

Williamson County Public Library
Board of Trustees Leadership Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.

Trustees Present: Mike Seitz, Delois Bratton, JeNan Merrill
Others in Attendance: Dolores Greenwald, Director

Mike Seitz, chair, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. The meeting was held in the administrative conference room.

Ms. Greenwald began by updating the library's work on the Mayor's Challenge. Contacts have been made through some schools. There will be some on-site, outdoor programs for Summer Reading this year, and Ms. Greenwald asked if the Mayor's Challenge could continue beyond the May cutoff. Because the current numbers are low, with a smaller percentage of county residents having cards now than when the challenge began, Mr. Seitz said the emphasis on new cardholders should continue. Otherwise, the program would be a failure.

Mr. Seitz then asked the director to think generally about the qualities of a good leader – being positive, unifying, having the ability to develop a plan with steps to follow to achieve success, and so on. He asked Ms. Greenwald if she felt she had these qualities and if so, what was she doing to demonstrate them.

Ms. Greenwald said that she had made efforts to work with the board. Mr. Seitz reminded her that her work would be evaluated on results, not efforts. He emphasized that her current relationship with the board is not good and gave some examples of how she had pushed back against the board rather than working with the board.

Ms. Greenwald described concerns she has with the board, including what she sees as too much paperwork and a lack of communication. She said she does not feel support from the board. She went on to say that she had never before worked with a governing board – previously she had worked only with an advisory style board.

Mr. Seitz replied that the current board was diverse, engaged, and aligned in their thinking. He told the director that it should not be viewed as the board against the director, but that they should work together. Ms. Greenwald stated that she had difficulty understanding what the board wants.

Ms. Bratton said that the director should look ahead and anticipate opportunities as well as potential problems. A good director should not have to be guided step-by-step by the board. WCPL needs a vision and plan for the future. Ms. Bratton reminded the director that many of this year's objectives had not been met on time. Also, when a certain objective was due to be complete, it was not brought up and discussed by the director at the board unless board members asked specifically about it. Ms. Bratton suggested that Ms. Greenwald review the improvement plan that she (Ms. Greenwald) had composed and sent to the board in October after her last evaluation. This document describes the things she planned to do, but not all have been addressed or completed.

Ms. Merrill agreed that WCPL needs a vision for the future. She said that the current ideas and projects were like items being put into a pot and stirred around, but never completed fully and brought out of the mix to be put into practice. When the director stated that the staff morale was low, Ms. Merrill said that it did not seem that the director has the respect of some of her managers, and this is a significant contributing factor to the low morale.

Mr. Seitz pointed out that there is a distinct difference of opinion between the director and the board in the perception of the director's job performance. He pointed out that many parts of her upcoming evaluation would currently be labeled as "not met" and that the director needs to bridge the gap on these items. Ms. Greenwald stated that things are not fixable overnight.

Ms. Greenwald said she needed the board to tell her how to improve and she listed the things she was hearing – work on morale, meet deadlines, and consider results over effort. Mr. Seitz added that the director should not pit the board against the staff as had been done in prior board meetings, remembering that disagreement does not mean disrespect. Ms. Bratton asked the director to consider how she has previously presented board ideas to the staff – enthusiastically or not?

Mr. Seitz asked the director to consider how she thinks things could get better, and in doing so, decide if she wants to do the work to make them better. Ms.

Greenwald said she does believe things can be better. She continued that she knows the changes need to come from her. She also stated that she realizes the relationship should be better between the staff and the board.

Mr. Seitz reiterated that leaders must be positive change agents. Our communities are changing, and the library must adapt to meet the changing needs. He told Ms. Greenwald that she needs to consider the expectations of the board and decide how the discrepancies between those expectations and her performance can be resolved. He also reminded her that she must decide if she thinks she is willing and able to change. Ms. Greenwald indicated that she does want to try to do that.

A proposed agenda for the April board meeting was presented by Ms. Greenwald for consideration. Ms. Bratton reminded the director that the objectives that had been on the previous months' timeline needed to be brought up to date. Ms. Bratton suggested a written review, sent to the board at least 24 hours before the board meeting, with discussion at the meeting as needed.

Mr. Seitz told Ms. Greenwald that Ms. Carothers and Ms. Baggett are on the objectives committee for the 2021-22 year, and also a nominating committee will be appointed at the April meeting. There was discussion about the need for all employees to be working on site, no longer remotely. This will be required by Friday, April 9, 2021.

Mr. Seitz stated one more time that the board has made the effort to coach the director to improve as a leader. She must recognize the gap between herself and the board, and understand that it is her responsibility to change in order to improve the relationship and move the library forward.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.

The next Leadership Committee meeting is planned for Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. at the Franklin library.

JeNan Merrill, board secretary, took these minutes.

JeNan Merrill