have to declare it now but I see no harm in having it. I actually think it's a well made point, I just think it is safer to have it. At least you could say everybody is going through the same, equal process.

McRae: Transparency, that we're above board.

Grimes: Ok, so can we table it until...

Director Phillips: You want to officially table the appointment of the 2022 Trustee Nominating Committee members to August?

Grimes: Right, I would prefer August, is that ok with everybody? I need a motion for that.

Matthews: So that would be the first thing on the August Agenda?

Director Phillips: Yes, it will be on the August Agenda.

Matthews: Because we probably don't have anything on the August agenda.

Fiser: I'll make the motion to table the discussion until August.

Story: Second

Grimes: Everybody in favor – motion passed unanimously. (Note that at 10:00a.m. Trustee Fiebig was excused and left the meeting. For this vote, since Fiebig left the meeting, he shall be recorded as voting in the affirmative.)

C. Discuss 2022 Board of Trustee Annual Topic Calendar – Director Faith Phillips:

Phillips: You can see what the different topics would be and I wanted to ask you, what do you all want to know? We can present you with statistics about what PIO does or what IT does but I want to make sure that you hear a meaningful story that helps you best understand what the library is doing and is most effective as you all work to support us. Is there something that you would just love to know about that you've never known about? Then we can put that as a presentation, we don't have to follow the same calendar of topics that we always have.

Matthews: I would say programming. What programs have you tried that maybe flopped and what are ones that were a huge success that we know we want to repeat? What's the process for planning and what made you excited about programming this year. What is the trend that you are looking forward to next year? So that we hear that you are coming up with new ideas and staying on the cutting edge.

Grimes: I want to add to what Ariel said, we're always hearing about the success stories but we're not going to learn anything unless we hear about the disappointments as well. I know you all are really good at what you do but I suspect that there are somethings that maybe haven't worked so well in the past.

Matthews: Then bringing them to this committee, a conversational place, can help you have – yes it may have flopped in this implementation but maybe there's a different way we can get the same point across and do something similar and we can help brainstorm that during one of Faith's fun strategy planning sessions.

Phillips: Does anyone else have any ideas that they don't see represented on the planning calendar? What I think the general consensus is that you all want more of a more personalized, "what's working well and what's not working" kind of a thing versus more working information.

Matthews: The facilities update in March, what's the intent for that?

Phillips: We have a lot of changes that we're making in some of our facilities. So it would be updating you on what we're doing.

Matthews: Those are like physical building updates or like digital updates, hardware updates?

Phillips: We're going to be moving all of the fiction stacks from upstairs to downstairs here at Headquarters. We're going to make a teen area at East and West. For computers, we've transitioned to a laptop model here, etc. You're going to be seeing a little bit of work at our locations.

Grimes: Also, just something to point out, traditionally Faith has done the budget in January. When we talked the other day we agreed to move it to March because that is when she is going to be ready to present it to the county. We both thought it was appropriate to do it all at the same time rather than having it two months early and then having to tweak it and bring it back in March.

Phillips: For the budget, I want to bring you all a comprehensive presentation. I can give you the numbers and say this is what we're doing but I want to talk with you about cost savings in certain areas, point out our strategic focus areas and give you reasons why we've reallocated resources to certain things. Right now we're in the very beginning stages of that process. It will be more comprehensive and will be more accurate to what we're doing if we present it in March.

D. Discuss By-Laws – Article IV – Meetings – Chair Irene Grimes:

Grimes: Since we have changed the calendar, we will need to name a By-Law committee but I don't want to put anyone on the spot so I will be in touch with each of you individually unless someone knows they want to be on the By-Law committee.

Matthews: What's the timeline for that?

Grimes: I would like to have the By-Law committee appointed by the next meeting (February 17, 2022).

Matthews: How soon would the By-Laws be rewritten?

Grimes: We have a year. Regarding all the changes, I didn't want to walk in here like a bull in a China shop. I'm very straight forward and I say what I think and I don't believe in anyone who is in the leadership position walking in and making changes right away. I think it's a best practice situation to see what's going on and then make the changes. I've been around a couple years. However, I have had the feeling that we've always come here, listen to a presentation and not always contributed to the conversation and the improvement of the library system. We are all working adults so I think we have a lot to contribute and I think a lot of us are cognizant to that fact. I think this is a good board and let's get to work.

E. Housekeeping Items: Trustee Sign up to attend 2022 Commissioner and Friends Board Meetings – Chair Irene Grimes

See discussion in item F. below.

F. Trustee Attendance at County Commissioner’s Meetings – Chair Irene Grimes

Grimes: Faith and I had a conversation the other day and we both agree trustees should not attend the county commissioner’s meetings unless there is an item on the agenda that directly affects the library. Most of us have started attending these meetings virtually but we would like to do away with that obligation. Marili will let us know if there is an item on the agenda which directly affects the library and then one of us will volunteer to attend that meeting. This decision will take away some of the extra meeting obligations.

Director Phillips: To add to that, obviously everyone is welcome to go and participate however they want to. From a library perspective, I want to think strategically, like you mentioned, we are all busy, when it comes to how I think is the most effective and strategic use of the voices of this board when time is needed; that is the time when you need to attend the meetings. When there is something in the budget or when there is a grant that you want to support, or if, for example, they are voting to go fine free, I think otherwise we don’t want to. We want to be mediated in our approach. I plan to attend if there is something that has to do with the library. If there is anything that you all need to be notified of, you can watch it but I’ll make sure to let you all know.

Grimes: I think it would be beneficial for us and the commissioners because I can see some of the commissioners would recognize us, looking out in the audience and wondering why we are there.

Phillips: Do you need to do a formal motion and vote to make the decision to not do that?

Grimes: I don’t think it is in the By-Laws.

McRae: I think it is just something – I remember Brian brought this up the first year I was on the board and it is just something that has been done for a while because the library is not a mandated...

Grimes: Because we’re an advisory board, rather than a governing board?

McRae: Well because the library is not mandated with the government. So they wanted just to have us present to let them know that we’re there and we care. I’ve only attended the morning ones which are usually very efficient and over quickly, but I’ve heard that the evening ones can go on for a long time.

MOTION: Trustee Fiebig made a motion that trustees will only attend the commissioner’s meetings, if there is an item on the agenda that directly affects the library.

SECOND: Vice Chair McRae seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Unanimous

Grimes: On the other hand, the Friends meetings, I think that because we have a symbiotic relationship and because we benefit each other, I think it is still a good thing and they only have 4 meetings a year which means that each one of us would have to attend every other year. I think it is still a good thing for us to be a presence at those meetings.

Fiebig: Actually I think we should talk about the Friends of the Library meetings. Maybe others have a different experience, although I did speak up because I’m constitutionally bound to as myself. I find those are mostly observational. I’m not saying that we should never go, I’m saying that six times a year would be ample or quarterly would be ample. They meet every other month so six times a year plus the others...if we’re talking about potentially adding two trustee meetings.

Fiser: If someone else signed up for a Friends meeting, and I would like to attend, is only one person allowed to attend or can others attend as well? I want to know for attendance – I think it is important to show up at those meetings; it's a very meaningful group.

Grimes: That was kind of my point that they are a very meaningful group and they do a lot for the library. I think it doesn't hurt, a. for us to be informed and b. for us to be helpful where we can.

Phillips: With the Friends as well, I want to clarify with you all, the Friends will be having a lot of extra meetings this year with the changes that are taking place with the structure. So I want to clarify which meetings you all would be signing up to attend, just the regularly scheduled meetings? Ok, if it would help with the attendance, the Friends typically always have a virtual option for their meetings. So if someone wants to attend virtually, that might help as well.

G. **Other Business:** Trustee Board Orientation will begin following this meeting. Those involved include Faith Phillips, Irene Grimes, Ariel Matthews and Bart Fiser.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.