

Carlock Public Library Board

Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 14, 2020

President Beth Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Other Board members present were Nick Birky, Lacey Fritsch, David Garrison, Mike Miller, Char Proctor, and Jane Randall. Denise Litwiller was also present along with 17 visitors in person and on Zoom. The meeting was recorded.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Correspondence: Beth read a letter from Nola Marquardt submitting her resignation from the Library staff effective December 31, 2020. She will work her Wednesday hours through that date.

Public Comment: Beth read the rules for public comment according to the Carlock Public By-Laws. Eric Larson, Library employee, patron and White Oak Twp resident, spoke in support of the efforts of the Board to retain Denise as Director and rein in the behavior of Trustee Miller, which Eric considers abusive and intimidating. Doug Litwiller felt that the ongoing situation is a struggle and waste of time for not only his wife Denise and the Board but causes the Library to suffer. Pat Luber reported that the Friends of Library mailed a letter to Board in support of Denise, expressing their concerns, and asking to be kept informed of the Board's actions to resolve the current conflict. The letter had not been received as yet.

New Business:

- 1) **Staff Holiday Gifts:** In lieu of having a staff party this year due to COVID restrictions, a motion was made by Dave to purchase a \$50 VISA gift card for each of the staff and volunteers, a total of 10; seconded by Jane. Motion carried 7-0. Nick volunteered to get the gift cards.
- 2) **Library Director Job Difficulties:** Denise was asked to attend the meeting to make a statement. She expressed her pleasure serving as Director and her desire for a resolution so she can return to a job she loves. She would consider rescinding her resignation under these circumstances: a) she would receive no emails from Trustee Miller or his family, that all messages would go through the Board President or Vice-President. She would comply with any requests received through the Board. b) the Millers would not be allowed to send letters to her at her home or work, c) Mike and Sharon Miller be required to wear masks in the Library as other patrons are, d) unreasonable requests for information be shut down by the Board, e) if not already done, Denise be relieved of her duties as FOIA officer.

Mike was asked to respond. He noted that as trustees in a public Library district, we are responsible to the all citizens in our district but feels we are responding to a small group of library patrons, especially parents and young children. He noted the drop in number of patrons and usage. He feels the Board as a whole is not willing to go forward with efforts to improve our statistics and efforts of the Long Range Planning Committee are not being supported. He will not stop pushing and feels a person in a public job must be willing to accept criticism. He has discontinued one-on-one conversations and emails to Denise.

Some of the Long Range Planning Committee's plans were reviewed. The acceptable ways for Board members and Director to communicate were reviewed, as were the guidelines of the Open Meetings Act.

Nick pointed out that although he supports some of Mike's ideas for library improvement, he felt Mike's methods were causing disruptions and arguments, all to the detriment of the Library's functioning, and therefore asked for Mike to resign. Mike stated he will remain in his position as trustee for the remainder of his term. He feels he has a responsibility to the public to dissent when he disagrees with any Board action, and will publicly say so if necessary.

Dave said the problems we're having now may make it more difficult to find staff replacements as needed and we need to show the Carlock community that the Library is a good place to work.

Dave made a motion that all communication, letters and emails from all trustees shall go through the Board President. She shall determine if any issues need immediate attention or if they can wait until the next board meeting. Motion seconded by Nick and carried with 6 ayes and 1 nay from Mike. Beth asked Denise to think about tonight's action and discussion and contact the Board with her decision regarding her return as Director.

Beth reported that she obtained legal advice about holding trustees to standards set down by the Secretary of State's Office. Because trustee is an elected position, options are limited. One option is to issue a commendation for the Director. So after further discussion, Char made a motion to commend Denise noting our appreciation for her service to the Library and support for her return as director. Jane noted that on December 4 Denise received the Citizen of the Year Award from the Carlock Community Club and seconded the motion. Motion carried with 6 ayes and 1 abstention from Mike.

With regard to Nola's resignation, Beth noted that as determined at the last meeting, Library hours of operation would be reduced if Nola's position is not filled by January. Hiring of staff comes under the duties of the director.

A motion was made by Lacey to adjourn; seconded by Char. Motion carried 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm. The next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jane Randall, Secretary