

Central Arkansas Library System

Board of Directors Meeting

March 30, 2023, at noon

Hybrid Meeting: Darragh Center & Zoom Video Call

Board members in attendance were Stacey McAdoo, Ryan Davis, Brandon Grice, Bob Brown, Luke Underwood, Alexis Sims, Audrey Evans, Madhav Shroff, Jennifer Jamison, and Dustin McDaniel. Sybil Jordan Hampton, Esperanza Massana-Crane, and Andy Gill were absent.

Staff in attendance were Nate Coulter, Lisa Donovan, Tameka Lee, Eliza Borné, Jo Spencer, Lance Ivy, Nathan Smith, Carol Coffey, Chris Ketterman, Pamela Bandy, Joe Hudak, Katie Adams, Kate Matthews, Hannah Saulters, Dre Thornton, Amanda Hayes, Liv Ryan, Rebecca Beadle, Ellen Samples, Candace White, Amanda Orgel, Mark Christ, Glenn Whaley, and Polly Deems.

Also in attendance was Joe Flaherty with the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, Kate East with AMR Architects Inc., and Richard Prewitt.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes

McAdoo asked the Board to approve the February Minutes as presented.

Brown moved to approve the February Minutes as presented. Evans seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

2. Approval of February Financials

Grice reported that as of February 28, 2023, CALS assets totaled \$170,703,515.14 with a net loss of \$1,502,144.18. He said CALS received the last collection of the 2017 capital bonds totaling \$375K in February. He mentioned that tax collections were up about one percent through March.

McAdoo filed the February Financials for audit.

Information Items

1. Williams Library Remodel Update

In May of 2022, Little Rock voters approved a capital bond millage decrease that generated funds that CALS allocated to renovation projects. While the majority of those funds will be directed to the Main Library renovation, about \$1M will be dedicated to remodel the Sue Cowan Williams Library. Coulter invited Kate East with AMR Architects Inc. to update the board on the Williams Library remodel plans.

East began by giving an overview of the branch's current layout. She said her team used feedback from suggestion boxes, conversations with regular patrons, and two community input meetings to get ideas for what staff and the community wanted in the renovation. Her team also considered the influx of students from the adjacent Dunbar Middle School visiting the library after school hours. East showed the board renderings of the re-envisioned space, including ideas such as moving the main entrance from the north side of the building to the west side; a crosswalk between the library and the middle school; a new children's area; an enclosed teen room with designated computers; enlarged staff work areas; additional study rooms; and an expanded community room with a teaching kitchen. She said her team has also been in conversation with local artists about the potential to create murals within the space that are representative of the community. She was also hopeful that a statue of Sue Cowan Williams could be commissioned to honor her legacy.

Davis expressed enthusiasm for the project, sharing that Williams Library was his local branch as well as a true community hub. McAdoo expressed her support for honoring Sue Cowan Williams with a statue, and Sims asked if a statue was included in the current budget. East replied that it was not, but could potentially be factored in. Coulter said that CALS could help raise funding for a statue. Underwood asked if there was a tentative timeline for the remodel. East said the plans were still in the schematic phase but the renovation would likely take around eight months, with the possibility of renovating in phases so the students who use the library after school would not be displaced.

2. Director's Report

Coulter noted that he submitted his report in writing ahead of this meeting, but had a few items he wanted to highlight:

- *Possible Capital Campaign for Main:* Coulter asked Borné to speak about a possible capital campaign to raise private money to supplement the public funds available from the bonds to remodel Main Library. Borné explained that as the architects have run early cost estimates for the renovation, it has become clear that CALS will need more than the current \$20M in public funds allocated to the project. In response, she said CALS is considering a private campaign with the goal of raising \$3M to \$5M to supplement the public funds. Since CALS has never hosted a capital campaign of this scale, Borné said that executive staff were looking into commissioning a feasibility study through Library Strategies consulting group to assess the likelihood that such a campaign would succeed. She explained that CALS would gather a steering committee to create a case statement along with a list of donor prospects to interview. The consultants would then manage the interview process, assess their findings, and prepare a feasibility report to share with the library's staff and board. She said the goal was to complete the feasibility study by June and that the study would cost about \$23K.

Sims volunteered to serve on the steering committee, citing her previous experience with non-profit fundraisers. She asked how many staff members were on the development team at CALS. Borné replied that there were four, including a full-time volunteer coordinator who would be less involved with the campaign. Brown asked what was at

stake if the consultants concluded a capital campaign was not feasible. Borné replied that the budget would be realistically decided with some desired elements scaled back. Underwood asked what the difference would be between raising \$3M versus \$5M. Borné and Coulter said that the architects would be able to give a more definitive answer, but they would likely implement value engineering to decide which items are most needed and affordable. Underwood asked if the potential capital campaign would be run through CALS or the CALS Foundation. Borné said that CALS would pay for the feasibility study and the CALS Foundation would pay for the campaign.

- *Censorship Legislation in Arkansas:* Coulter said that CALS was actively analyzing the possible implications of SB 81, which would soon be signed into law by the governor. [On April 4, 2023, SB 81 was signed into Arkansas law as Act 372.] Brown asked how CALS was preparing for the law to go into effect ninety days after the legislature adjourned. Coulter said that, practically speaking, the library's policies on requests for reconsideration and collection development would need to be reviewed for compliance with the new law. He also said he has assured staff that it will be CALS' policy to defend any employees who might be subjected to charges arising out of the law.

Sims asked about the litigation strategies Coulter mentioned in his report. Coulter said CALS regularly consults with lawyers on various legal matters and that he hoped to find additional pro bono help for this particular situation. He said any legal challenge to the law would hopefully be a coordinated effort on part of many libraries to protect values such as the freedom to read and access to information.

- *Book Lockers:* Ivy shared that book lockers had been installed at the Roberts Library on the Library Square campus. He said book lockers would be installed at four branches: Main/Roberts, McMath, Rooker, and Terry. Ivy asked Amanda Hayes, System Holds Manager, and Liv Ryan, System Book Club Kit Coordinator, to share more details about the book lockers. Hayes said that each locker had forty-one storage spaces, totaling one-hundred-and-sixty-four storage spaces across the branches. Ryan said that patrons would be able to select the book lockers as a pickup location for holds through the catalog. Hayes said that once the lockers were operational, staff would fill the lockers with requested books, and patrons could scan their library cards to pick up holds at any time. Hayes said a book locker manual would be created and distributed for staff to use as they learned the ins and outs of the new technology.

3. Other

Christ invited the board to a program at Ron Robinson Theater on April 20 featuring director Lizzie Gottlieb. Gottlieb made a documentary about her father, editor Robert Gottlieb, and his work with writer Robert Caro. After a showing of the documentary, Coulter planned to moderate a program in conversation with Gottlieb. Whaley also shared that the Roberts Library would be hosting a birthday celebration for George Fisher on April 8, who would be turning 100 years old were he alive. Fisher was a longtime editorial cartoonist for the Arkansas Gazette and the Arkansas Times.

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Polly Deems, CALS Volunteer Coordinator, shared that CALS was gearing up for Volunteer Appreciation Month in April. She and the branch volunteer coordinators were planning appreciation events as well as gifts, free CALS merchandise, and thank you notes for volunteers around the system. Deems thanked the board for volunteering their time and efforts to the library as volunteers.

4. Move to Adjourn

Davis moved to adjourn the meeting. Brown seconded the motion, and McAdoo called the meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.



President



Secretary