

Central Arkansas Library System

Board of Directors Meeting

October 24, 2023, at 12:00 P.M.

Hybrid Meeting: UALR Downtown & Zoom Video Call

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

Staff in attendance were Jo Spencer, Gonzalo Hernandez, Eliza Borné, Lisa Donovan, Nate Coulter, Latina Sheard, Carol Coffey, Joe Hudak, Hannah Saulters, Heather Zbinden, Amanda Orgel, Ellen Samples, Pam Bandy, Polly Deems, Tameka Lee, Brant Collins, Nathan Smith, Candace White, Chris Ketterman, Brad Mooy, Glenn Whaley and Will Gross.

Also in attendance were Stuart Mackey and David Hathaway with the Hathaway Group and Kate East and Jake Sullivan from AMR.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes

McAdoo asked the Board to approve the September minutes as presented.

Hampton moved to approve the August minutes as presented. Sims seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

2. Financial Report

Grice reported that for the month of September, 2023, CALS assets totaled \$105,932,600.57 with a net loss of (\$3,281,130.31). He said that tax collections were up 4% through October, and noted that October and November were typically the months where we could expect the largest draw so we could see a flip from a net loss to an income position in November.

Spencer added that there was a timing issue with tax collections this month according to the assessor and that we should see an 8-10% increase in the next month.

McAdoo filed the September Financials for audit.

Information Items

1. Williams Remodel Update

For information contact:

Will Gross, wjgross@cals.org (501) 918-3033

Spencer opened with the timeline for the remodel to Williams Library (closing on November 3) and then introduced Kate East and Jake Sullivan from AMR Architects, the firm who designed the remodel. East reintroduced AMR to the board and said that since they last were at a meeting they have secured a contractor and officially started construction.

East detailed the key changes coming to Williams including a teaching kitchen, mezzanine for office space, a new entrance, and a new acoustically controlled youth area. Evans asked what was involved in the new youth area and East answered that there would be new shelving for books and DVDs, new study tables, along with 2 screens for gaming and other programs. East also mentioned that the space would be divided by glass walls so staff could keep an eye on the youth in the space. East mentioned that 3 study rooms would be added in, there would be an added all gender restroom, new finishes and ADA updates to the entire space.

East then showed off the floor plans to the building. Sullivan then went on to show renderings for the newly updated building. He showed renderings of the entrance, interiors and programming areas. Sullivan then went on to talk about the key dates for the construction process including the library's closure on November 3, several weeks are then set aside to move out staff and vital items before builders move in on November 24. Then move-in will begin the weekend of spring break with the aim being a Grand Reopening on April 6, 2024. East mentioned that a lot of the shelves and furniture will be reused, and stored in a pod until the library reopens.

Coulter then emphasized that the remodel was focused on how to better serve the 100s of kids that come over from Dunbar school every day. He then invited Sheard to talk about what the library staff will be doing when Williams is closed. Sheard said that they would be working out of two classrooms in the Dunbar school, where they would be able to provide after-school services as well as giving students access to books during the day.

Sims then asked Sheard if there was anything missing from the building plans that Sheard or her staff would like to see. Sheard said that the current plans are sufficient, and that the addition of the teaching kitchen would be extremely helpful. She also talked about how the new teen area would greatly enhance services to many of their patrons. Sheard also praised AMR's willingness to listen and work with both staff and community members to design a library that would best meet the needs of the community. East also mentioned the Community Fridge that Williams had planned would also be incorporated into the design.

Coulter then asked East to talk about how art would be incorporated into the branch. East worked with Colin Thompson from CALS as well as artists to conceive what art would be included in the branch. They have been working to envision the art that would be included in the branch. One of the pieces planned would be in honor the library's namesake, Sue Cowan Williams.

2. Six Bridges Book Festival Recap

Mooy introduced himself and began to detail the successful festival. He said that there were 61 programs, 52 presenters presented at 19 different venues. It had an overall reach of 5,318 as of the Tuesday the week of the meeting with over 500 post-fest views. 620 Books were sold and

For information contact:

Will Gross, wjgross@cals.org (501) 918-3033

more than 750 were given away. The festival exceeded its fundraising goal and kept expenses in line. Mooy was very happy with all of the presenters and highlighted David Gran, Christian Cooper, and Maureen Corrigan's presentations as being exceptional. He also mentioned some of the honors festival speakers either received or were short-listed for including New York Time's Bestsellers, Pulitzer Prizes, ALA Excellence in Non-Fiction awards, and the National Book Award.

Mooy went on to talk about how 71 volunteers dedicated 567 hours to the event and that 60 sponsors supported the event. Mooy then talked about the successful Friday night reception with food and drinks. The event had two book sellers operating at it. They had presentations in person for four days, with an additional three including virtual presentations. Corrigan closed the fest and ended her speech with a talk about banned books. The festival ran into banned books week at the end and had a banned books themed writing contest centered around Huckleberry Finn. After the fest ended, there have been art workshops for the past several weekends with excellent artists and illustrators including Yuyi Morales. Those were paid for by grants from the Arkansas Art Council and the Mexican consulate.

Upcoming, Six Bridges is partnering with the Clinton Center to host author Samuel Spitalé. The next event after that will be "Wes Fest" in November, including showings of Wes Anderson films and a talk given by an author of books about the director. After that comes the Big Read in 2024, centered around the book There, There by Tommy Orange. Orange will be speaking in Little Rock thanks to an NEA Big Read grant. Next year's Six Brides fest has loosely confirmed Pulitzer winner Nate Powell will be there and the classic book will be Kindred by Octavia Butler. Mooy then went on to share an anecdote from a fest attendee talking about how excellent the festival was.

Mooy then shared an anecdote about how he had a funny interaction with a patron who was actually in one of the books by an author who was presenting. Nate and Brad then talked about how they came to invite Christian Cooper thanks to the Alan Ross Kumpe Memorial Fund, 226 people came to see Cooper speak. Afterwards the video that the Communications team made with Cooper to promote CALS' birdwatching kits was shown.

3. Hillcrest Hall Update

Mackey from Hathaway Group informed the Board that the local Masonic chapter had approved the purchase of the property. He thinks that they didn't take the vote until they received approval from the national organization, but he's still waiting on confirmation of that. Hathaway Group is making all of the preparations for the sale based on that. Mackey said the farthest date out for the sale is November 9th with a good chance they'll close before October 15th. They've reached out to the Hillcrest Merchants and Residents Associations and other building tenants and they all were comfortable with the sale. The only people who weren't were others whose bids weren't accepted.

4. Director's Report

For information contact:

Will Gross, wjgross@cals.org (501) 918-3033

Coulter began by talking about the legal battle around Act. 372. October 24 was the deadline for the state to file an appeal of the injunction. It did not appear like the state was planning on doing so.

Afterwards there was an update from the Hathaway Group about the sale of Hillcrest Hall. Hathaway announced that the buyer had removed all conditions on the sale and documents had been prepared to complete the sale. Hathaway then asked for an official board motion to complete the sale and for a representative to sign and complete the sale on the signing date of November 9. Spencer and Evans volunteered to be CALS' representatives that day.

Gill then moved to authorize Spencer or Evans to represent the Board and sign for the sale.

Sims seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Mackey then went on to talk about how with the sale, the Masons have been willing and working with various community members and organizations who have used the space before to allow them to continue using the space.

Coulter then went on to honor staff member Jasmine Jobe who was recognized by the Arkansas Library Association with the Laurie Shuff Paraprofessional Award. The Communications team also presented at ArLA, showing off a poster talking about the development of the Rock, Ready, Run 5K they hosted in partnership with the North Little Rock Library.

Coulter then talked about the upgrades happening to the paths on Jonesboro Drive near the Children's Library. This project in conjunction with MetroPlan will help expand access between facilities like Jim Dailey Fitness Center and the Children's Library.

Coulter also took some time to honor Lisa Donovan for her illustrious service to CALS on the eve of her retirement. Donovan then gave a few words showing her appreciation by thanking the board, her coworkers, and of course, Harry Styles.

Coulter then introduced Matthews and Samples as the new Directors of Public Service and Programming respectively. Samples then gave a few words expressing her gratitude towards Donovan and her excitement for her new role.

5. Other

Coulter reminded the board that there would be no meeting in November and that the next board meeting would be on December 14.

6. Move to Adjourn

McAdoo moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Gill.

McAdoo officially adjourned the meeting at 12:49 P.M.

For information contact:

Will Gross, wjgross@cals.org (501) 918-3033

President

Secretary

For information contact:

Will Gross, wjgross@cals.org (501) 918-3033