

MINUTES

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

July 27, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners was held at the Central Library starting at 11:03 a.m. on the above-written date.

1. Roll Call:

Present:	Commissioner	Valerie Lynne Shaw
	Commissioner	Linda Blank
	Commissioner	Hiram Sims

Absent:	Vice-President	Kathryn Eidmann
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Also present: City Librarian John F. Szabo Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman; Deputy City Attorney Josh Templet; Library staff and members of the public.

Following advice from Deputy City Attorney Josh Templet due to the absence of a President and Vice President, Commissioner Blank moved to nominate Commissioner Shaw as acting President for the purpose of chairing this meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sims and passed unanimously: 3 Ayes (Blank/Sims/Shaw). Noes: 0. Absent: 1(Eidmann).

2. Opening Remarks: None.

3. Approval of the Minutes: Regular Meeting - June 22, 2023

It was moved by Commissioner Blank and seconded by Commissioner Sims to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on June 22, 2023. The motion passed with 3 Ayes (Blank/Sims/Shaw). Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Eidmann).

4. Public Comments on Matters

Within the Board's Jurisdiction: None.

5. City Librarian's Comments and

Announcements: City Librarian John F. Szabo provided the following information:

Fiscal Year Budget 2024-25: Mr. Szabo informed the Board that staff will start having internal meetings this week to prepare for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25 budget. He said that the proposed budget is generally submitted to the Board in November.

Libraries Serving as Cooling Stations: In the midst of summer heat, libraries are serving as cooling stations. The Library's Public Relations & Marketing Office is getting the word out.

Installation of Hydration Stations in libraries: Hydration stations will be replacing water fountains with units that are both water fountains and also fill water bottles. Mr. Szabo reported that currently 45 libraries have hydration stations through a partnership with DWP, for which the Library receives some reimbursement. The goal is to have them at all LAPL locations.

Storytime with Los Angeles Dodgers: Current and former players are doing Storytime at several LAPL libraries through a partnership with the Dodgers and the Library Foundation of Los Angeles. The Dodgers also provide some merchandise like hats and tickets for young people who attend Storytime. The most recent Storytime was at the Baldwin Hills Branch. The Dodgers also partnered with the Lincoln Heights Branch and LAPL's Exploration & Creativity Department to have a group of 60 students help with planting lavender along the Dodger Stadium walkway, working with the Dodgers Landscape crew, and then stayed for a game. Mr. Szabo said the latter event was a continuation of biodiversity storytelling.

Partnership with the LA Kings: The Kings crew and mascot Bailey have come to a number of libraries throughout summer.

Summer Reading Program: The focus of the summer reading program is about stopping the summer slide by engaging young people in reading to maintain their reading skills.

Octavia Lab at Central Library: The lab holds a monthly 3D Modeling and printing workshop, showing families and kids how the printers work, and allows kids to have an individual design project. Also, a crew from NBC Nightly Kids Edition, with News Anchor Lester Holt, filmed the class and interviewed kids and parents on their project.

Partnership with LA Zoo: The LA Zoo has come to several of LAPL libraries to talk about the Zoo and to read a special picture book called, *The Zoo That Moved*, which is about the former zoo location. Mr. Szabo reported that LAPL has over 30,000 registrations for the Summer Reading Challenge, which is over 1.5 million minutes.

Libros Schmibros: Each year the Library participates in a program with Libros Schmibros Bookstore located in Boyle Heights. They sponsor 15 high school students who are Boyle Heights residents and bring them to various cultural institutions throughout Los Angeles. Last week, they came to the Central Library to tour the Octavia Lab, Special Collections, Rare Books, and the International Languages and History Department.

Digital Equity: LAPL has been making numerous efforts towards digital equity throughout our libraries. One major one is the Tech To Go bundles, funded through numeral sources, but with significant Federal funding. This program circulates a laptop and Wi-Fi hotspot bundles. To date, there have been over 7,000 circulations. This is not just providing Internet access and technology that's in our libraries, but also providing access at home.

Income Tax Preparation. This service ended back in April, but has some meaningful data from that work. Several of our libraries work with VITA, which is a volunteer income tax assistance program, and with AARP who provided tax assistance at the library. They offered a total of 152 Income tax preparation programs and helped file over 3,300 tax returns. Mr. Szabo said this paints a picture of the importance of that program.

Student Success Library Card: This partnership with LAUSD to provide the Student Success Library Card to every child in the LAUSD so they have access to all Library resources was celebrated recently at the Watts Branch Library with the Superintendent, Alberto Carvalho. Mr. Szabo said that LAUSD's homepage is promoting the Student Success

Library Card and partnership with LAPL, and the Library does the same on the LAPL's website.

Commissioner Blank asked how many branches were involved in the Income Tax Preparation program and how they were chosen. Mr. Szabo said 16 branches participated. Joyce Cooper, Director of Branch Library Services, stated that locations are selected by Branch Library Services and the Lifelong Learning Department because they have the connections with the providers for this program and for many other programs as well. Usually, they offer them to the branches and the branches select the programs based on community need and available space.

Commissioner Blank asked how they advertise the program. Ms. Cooper replied that the programs are posted on the Library's website. The branches also put out flyers and on their events calendar.

Commissioner Blank commented that when she was at the Watts Library for the event with LAUSD, the branch librarian indicated to her that sometimes it's hard to even get the kids to the library because the parents don't know that the library exists. She asked what can be done to facilitate that information being given through the schools so that the library is used to its ultimate, not to its minimum.

Mr. Szabo replied that LAPL does outreach to local papers and other local communications channels, but also through LAUSD. Children's Librarians take advantage of their communications channels through the school district to inform about what the library is doing and going out into the schools, promoting libraries and digital services. He said that in-person traffic in libraries is not where it was pre-pandemic and the physical circulation, which libraries are designed around, is also declining. He pointed out that this is an issue for libraries, large and small, across the country. He said that libraries are having more dynamic programming, activities, exhibitions, in-person learning and Full STEAM Ahead programs and technology; all of which is really important. Using the space for those kinds of activities in the library and doing the job of promoting them in the community is enormously important.

Commissioner Blank asked if the elementary schools have summer school programs where the library can work in conjunction with summer school. Mr. Szabo replied that yes, and in fact, the kids who are at the Watts Branch event with LAUSD were part of the summer program in one of the schools.

Commissioner Sims asked about where to find the many different events happening at the different branches and if there is a master list of what's happening at all of them. Mr. Szabo replied that events can be found at lapl.org, the website has those programs, which are being added all the time and are promoted through the website. This is the one place where hundreds of programs that are being offered are located in a single location.

Commissioner Sims asked Mr. Szabo to provide more information about the Federal grant used to provide the Tech-To-Go program, who wrote the grant, and other details.

Mr. Szabo said the Library had applied for and received two grants through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as part of the broad stimulus funding that Congress appropriated. The two Emergency Connectivity Fund grants, one was for about \$1.7 million and the subsequent one was between \$5 and \$6 million dollars, paid for the bundles that consist of a laptop and a Wi-Fi hotspot, as well as the connectivity service fees.

Mr. Szabo noted that the service on those laptops is good through the end of this calendar year. He said there is another small program of just mobile hotspots without the laptop that can be checked out that are also part of our Tech To Go program. LAPL received

Community Development Block Grant funds for this program, which comes through another city department. He also added that the funding for the branded bags used for the bundles are paid for by the Library Foundation.

Mr. Szabo added that the chairwoman of the FCC, Jessica Rosen Morsel, complimented LAPL for allowing patrons to check out the bundles for 6 months. He said that one of the challenges about digital equity and access is that the need doesn't go away, but the funding for the service does, which brings up the question about whether the library should pay for at-home Internet service for individuals who check out these bundles for 6 months at a time. He said that not every library system loans out for long periods, but LAPL staff made a decision early on to do so. He said staff is hopeful that some Federal funds might become available to continue the program, because there are many issues that stem from people not having this essential access.

Commissioner Blank asked if the library has grant writers who apply for grants and if there was a designated department for that purpose. Mr. Szabo replied that the Library does not have a designated grant writing department and it is the leadership staff that apply for the grants; for example, Jené Brown and team applied for the Federal Grant for this Tech To Go program; He said the Library Foundation has a great skill set for applying for grants, and sometimes they are the most appropriate receptacle for the funding.

Commissioner Shaw asked if there was another city department that provides a large number of services and programs other than the library. Mr. Szabo replied that he could not think of another department in terms of serving everyone in the city as the library does with the diversity of services and programs.

6. City Librarian's Reports: None.

7. Staff Presentations: New Americans and Street Vendor program

Eva Mitnick, Director of the Engagement and Learning Division, stated that the Lifelong Learning department is one the core departments in her division because they coordinate system wide programs and services mainly for adults to build skills and knowledge they need to survive and thrive by providing adult literacy, Career Online High School, financial literacy, health literacy, citizenship services and courses for those who are learning English as a second or third language, as well the VITA program and many more. She said that the Lifelong Learning Department is divided into two offices: The Office of Civics and Community Services and the Office of Education and Literacy, and both of these offices will be providing an overview of their services and programs.

New Americans Initiative Presentation

Madeleine Ildefonso, Senior Librarian, Manager of the Office of Civics and Community Services, stated that her two presentations are focused on the New Americans Initiative and the Street Vendor Program. She said that she is the first manager of the Office of Civics and Community Services Department, which opened in 2012, when the Library launched the Path to Citizenship Program, which featured citizenship classes and citizenship corners with study supplies and information from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). She said that in a formal partnership with USCIS, the Library expanded

services both to legal permanent residents eligible to naturalize and for any person with questions related to immigration; and in 2018, the Path to Citizenship program was relaunched as the New Americans Initiative with expanded resources.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that some of the pillars of the New Americans Initiative are related to immigrant integration and inclusion, feeling welcomed, economic mobility and civic participation, as well as considering migrant features and realities, and LAPL supports these efforts by providing free legal immigration services as well as small business support and resources for immigrant business owners, including street vendors.

Ms. Ildefonso reported that LAPL had created six New American Centers to provide private locations for legal consultations, with one center located in the Central Library's International Languages Department and five at branch locations. They purchased supplies such as branded tablecloths, signage, and laptops to conduct pop-ups of the New American Centers to increase access where needed. A web portal was built to share program information and to provide the ability to make appointments and provide information for callers in English, Spanish, Persian, Mandarin and Korean. Envelopes were also created with a list of items frequently needed to naturalize and "Know your Rights" cards in 18 languages. She said those items, along with USCIS materials, can be found at the welcome stations at all 73 libraries.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that her office has written Requests For Qualifications (RFQs) to support this work by using a group of approved contractors. She showed a powerpoint listing all the services that are provided. She said currently the contractors that are actively working with the Library are: African Communities Public Health Coalition, CARECEN, International Rescue Committee, Centro CHA, Catholic Charities and PARS Equality Center. She noted that the organization formerly named Asian Americans Advancing Justice is currently not working with the Library as a contractor but the Library refers all API languages to them for services.

Ms. Ildefonso highlighted a special partnership project with PARS Equality Center and IRC International Rescue Committee to welcome Afghan arrivals, to whom the Library issued around 200 library cards and worked with Persian-speaking librarians to develop presentations and meet with Afghan arrivals, along with the representatives from integration and refugee resettlement organizations to orient them to resources offered at the library. She said this project is still ongoing.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that her office had also been working on a project with street vendors. During the pandemic, library cards were issued to street vendors and staff conducted virtual library orientation for street vendors about library resources.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that in prior years, several agencies were funded in Los Angeles by USCIS to provide citizenship classes and LAPL hosted many classes, but this past year, the USCIS did not fund any LA nonprofit to conduct citizenship classes. Because LAPL is deeply engaged in the integration landscape, staff was prepared by way of contract services to provide citizenship classes at the Library. Classes beginning in August 2023.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that her office will be working to find or to grow opportunities to provide classes with language support in Mandarin, Chinese, Armenian, and Thai language. She said that since 2012, the Library has hosted 6,870 citizenship classes with almost 70,000 attendees. In 2019, LAPL hosted 754 in person citizenship classes with almost 7,000 attendees. These are overall stats since the launch in 2018, they have provided 11,299

service and citizenship programs and assisted more than 80,707 applicants with citizen integration and naturalization.

Discussion

Commissioner Shaw asked who had created this program initially. Ms. Ildefonso replied that the idea had been created prior to her assignment at the office, but when she was hired, it was her job to make it work.

City Librarian John Szabo reported that the program had started just prior to his arrival in 2012, when Antonio Villaraigosa was Mayor. The challenge was getting information about naturalization to the 700,000 plus legal permanent residents in greater Los Angeles and communicate the benefits. A conversation began between the Mayor's office and LAPL. The initial partnership was to provide USCIS information about naturalization in libraries and provide some basic training to library staff on how to answer questions about the naturalization process. He pointed out that LAPL was the first library in the country to partner with USCIS; today, there are libraries all over the country that offer citizenship information. After AB 60 passed, which is the State legislation that allows undocumented residents to have drivers licenses, more people were coming to the library for more issues around immigration and partnerships expanded.

Commissioner Shaw asked if there was a center in South LA. Ms. Ildefonso replied that there is one at the Junipero Serra Branch and another one at the Wilmington Branch.

Commissioner Shaw asked if there was a center in every region. Ms. Ildefonso replied that the Western region didn't have one, but they have done numerous pop-ups in the Western region; in West LA at the Mar Vista Branch and at various locations throughout the city.

Commissioner Sims asked why would street vendors need to know about library service. Ms. Ildefonso replied that the street vendors in Los Angeles have a high percentage of monolingual speakers, mostly Spanish or Thai speakers, and work long days and are very focused on supporting their families, the library is something that maybe isn't always perceived as a destination for resources. During the pandemic, staff had good opportunities to connect with street vendors through partner organizations to highlight all the Library resources available to them and their families.

Street Vendor Program Presentation

Madeleine Ildefonso, Senior Librarian, Manager of the Office of Civics and Community Services, discussed the Street Vending Program, which is part of the New Americans Initiative. She said her office is always considering the information needs and how they can support immigrants. She stated that street vending was legalized in 2018 by the state, and her office hoped that LAPL could provide educational classes. They started working with several community partners who are supporting street vending and noticed an information gap on what vendors need to know to become successful business owners.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that also in 2019, the American Library Association had a small business grant intended to serve underserved communities and to help create resources to advance ownership of their businesses. She said this seemed like a great opportunity for the street vendor program, applied for the grant and started with creating a web page with content in English and Spanish about permits, working with partners and the Department of Public Health to update the information.

As part of the Google grant they were able to gather a small group of eight (8) street vendors, who were paid as consultants, and they worked directly with them along with the community partners to produce microlearning training using Cell-ED, an EdTech company that produces microlearning using text messages, phone calls, or WhatsApp. Users learn at their own pace, the units developed are at about a third grade literacy level, and coaching by phone is available. She said this is a resource developed specifically for street vendors because they're often on the go.

Ms. Ildefonso stated that the Google grant paid for the work done by Cell-ED, which includes courses in learning English for your business, marketing your business, making a budget, pricing items, and an introduction on paying taxes. She said vendors have existed in the informal economy, but they're excited and proud to be part of the business community in Los Angeles. Also very important to the vendors is community safety, and the program provides training in Bystander Intervention and Self Advocacy for Safety with de-escalation techniques.

Ms. Ildefonso also mentioned that mental health was featured in the work that they did with the vendors who had experienced trauma on the streets, and the Library was able to bring in a therapist to work with them. They had the option of attending a group session or one-on-one therapy to help them navigate talking about the things that bothered them, since some of them experience violence.

Ms. Ildefonso reported that recently they had presented the first Street Vendor Financial & Digital Literacy Fair in partnership with several organizations. She said they plan on doing more events on a smaller scale with the partners and at strategic locations throughout the library system like at Pico-Union and Junipero Serra, where many street vendors do business. She showed the list of the presentations and the workshops that were done at the event and some pictures from the event where DPH was the featured speaker. She noted that this was the first time that DPH had met in person with vendors since 2019, and there were promises of more work to be done together.

Discussion

Commissioner Sims asked how they had recruited the vendors. Ms. Ildefonso said that the Library worked with the community partners that work directly with the vendors.

Commissioner Blank asked if the fair had been held at the Central Library. Ms. Ildefonso replied that it had been held at the Central Library, but they will be looking into doing smaller versions of the event in branches.

Adult Literacy Services Presentation

Veronica Majd, Senior Librarian, and Krystal Messer, Librarian III, from the Office of Education and Literacy provided an overview of the LAPL's Adult Literacy Program. They reported that since 1984, LAPL has been a recipient of the California Library Literacy Services funding to develop and expand services for adult learners. The Library's Adult Literacy Services program helps adults meet their lifelong learning goals, whether that is reading a storybook to their children, applying for a job, or learning English as a second language.

Ms. Messer reported that LAPL operates 20 Literacy centers throughout the system, and branches that don't have a formal literacy center operate as satellite locations, so patrons can seek service at any LAPL location.

Ms. Messer stated that to participate in the program, adult learners must be at least 16 years old and not be enrolled in the traditional high school program. Services are offered for native English speakers and ESL learners. They rely on volunteer tutors. The Literacy Coordinators are pivotal in finding both the tutors and learners in their communities and matching them up together. After an assessment, volunteers provide one or more tutoring sessions. They also teach conversation classes on topics ranging from film discussions, book discussions, and conversations about the news. There are many opportunities for learners to practice with each other. One-on-one tutoring is the heart of the program and this is where they match learners and tutors for weekly meetings over a minimum of six (6) months. She said many of the pairs have been working together for years.

Ms. Messer reported that during the pandemic, they had to adapt to virtual sessions, but now they are seeing many of them start to meet again in person. It's really about that partnership, and what works best for the tutor and the learner together and that's why they stay together for so long. Walk-in tutors can help folks who might not be ready to commit to the one-on-one program yet, and these sessions are always in person.

Ms. Messer discussed Family Literacy services, to support adult learners who are caregivers to children 0 to 17 by building their confidence to read aloud to their children, engage in their child's schooling and build their home into a literacy rich environment.

Ms. Messer stated that LAPL was the very first library system country to offer the Career Online High School program; and not surprisingly, the pandemic only increased demand with a dramatic rise in applications. The Library is able to offer scholarships to patrons to this fully accredited diploma program through State support. Currently, they have over 800 alumni and are planning for the next graduation ceremony this October.

Discussion

Commissioner Sims asked which office from the State provides the California Literacy Services Funding. Ms. Majd replied that the State Library manages California Library Literacy Services, which LAPL applies for yearly.

Commissioner Sims asked what percentage of what's needed comes from the State and what is the total needed to run the program. City Librarian John Szabo replied that LAPL receives less than \$300,000 from the State and it is used for operations and literacy materials.

Commissioner Sims asked if students have to be 16 to enroll in the Career Online High School and not enrolled in a different high school? Or does that age start younger? Ms. Majd replied that students need to be 19 years and older to enroll in our career online high school program.

Commissioner Shaw said she is looking for something a little different about what could be done for the 16 year old. Ms. Majd replied that the State would have to give permission. She said the Career Online High School allows learners to obtain their high school diploma and also has a Cell-ED program called the Skill Builder Program, which is a series of courses in reading, writing, and social studies for native English speakers to prepare them to take one of the high school equivalency tests or the GED.

Mr. Szabo added the Career Online High School service is structured specifically for individuals who are not of high school age. The idea of dual enrollment, is something outside of what the COHS offers. He said that COHS graduates typically are adults who for numerous reasons dropped out of high school, and they want a diploma rather than a GED. He said many of the graduates go on to community college. He said he would be interested in dual enrollment conversations with the community college.

8. Election of Officers for Fiscal Year 2023-24

PRESIDENT:

It was moved by Commissioner Blank and seconded by Commissioner Sims to elect Commissioner Shaw as President of the Board of Library Commissioners for Fiscal Year 2023-24. The motion passed with 3 Ayes (Blank/Sims/Shaw). Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Eidmann).

VICE PRESIDENT:

It was moved by Commissioner Sims and seconded by Commissioner Shaw to elect Commissioner Blank as Vice President of the Board of Library Commissioners for Fiscal Year 2023-24. The motion passed with 3 Ayes (Blank/Sims/Shaw). Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Eidmann).

Board President Shaw stated that she was honored to be the President of this Board and she sees herself as a city family member having worked for the city for almost 25 years. She said she was born in L.A. and that she cares about the residents and about this department, that they are all here to support the employees of this department, support the city librarian and provide service to the community. So she will be sort of a different President and this Board is going to be more proactive, looking to see how they can help in any way and be the department's advocates and problem solvers. She said they will spend the next six months learning as much as they can to be most effective.

9. Commissioners' Comments and Announcements *(Taken out order: Item 9)*

Next Board Meeting Notice: The next Regular Meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, August 10, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. at the Central Library, in the Board Room.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned 12:18 p.m.

ATTEST:

Valerie Lynne Shaw
President

Raquel M. Borden
Board Executive Assistant