

**DECATUR PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**Finance and Properties**

**Minutes**

**Date:** July 8, 2015

**Time:** 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Decatur Public Library Board Room

**Members present:** John Phillips (Chair)

Jim Alpi

Donna Williams

Garry Davis

Jennifer Sykes

**Staff:** Rick Meyer, City Librarian,

Robert Edwards, Asst. City Librarian

**Other Board Members:** Mark Sorensen, Mike Sexton, Gregg Zientara

**Guests:** Allison Petty (Herald and Review), Amy McEvoy (Friends of the Library, President)

**Absent:**

**Call to order**

Mr. Phillips called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Phillips introduced the new board members Michael Sexton and Gregg Zientara that were in attendance. He said they had been appointed by the Mayor and would be sworn in at the next full Board meeting.

**Agenda**

Motion to approve agenda by Mrs. Sykes, seconded by Ms. Williams, unanimously approved.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Motion to approve minutes by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mrs. Sykes, unanimously approved.

Mr. Phillips stated that he had asked Mrs. Sykes to chair the Finance and Properties committee starting in August.

Check Register

Mr. Phillips stated that the check register was the first item to review. He explained that the checks had already been written and the check register was just for reviewing the bills that had been paid. Mr. Meyer informed the committee about the line with his name. He stated that it was a reimbursement for a credit card payment that he made for the library. He stated that the adjustment with another employee, Carol Robinett was due to an overpayment, the repayment came the following month. Mr. Sexton questioned how an employee would not know they were

overpaid. Mr. Meyer stated that he was not sure how it happened. Mr. Zientara provided insight on the City's payroll system.

Motion to approve check register by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mr. Alpi, unanimously approved.

#### Budget review

Mr. Meyer gave an update of the library budget. He stated that the library was over half way through the year and still in good shape. He added that the Professional Services line was up a bit due to attorney fees. He stated that the electric costs were steady and the library should be seeing a reduction in the phone bill services due to the E-Rate discount. Mr. Alpi asked about the attorney fees and the anticipated billing timeline. Mr. Davis discussed the customary billing process. He stated that the library could get an update on the billing by contacting the attorney. There was more discussion about the budget spreadsheet. Mr. Sorensen asked if it was true that the Library had at one time asked the City attorney to represent the Library and she had declined. Mr. Meyer said that was the information that had been given to him. Mr. Zientara stated that he remembers the Library asking last summer, but he didn't remember the reason why the City attorney declined.

Mr. Meyer stated that the library had received an installment of tax revenue. There was discussion about the tax revenue.

Mr. Zientara informed the committee about the recent opportunity of the City to receive lower costs for natural gas. He added that some of the savings would be passed on to the library. Mr. Meyer questioned what they plans they should have for reserve funds. Mr. Zientara stated that as long as revenue exceeds expenses, it should be no problem having a reserve fund if needed.

#### Library/Building Commission/County

Mr. Phillips discussed the status of the Library/Building Commission/County agreement and the recent City Council meeting. He stated that several council members have stated that they need more information about the agreement. He added that the Mayor McElroy had made a statement to the City Council concerning the City purchasing the building. Mr. Phillips stated that he wasn't willing to go to court to fight the City over the library's right to sell the building. He stated that the city had stated in the paper that they have the right to buy the library building. Mr. Phillips stated that he had his own doubts about going forward after the City Council meeting. He said that he had spoken with Jay Dunn and other individuals from the County who had informed him that they cannot do the deal without the Decatur Public Building Commission. He discussed some of the complications of going forward without the Building Commission. There was more discussion about the Library/Building Commission/County agreement. Mr. Zientara stated that the County could still rent from the owners of the library. Mr. Phillips discussed further reasons that the County couldn't do the deal without the Building Commission. Mr. Phillips stated that the reason the library had gotten into the deal with the Building Commission and County is because they thought it was a good thing for all parties involved. Mr. Phillips stated that he didn't want a controversy with the City; he suggested that they consider recommending to the full board that the Library withdraw from talks with the Building Commission and County. Mr. Meyer stated that he was planning to recommend something similar. He mentioned Mayor McElroy's comments about the City considering purchasing the building. Mrs. Sykes stated that she thought it was a bit premature to abandon the proposal. She

said the Library still had a few weeks to talk with the City. Ms. Williams agreed, she said they have put in so much energy with the proposal; they should go a little further. Mr. Sorensen stated that he had observed from his past and present experience that the Library standing alone has had a hard time trying to keep up with the total repairs needed in the building. He added that the Library has also struggled to manage rental properties. He stated that Annex was also in need of repair. He said when an opportunity came to relieve the library of the maintenance costs and provide staff with other job opportunities; he thought it was a good proposition. He added that the Library has gotten no help from the City in the past 17 or so years in areas such as the parking lot. He stated that unless the relationship changes between the City and the Library he didn't see how things would change with the City helping the library.

Mr. Alpi stated that he thought the deal looked solid. He stated that the Decatur Public Library was a beautiful library, but the building is getting older and the revenue has been flat. He stated that in a perfect setting the library could go to the City and ask for assistance, but the City is having financial issues of their own. He added that currently 40% of the building is not being used. He said that attempts to rent out the property have not worked out well for the library. The Library had asked the County to come in back in 2010 to look at space for record storage but that hadn't worked out. He added that later he and Jay Dunn had discussed the use of Library space with the use of the combined parties that were now involved. He said all parties involved had thought the deal would make good use of the space, plus add stability to the library's future. He stated that the deal was put together to help the library avoid future costs of renovations and repairs, without causing more money to the public. Mr. Alpi discussed some projected costs of repairs and future revenues for the library. He discussed the additional costs that would be involved in preparing the present space in order for it to be useable for tenants. He stated that he wasn't looking to cause any controversy with the City either, but he thought the ideal was a good one the deserved a vote for the public's sake. Mr. Sorensen stated that it was his understanding that the Decatur Public Building Commission has had experience managing other buildings such as the Macon County Health Department. Mr. Zientara presented an overview of the use of building commissions in the state of Illinois.

Mr. Davis stated that he would be going off the board, but announced that he was a passionate library user who loved the Library. He said the free public libraries are the foundation of freedom. He said he didn't think the deal should be taken off the table. He said he didn't know all the benefits that the deal would provide for the City or County or others, but the board was looking for something that would protect the Library for years to come. He said, if the City wanted to fix the parking lot, the lighting and help the library with current and future expenses, so be it. He stated that the board which group takes care of the expenses; they just want the expenses taken care of. He added that the board is there to protect the library. He added that he was amazed at some of the discussion at the City Council meeting. He stated he thought the agreement should be voted on.

Mr. Sexton stated that he couldn't imagine the City letting the building fall into disarray if they owned it. There was discussion on present spending of tax monies by the City and more discussion on the agreement between the parties.

Mr. Zientara stated that the City Manager's decision is that the City Council needs to weigh in on the decision. He added that the City Manager provided some facts and data that the Council did not know. He stated that the City Manager has made no recommendation at the present time. Mr. Sorensen stated that one of the questions brought to the City Council was that the City carries a value of 4.1 million dollars of the library property on their books, which will hurt the City if the

present sale goes through. There was discussion by the committee about the library value, investors and bond ratings. Mr. Zientara stated that he couldn't state with certainty that it would hurt the rating. He added that the City Manager is looking for direction from the City Council. There was more discussion by the committee about the library's present and future value. Mr. Phillips stated that the consensus that he hears from the committee is to let the agreement process run its course. Mr. Meyer stated that his concern is that he is aware of the specifics of the deal on the table, but he would like to more specifics about the Mayor mentioning the City could buy the library. Mr. Zientara stated that he couldn't speak to that. Mr. Phillips stated that they could inform the full board that they had discussed these options and decided that the Finance and Properties committee's recommendation is to wait and see how the vote from the City goes. There was more discussion about the possible directions the City Council could vote. Mr. Zientara stated that the City will have to come up with a plan and the City Manager is prepared to do that.

Mr. Phillips asked if the general consensus was to continue on with the process involving the agreement. The committee agreed the consensus was yes, none opposed.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Davis, seconded by Ms. Williams

Adjourned at 6:30 pm

Scribe,

*Robert L. Edwards*

Assistant City Librarian

Approved 8/11/2015