

ST. CLAIR COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

TIME & PLACE: 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 18, 2005
210 McMorran Boulevard, Port Huron, St. Clair County Main Library

PRESENT: BOARD MEMBERS: Arnold Larson, Lynn Moran, Kathy Nicholl, Helen Praet and Peter Vernier. DIRECTOR: James Warwick.

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: County officials, public and staff (fifty-three)

Pledge of the Allegiance

- I. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE BY Chairperson Vernier at 6:35p.m. All members present.
- II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Moved by Member Larson and supported by Vice-Chairperson Moran to approve amended Agenda (moved guest speaker Jeff Johnson prior to Citizens' Comments and added under New Business: Special Board Meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

Director Warwick introduced and welcomed Jeff Johnson a Private consultant of five years, worked for the Library of Michigan (fourteen years) and the Cooperative Director of Woodlands.

Guest speaker Jeff Johnson – Presented an informative presentation on six options for units of local government in Michigan to provide public library services to their communities – Options: City library, village library, township library, county library, school district public library and district library. Time was given for questions and material distributed.

Chairperson Vernier noted there was a lot information that was discussed and information that the board needs to think about.

Chairperson Vernier explained that due to the amount of people in attendance who might want to speak there would be a limit on speaking time (3 minutes).

- III. CITIZENS' COMMENTS:
Dale Kittendorf a resident of Port Huron. Explained he worked at the Main Library for 5 ½ years and would like to make comments on the budget but was left in the dark along with rest of the staff. Commented on the fear that has arisen with staff involves the Directors Budget proposal that has been veiled in secrecy. Asked the board why are they just now reviewing the proposals when they are one month into the fiscal year? Asked board members whatever they decided to do with the budget proposals, he urged board members to communicate more with library staff to find out what is going on a daily basis and to remember it's Board's job to oversee the Director and not just accept what's given to them each month.

Janet Rose a resident of Richmond, Children's Services Coordinator at the Main Library, member of AFSCME Local #1089 and the instinctive of being the oldest employee of the Library in terms of years of services. Spoke briefly on programs explaining especially for children is a vital part of the services that the Library offers to the community. It teaches pre-reading and reading skills as well as improving the literacy in the community. Noted it was a difficult year in 2004 to plan and carry out programs with such limited funds it actually took more staff time to plan and prepare for these programs because of having to do a lot more preliminary preparation. If we had more funds to spend on already prepared material it would take less time. Concerned with the possibility of reduction in hours, layoffs or closings. Ms. Rose also explained that staff is the most vital resource that the Library has, without staff there can't be any programs, no collections or reference

service giving. Suggested that the program budget remain at last year's level, which would save approximate \$7,000 and asked board members before they make a decision on what cuts to make that all areas of the budget be examined before cutting staff or hours.

Kathleen Wheelihan of Mussey Township, employee of the Library System for 26 years, currently works in the children's room. Explained there are three staff members that order, finish processing children's material and they cover sixty-four of the sixty-seven and a half hours per week that they are open they also check out eight to ten thousand items a month and answer about two-hundred reference questions a month and between three and five hundred children per month attend their programs. We are not over staffed! The staff in this Library System is outstanding; the individuals that work here are very dedicated and take their jobs very seriously. Also explained the most important component in this service is the staff and explained the stress in this building has reached toxic levels. Concerned with the inability to have input and also feels that the extended Saturday hours have not been very productive. How much could we save by cutting back on this? Asked the board if they would please review before making cut backs.

Barb Adent resident of Clyde Township, employee of the Library is here tonight to find out what the proposal budget is because she has not heard anything only what has been in the Times Herald. Concern with the lack of communication between staff and administration, has never been asked for suggestions nor been informed of any issues about our current budget crisis except that there is one. The last time she was asked for input is when the staff was in an in-service meeting. Also explained she has seen staff changes in her department that affects her department greatly and does hope that their budget cuts does not affect any more employees in the way that it has affected the department that she works in. Suggested rather than cutting jobs, they look more closely in materials and other areas to find money we need to balance this budget. While it may not be favorable for the patrons to have less material and all the free programs we will still be able to maintain the basic needs of this community with sufficient staff to serve those needs.

Linda Aguinaga resident of Emmett and the Branch Librarian at the Memphis Branch. Explained the staff has worked around smaller material and program budgets and the Memphis Branch has worked with one less staff person since last May. We have all pitched in to help. Asked if there could be brainstorming sessions with staff to help us with possible resolutions. Her feeling is if they have an idea of our options we could at least give suggestions that could be considered and also asked what ever decision they make as our board they will look at everything that can be offered by staff as well as management.

Kaye Ray Branch Librarian at the Yale Branch asked that the board look at every way to save money and if we can make it up and we have to loose some hours she would suggest they go with the plan that closes all branches including the main branch for one week a quarter because it will be the fairest to everyone.

Sharon Bender patron of the Library System. Explained she wanted them to know she was disgusted with the County Commissioners in the way they went about this to begin with. She urged Director Warwick to go ahead with plans to look into district concept and would work very hard toward it. Strongly suggest they not follow what the County Commissioners did and the way they went about these cuts, instead talk to your staff they are the best to tell you where cuts can be made also strongly object to the idea of eliminating the reference librarian, this is one of the key positions she uses when she patronizes this library they are a source of wonderful information they can get you the information that you need, helps with the web, helps in all kinds of ways and not only her self but her family. Her father uses this service, (he was just ecstatic, he got a book of Abraham Lincoln and you would not believe how happy he was). Asked please consider what your staff is telling you and please do not eliminate the reference librarian and if we have to cut hours do that but don't eliminate the position.

Julie Alef Branch Librarian at the St. Clair Branch. Her feeling on the situation is you can spend a lot of money and get nothing or you can spend a little bit of money and get a lot. Their branch was blessed when their Friends donated \$600.00 so they could continue programming last year. Their circulation was up 4 ½ percent, are they connected maybe or maybe not? Noted she could actually use a programmer full-time and as we look where we are going to reduce that \$400/\$600 etc. it's going to make a big difference or either a small difference. Also urged them to understand what the Union contract means in reducing hours, their programming staff is one of lowest seniority members. If you cut hours in St. Clair it's going to pop out over some place else, so consider the big picture as you make the decisions.

Maura Gostinger staff member in charged of the Circulation Department at the Main Library. Has worked for the Library part-time and full-time for ten years and a single mother, this was a big job for her to get benefits and have a decent salary. There are other single mothers on staff here. A lot of people are dependent upon their job at the library. It's a very hard economy out there. The staff works very hard but one thing that bothers her is the low morale and the poor communications. The library staff has not been included in any of the decision-making. Also believes if you take care of your staff it will over flow with good public service. Asked the library board to get to know the staff individually you'll get a better viewpoint. Does not want to see staff cuts and if you cut the library anymore it will hurt the public and hurt everybody.

Susan Bowen taxpayer and citizen of this community, Port Huron. Processing clerk here at the Main Library and is very fortunate to come to work each day to a job she enjoys so much. There are many talented and caring staff working for the library for our community, to name just a few Lois Kaufman Branch Librarian at Marine City, Anita Jackson at Burtchville and Blake Cottingham at Memphis. Prior to working at the library, worked in a school district both in Port Huron and also Central Texas and when ever issues arose we all came together in staff meetings to discuss and share ideas. We don't have that here. Has questioned why committees haven't been formed to discuss this crisis and does not understand why staff or the community has not been able to participate in any of the suggested proposals that were given to you tonight. Proposals will be affecting so many residents of St. Clair County. Why hasn't all staff been included in this process? It is wrong that only the chosen few are repeatedly invited into the director's office and allowed to input their vision for our future. Staff has ideas and have suggestions and let us have a voice as well. Please consider listening to use before deciding on the proposal tonight. Also as an employee wanted the board to know how much she appreciates Allison Arnold in all she trying to do to help us and thanked her for always being available for the staff. Ms. Bowen also shared that she still has a vivid memory of coming here to the library with her grandmother, years ago and thinks she loves the library so much because of her, so many other people have their library memories and don't want any of them to be lost so please do all we can to work together.

Jerilyn Brown member of the IT Department and at one time an employee at the Library also the president of #1089 the Union who represents these people. Explained she is proud of the staff for the way they came to let you know what it is they feel. She is very upset that these people have been left out and even if you didn't want to hear what they had to say, but thinks at some point compassion would've asked that you would have sit down with them and told we're having a tough time do you have any input. Also explained her telephone has been ringing of the hook because they've been told that this Union is working with this board to make cuts. No one has contacted them. The only thing they know is what they seen in the paper and what she sees on the proposals tonight doesn't make absolutely no sense as their presented. Tomorrow when sitting down with Terry Pettee and members of this board perhaps she'll understand what it is their actually doing. And also no matter what happens and the dust settles the decision the board makes these people still have to work together on a daily basis, give them some relief.

Anne Marie Bedard resident of Port Huron and the reference librarian whose position they will be deciding on to eliminate. Have been working at the Library for a year and a half. Last year she was paid thirty-five thousand dollars plus benefits after taxes. She takes home less than two thousand dollars a month. This past Thursday afternoon Director Warwick called her into his office and told her he's extremely satisfied with her job performance and by accounts she's doing an exceptional job but the Library can't get by without the money their paying her. His first solution to the current financial problem is to eliminate her job entirely. It really feels scared to be alone that the only staff member threaten with compete layoff. It feels that the Library's budget problem is being placed disproportionately on her shoulders and in addition to the fact that she lost her job will be devastated to her. She feels hurt that her contributions to the library over the past year and a half are valued so little by the administration and if she was administration with an employee like her she would move heaven and earth to find anyway to avoid letting them go. Also would like to say openly that she was offended by the way she was given the information that her position was to be eliminated not only did the administration wait for the last possible moment to inform her of this and during the fewer then five minutes she was in the director's office she was given almost no explanation for this decision except to be told if you need someone to blame for this, blame Troy Feltman. Also deeply resent being told by the Director to keep this information secret from co-workers. When interviewed for this position she specifically asked if there was a danger of budget cuts that might threaten the security of the job and was told there was not. She explained she needs her job and wants to try and express to the board why it makes more sense for the library to keep her position then to eliminate it. The library's greatest asset by far is the services being provided by the staff. Your staff is your library and if you choose to balance the budget by eliminating your staff you're cutting out your greatest long-term assets in favor of short-term dollar. There has got to be another way to solve this problem. If we work together as a team we can find it. Respectfully asked the board to say no to the proposal that calls for eliminating her job.

Lois Kaufman Branch Librarian at Marine City for nineteen year's. Explained she too remembers the bookmobile and nothing was better then going to the bookmobile and also remembers taking her children to the library for story-time and asking Jackie Fournier how she got that job and her greatest joy was getting the job at the library and loves it. We do have great staff and we have people that care. This morning had a patron who needed information within few minutes because she was going to court. She called reference at Main and spoke to Anne Marie who had the information faxed to her within five minutes. We need a lot of services but we need the staff and we need to be there for each other.

Barbara King Head of the Reference Department at Main. She was very surprised that we contracted with an outside contractor to teach the computer classes when we have people working in the reference department who are very qualified to give those classes. Also two other branch librarians are trained to do computer classes so she doesn't know why the library is spending the money to pay somebody from outside our system when we have people already here that can do that job. Also very surprised this year when she received the budget figures to find that very few items have been reduced at all and many have been increased and right now we have curtailed our purchases of the expenses for technical and medical materials that they have purchased in the past, we are receiving these materials now through the Mile System and also thinks there's room to trim the materials budget a little bit more.

Ray Kuznia resident of Clyde Township and a patron for twenty-five years. Has thought that things were going along quite well until recently when the Board of Commissioners decided to cut the budget for the library. It is unfortunately that we can't call them to answer for what they did for another two years. In the mean time the library's funds are dewingling and services are going to be lowered and it's pretty clear that we have to find another way of keeping this in valuable resource system as much as possible as it can be and don't think they have no choice but to move to district. Otherwise the commissioners are going to keep chipping away until there is nothing left as far as money for the county is concerned. Also explained its fair and best to spread around misery so rather then chosen one or five etc. to eliminate this its better just to spread it out over the

entire staff. A library close is absolutely useless so rather than have all the library's closed for three weeks it would seem to be best to close one branch at a time so patrons could go somewhere else and if they're all closed we can go anywhere. The reference librarian position might be the most valuable person in the library because most people who use a library don't really have to ask the staff usually about a lot of things. They know where the books are that they want to check out and when they don't know how to get some information they would have to go to a reference librarian and if their not there they don't get the information. Regarding the morale it might be obvious to the staff but he has never noticed in all the times he has gone to the library and have not never noticed it in the way they treat the patrons, they're the best staff in any library that he as been to.

Chairperson Vernier asked if anyone else would like to speak hearing none, citizens' comments closed. Chairperson Vernier thanked everyone for their comments and explained the cuts that the library board has to make they're not making them arbitrarily their not making them without thought and their not making them with the idea of punishing people. None of that is part of their thought process. Their responsibility is to serve the people of the County of St. Clair. We certainly don't want to close the library. We want to make it as efficient as they can and in the year and a half (two years on the board) they have been making cuts and the sudden change in the last month or so of why we have to make the cuts is because they honesty thought they were getting money from the County board until the budget was passed. That's when they found out they weren't receiving any money and that's why this has to operate in a very quick way. We have to analyze what the money is and how to save it and hopefully we can do this with the least amount of pain to the employees and patrons.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Moved by Member Larson and supported by Vice-Chairperson Moran to approve the December 21, 2004 Regular Meeting Minutes. Motion unanimously carried.

V. FINANCIAL REPORT:

- a) Approval and Ratification of Bills.
Director Warwick noted explanations on larger amounts are in his director report. Member Praet asked what the BC Dumb was? Director Warwick would get back to her. Moved by Member Larson and supported by Vice-Chairperson Moran to approve the Regular invoices for December 2004, totaling \$16,845.30 and Millage invoices for December 2004, totaling \$214,528.23. Motion unanimously carried.
- b) Acceptance of Financial Report.
Director Warwick explained the Year-end fiscal report in depth (including adjustments and 2004 invoices to be paid) reflecting \$115,487 as being unspent for 2004. Also noted we might receive additional bills for 2004. Director Warwick's recommendation is that they use at least \$100,000 out of this towards any deficit for next years operating. Moved by Member Praet and supported by Vice-Chairperson Moran to accept the December 2004 Financial Reports as information only. Motion unanimously carried.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS:

- a) Library Director's Report.
Director Warwick complimented the staff on the process of getting the mitten trees up and getting the mittens donated and contributing back to the community.
- b) Department and/or Committees.
- c) Thank you notices
 - American Red Cross – Diane Ward
 - First Night Port Huron – Laurie Sample-Wynn
 - St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency- Whitney Pavlov

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

a) 2005 Budget.

Director Warwick explained we are not in an unusual situation. In reading the American Library Journal they quote that library funding cuts have reached \$82 million in the last eighteen months with 2,100 jobs eliminated and at least 31 library's closed. In going through the budgetary process of looking in what to do, we are looking at a combination of three years of cuts from the County that have amounted to \$912,000. Also explained, yes he was on the County budget committee and when the budget committee got through with discussing all of the department budgets they had a surplus of about \$78,000. One of the budget members said they would not touch the library's budget because the library has taken enough cuts. When the cuts came at the County Commissioners meeting of \$312,000 it was a complete surprise. The County did not complete the budget process until the end of December and we had plenty of people who went before the County Commissioners and made pleas on behalf of the library's budget. Was most impressed with a home school student who was twelve years old and gave a talk on the importance of libraries. So this did come at the last minute, it wasn't part of the budget committee's recommendation and the board at the December meeting did not have time to go through everything to be able to evaluate in order to make a reasoned decision. He also recalled sending out an email to staff asking for suggestions and did receive some replies. Copies of budgets were emailed to each branch and if anyone else wanted a copy they could have had a copy. Director Warwick sent copies of the first three initial plans to the board.

Plan A: Reducing staff hours at the branches and Main \$145,000, eliminating the Reference Librarian position \$55,000, eliminating two floater positions \$26,300, reducing library materials \$10,000, printing of one newsletter \$6,400 and purchasing the server from the fund balance \$40,000, estimated savings \$282,700.

Plan B: Closing the Library System for three weeks but on a rotational basis \$147,456 (refer to Zone chart), eliminating the Reference Librarian position \$55,000, eliminating three Page positions at Main \$23,884, reducing library materials \$10,000, printing of one newsletter \$6,400 and purchasing the server from the fund balance \$40,000, estimated savings \$282,700

Plan C: Closing the entire Library System down for four weeks \$196,662, eliminating three Page positions at Main \$29,638, reduction in Library materials \$10,000, printing of one newsletter \$6,400 and purchasing the server from the fund balance \$40,000, estimated savings \$282,700.

Reviewing again last week in terms of having a surplus in 2004 budget and not providing services and building up a fund balance does not seem to him the way to go.

Plan D. Reduction of hours at Main and Branches \$55,000, eliminating the Reference Librarian position at Main \$55,000, eliminating two floater positions \$26,300, printing of one newsletter \$6,400, purchasing the server from the fund balance \$40,000 and allocating \$100,000 for a cutting of \$282,700. Instead of cutting seven to seventeen hours at the branches it's between two and eight hours (seven and a half at Main). As a Library Director he has to balance a lot of things. We still have more hours then we did prior to 2001, a better book budget and we have a programming budget. Vice-Chairperson Moran asked how soon do we have to have this done? The clock is ticking. Director Warwick noted he was criticized that he did not give these proposals out to the staff ahead of time. He was told by the Human Resource Department that he should not do that. The process is he was to make a proposal to the board, then meet with the Union then we go and talk to the staff.

Vice-Chairperson Moran explained there were so many good points brought out this evening that were very insightful and because they are out there doing the job they have a better feel of where we could cut back and would like to see a workshop or something. Would like to see their input considered before the board decides on what to do here.

Member Nicholl explained if they're intended to ask them to make a decision this evening she feels very insecure and not well informed to do that.

Chairperson Vernier noted he didn't think they were planning on making a decision this evening and also noted the longer they wait the more they will have to take off.

Member Larson asked do we want to utilize some of the dollars that could be put in our fund balance approximate \$115,000 to reduce some of our cuts and do we want to look at our \$40,000 for the server and whatever reduction we incur or recommend, we are going to have issues and the State revenue, allocation is not going to increase. Staff is very valuable and appreciated their comments tonight but also our patrons are very valuable and access to our library services is very valuable. So if there are some reduction we can't totaling impact one or the other there needs to be a balance and is not favorable in closing the library for weeks. We need to talk about general concepts tonight to allow Director Warwick to go back and talk to the Union and staff so they will understand where the board is coming from. Then, we could get comments from the staff through Director Warwick before making a decision. Member Larson said it seems to be a consensus that the board would like the Director to consider, not a motion.

Director Warwick explained by using this \$100,000 (potential savings from 2004) that there is only a \$15,000 window and there could be some things that was missed and could have a deficit budget for 2005 budget year.

Member Larson noted they have to look at the concept that real budgets go up and down and you can't control everything but also we're sitting with a fund reserve and the intent of that fund reserve is to cushion things that you don't control over. We also have some other issues that are significant, are we going to go district, additional Millage and is this going to impact staffing. These are issues that we have not addressed nor made decisions on but feels making this commitment of \$100,000 is reasonable, would like to see it moved.

Member Praet noted she liked Vice-Chairperson Moran suggestion about having a workshop, everyone has questions. Also quoted Director Warwick's notes from his Director Report "We work together with a well thought plan to overcome these difficulties. Otherwise whatever cut in service is approved, will become our operating status for quite some time. The public must see us working together as an organization."

Noted because he was directed by Human Resources to not meet with the Union or staff, now is the time to decide to sit down with the staff, union, community and board, lets figure this all out together. Member Praet offered a proposal E she liked to put on the board, suggesting laying the Director off totaling over a \$100,000 in salary and benefits.

Member Larson noted in general it appears to be a consensus with the board to set a side \$140,000 from the reserve and requested that the Director meet with the staff within the next week or so to further discuss this and get recommendations from them and be brought back to the board for action. Board Members Larson, Nicholl, Vice-Chairperson Moran and Chairperson Vernier agreed they would rather see a reduction in hours then closing the system for weeks at a time. Member Praet did not agree with either option. Member Praet asked about closing Saturday hours. Director Warwick explained he could not recommend the closing of Saturday hours because there are a great deal of people who work during the week that has only Saturday's as an opportunity to come to the library.

- b) Technology Plan.
Director Warwick explained the Library Technology Plan that was submitted to the Library of Michigan has been approved by the State.
- c) Detroit Edison Company Tax Assessment Appeal Letter.
Director Warwick noted he has not heard anymore regarding the appeal letter.
- d) Long-Range Planning for 2005 discussion.
Director Warwick asked that the Long-Range Planning for 2005 be put on hold.
- e) Forming District Library Committee.
Chairperson Vernier recommended that Director Warwick and staff come up with general ideas of what we need to know then form an ad hoc committee. Director Warwick recommended Allison Arnold and additional three or four staff members (two from branches and two from Main). Director Warwick to send an email.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

a) Board Member Reports.

Member Praet – Spoke to all three-branch librarians and they are very concerned about the budget. St. Clair Branch short handed due to an employee quitting. St. Clair Friends Group is really involved if any one is interested to please contact them also their sponsored program is held on the 1st Thursday of each month. Jane Perukel Branch Librarian at Kimball is also very concerned with the changes at their library. Vickie Hurley Branch Librarian at Marysville also concerned and concerned with not publishing the newsletter, their computer classes are only half full, which usually they are full. Member Praet explained the library could get a really good price on a full page in the Times Herald for advertising. Director Warwick explained the newsletter is on the library's web page and also it wasn't to save money. He just didn't want to schedule proposed programs and then there be a major change through the board.

Member Nicholl – Yale is also concern with the budget and the staff is trying to remain professional in their responses to the community when getting asked questions. They are also gearing up for their inventory.

Member Larson – Was impressed with a couple of articles in the Times Herald. Noted he spoke to Director Warwick and suggested maybe Chairperson Vernier or another board member and Director Warwick sit down and talk to the Times Herald Editorial Board and talk about what their perception are and what the status of the library is and see where their coming from, it helps to understand (Maybe once a week and within the next 30 days).

Vice-Chairperson Moran – Linda Aguinaga, Branch Librarian at Memphis was successful in obtaining a grant to repair the roof on the community building through the Community Foundation of St. Clair County.

Chairperson Vernier – No report

b) Special Library Board Meeting.

Moved by Member Larson and supported by Vice-Chairperson Moran to schedule a Special Library Board Meeting to discuss the 2005 budget, Tuesday February 1, 2005 at 6:30 p.m., located in the Gilbert Wilcox Meeting Room at the Main Library, 210 McMorran Boulevard, Port Huron. Motion unanimously carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE. Tuesday, February 15, 2005 at 6:30 p.m., located in the Gilbert Wilcox Meeting Room at the Main Library, 210 McMorran Boulevard, Port Huron.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Member Larson to adjourn meeting. Motion unanimously carried. Adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Peter J. Vernier, Chairperson

James F. Warwick, Director/Secretary