M I N U T E S

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

June 24, 2021

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

1. **Roll Call:**

Present:	President	**Bích Ngọc Cao**
	Commissioner	**Arianne Edmonds**
	Commissioner	**Dale Franzen**
	Commissioner	**Josefa Salinas**
Absent:	Vice-President	**Kathryn Eidmann**

Also present via teleconference: City Librarian John F. Szabo, Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman, Deputy City Attorney Basia Jankowski; Library staff and members of the public.

2. **Opening Remarks:** None.

3. Approval of the Minutes: Minutes of the Regular Meeting - April 8, 2021

It was moved by Commissioner Salinas and seconded by Commissioner Franzen to approve the Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on April 8, 2021. The motion passed with 3 Ayes (Cao, Franzen & Salinas). Abstained: 1 (Edmonds) Absent: 1 (Eidmann).

4. Public Comments on Matters
Within the Board's Jurisdiction: No requests were received for public comment.

5. City Librarian's Comments and Announcements: City Librarian John F. Szabo reported the following:

- **Status on Reopening of Libraries:** A total of 70 libraries are now reopened to the public and have welcome stations. The three (3) remaining library facilities are still having work done. The Watts Branch Library was also celebrating its 25 anniversary and staff decorated the branch with a luau theme welcoming patrons back. Mr. Szabo applauded the work of staff and Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman for leading this complex effort across the system.

- **Digital Equity and Bridging the Digital Divide:** The Library is addressing digital equity and digital divide in so many ways and one of the programs it is offering is Tech-to-Go. This program offers mini iPads devices with preloaded apps and mobile Wi-Fi hotspots at 70 LAPL locations for check out. Over 1,000 Wi-Fi hotspots have been acquired with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Senior Librarian Edwin Rodarte has been managing the mobile hotspot program and he was interviewed by the State Tech Magazine about LAPL efforts on digital inclusion in LA communities. He noted that for 71% of patrons who borrow hotspots to take home, more than two people in the household use them to go online and for 23% of people checking them out, four more people gain internet access. Due to the pandemic internet access is a tremendous issue that the Library is helping to address.

- **Juneteenth Celebration:** The Urban Libraries Council highlighted LAPL's Juneteenth program. Librarians did a great job in helping celebrate and draw attention to Juneteenth in a big way.

- **Adult Literacy Relaunching:** Adult Literacy Kick off with the Summer Reading Program and had writer and actress Altisa Baker speak to adult learner and tutoring volunteers about creative writing, and did other activities as well as sign up using Beanstack App to track their reading.

- **2021 Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate:** Last Saturday, LAPL featured 18 young people for the commencement performance. Jessica Kim, who is Korean-American disability rights advocate, was crowned the 2021 Youth Poet Laureate. The event was a collaboration with Urban Word and the Library of Congress.

- **Discover LGBTQ Program Series:** The program recognizes that around 1,200 historical cultural monuments in Los Angeles, only a dozen have been designated because of their association with the City's LGBT community. This LGBTQ program series is being presented during Pride Month and presents noteworthy locals (buildings and sites) like the black cats.

- **LAPL Cooling Centers:** LAPL is assisting the City and the City Emergency Operations Center to use libraries as cooling centers during heat waves.

- **Online Career High School:** Rosie Garcia, who graduated from the program in April, reached out to the Library requesting permission to take her graduation photos with cap and gown at Central Library. LAPL shared the image on social media. 566 graduates have obtained their High School diplomas and career certificates from this LAPL program.

- **LAPL DSW Assignments:** Over 500 Library staff members filled various roles as Disaster Service Workers. These assignments are coming to a close and the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Mayor's Office have acknowledged their work.

6. <u>City Librarian's Reports:</u>

Consent Item Item(s)

a. Recommended Approval of the General Manager's Expense Account for Fiscal Year 2021-22

It was moved by Commissioner Salinas and seconded by Commissioner Franzen to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Cao, Edmonds & Salinas). Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Eidmann).

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2021-19 (C-18)

RESOLVED, That the City Librarian or designee be authorized to receive an advance or be reimbursed for such miscellaneous expenditures as may be necessary in the form of business meals, taxi fares, parking fees, etc. in an amount not to exceed $3,500 for the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that said amount be encumbered in the Office and Administrative Expense Account Number 6010 of the Library Fund Number 300.

7. Oral Update from the Ad Hoc Committee on Re-imagining Safety & Security

Board President Cao reported that the committee met last week where they talked about the various contracts being signed and what the Library has been doing to learn more about what other library systems are doing in terms of best practices on safety and security, as well as a mini-grant program to reach out to local organizations that could help come up with solutions and she asked City Librarian John F. Szabo to elaborate on these topics.

City Librarian John F Szabo stated that two contracts have been signed since the Committee met last week. He said Turning West is one of them and they will begin the process of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for some of the services the Library will contract for with outside organizations to offer mental health assistance and case management social workers that the Library is looking to hire.

Mr. Szabo stated that in terms of best practices by other library systems each library is different in terms of engaging social workers, providing mental health assistance. He said LAPL developed the idea of a Library Experience Ambassador and that person would be an employee of the library who would be trained in de-escalation techniques that would be focused on customer service and something completely outside of the law enforcement approach. He noted that Denver and San Francisco use peer navigators or associates, which are similar to Library Experience Ambassadors. Staff have also spoken to King County, Columbus Metropolitan, DC Public Library to look at how they employ social workers and implement their programs, whether they are working with a county public health department or other agencies, looking at their best practices and services and how it helps their patrons and to create a welcoming safe environment. Staff looked at their approaches, successes and challenges. He noted that there are several of those libraries that are constantly exchanging this kind of information. He said that Karen Pickard-Four, who leads the Library Experience Office is reaching out to several libraries to learn from them.

Mr. Szabo stated that the committee also discussed a mini-grant program and asked Susan Broman, Assistant City Librarian, to speak about it. He said this grant is about recognizing the wisdom of staff throughout the organization and every classification and to give them an opportunity to offer ideas because they are familiar with the issues they face in the front lines

Susan Broman, Assistant City Librarian, stated that the mini-grant project is around reimagining the Safety Initiative and it build on the work that has already been done in the library throughout the past several years, one of which is the grants ideas for which staff are encouraged to develop a small project and apply for funding for pilot projects that later become larger initiatives benefiting the entire system. This grant would build up on the safety and security project by engaging staff to come up with solutions to safety issues and creating a welcoming environment tailored to their community.

Ms. Broman noted that with the mini-grant, an individual branch can apply for funds to work with a specific community partner organization or group in their community that meets the needs of something related to reimagining safety serving the entire community; for this they would develop a budget and forward when they apply.

Discussion

Commissioner Salinas asked if in talking to libraries that already have a system like this in place, have they provided any information on what has worked and what hasn't worked for them. Do those libraries have developed reports for their cities?

Mr. Szabo replied that Karen Pickard-Four has obtained that information on the successes, how they implemented it, the nature of the positions, costs and what information they provide to their local government. He asked Ms. Pickard-Four to speak about it.

Karen Pickard-Four stated that Denver and San Francisco have been working on their projects for a significant number of years. For example, San Francisco has been working on this project since 2009 and Denver started in 2012. There are plenty of reports and anecdotal information from them. For instance, Denver has not seen a large decrease in incidents, but they have seen more people being helped in the community and more caseworkers assisting people with housing. San Francisco tracks incidents for mesures. She said LAPL has a very advanced system for tracking incidents.

Commissioner Salinas asked if they had overviews. Ms. Pickard-Four said she would reach out for that information and noted that she had seen presentations; they have already shared job description information and are willing to share information that would help us.

Commissioner Edmonds asked if the Board members could also get information on how these new offices within those library systems are supporting the cities they are part of, whether more people are signing up for more programs, or being able to be supported. Ms. Pickard-Four replied that she would ask for that information and noted that those cities are having the same problems our city is having, such homeless that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Mr. Szabo stated that through The Source, LAPL brings multiple social services agencies together that provide many different services, which paints a picture of how library programs tie in with other parts of local government and overall social services network that provides assistance with social security, housing and so forth. He stated that a strategic approach of contracting for mental health services with a partner from The Source is being coordinated.

Commissioner Salinas asked if there was a city in comparison to our city that stands out on their program approach that is having success.

Mr. Szabo replied that they have seen all sorts of successes with public health, providing nurses. Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, have social workers that do meaningful engaging the public and providing services and have great partnerships with other entities in local government. He said San Francisco has a non-uniform and non-traditional law enforcement similar to that of a library experience ambassador and Columbus, Ohio has an approach with a customer service approach.

Mr. Szabo stated that the real challenge long term is around data and measuring success as well as things that relate to safety and security that are outside the Library's control.

Commissioner Edmonds asked how the Library was developing success metrics

8. Presentation: "Life on a String: The Yale Puppeteers & The Turnabout Theatre" Exhibit

Christina Rice, Senior Librarian, Photo Collection, provided an overview of the Exhibit "Life on a String: The Yale Puppeteers & The Turnabout Theatre," that was launched as an online exhibit and now it is on display in the Central Library's Getty Gallery. She provided background information on each of the three puppeteers Harry Burnett, Forman Brown, and Richard "Roddy" Brandon, who started the Yale Puppeteers in the 1920's and brought their show to Los Angeles in 1931.

Ms. Rice pointed out that the Yale Puppeteers theater were the first inhabitants of 27 Olvera Street as it was being reimagined as a tourist destination and they attracted local Hollywood celebrities. They went to the east coast but came back to Los Angeles and opened up the Turnabout Theater and from 1941 to 1956 they received worldwide acclaim and were on the cover of TIME Magazine.

Ms. Rice explained that the theater had two stages, one for the puppet show and the other for live performances. The theater had acquired seats from the street cars belonging to the Pacific Electric transportation company. The seats flipped allowing the audience to stand up and flip their seats after the puppet show to watch a live performance on the other side of the theater.

Ms. Rice stated that after Forman, the last puppeteer passed away in 1996, through Carolyn Cozo Cole and Councilmember Ruth Galanter the Turnabout Theater Collection of photographs and ephemera came to the Los Angeles Public Library and it was the first collection to be digitized in 1998. There are shy 240 objects on display in the Getty Gallery such as photographs, original ephemera including puppets and costumes. She noted that the three men were gay, but they were not open about it. Forman Brown penned a fictional novel based on his life, titled Better Angel under the

alias of Richard Meeker.

Ms. Rice concluded her presentation noting that the Photo Friends have published the book Better Angel with Forman's name on the cover and a foreword from City Librarian John F. Szabo is available in the Library Store as well as in the Library's print and digital collection. The Exhibit,which will be on display until March 2022, includes archival audio as well as a narrated audio tour with an introduction by City Librarian John F. Szabo.

9. Commissioners' Comments and Announcements

- Next Board Meeting Notice
  The next Regular Meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, July 8, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. via Teleconference.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

ATTEST:

Bích Ngọc Cao
President

Raquel M. Borden
Board Executive Assistant