

# Connie Morella LAC Meeting Minutes - 10/11/2022

Barbara Levine (LAC Chair), Kate Sweeney (Regional Manager), Jim Montgomery (Library Board Member), Claudia Deane, Colin Repetti (Secretary), Elisa Evangelista present

## Minutes

- We aren't approving the minutes from last meeting because Colin sent them the day of the meeting and people haven't had time to review them
- We are enforcing an artificial deadline of the 4th Tuesday of the month to get the minutes out because Colin works best with deadlines

## Regional Manager's Report

- Was optimistic about staffing situation at the last meeting
  - Should not have tempted fate, lots of expected and unexpected leave and there has been a lot of catching up
    - The situation seems to have stabilized, the expected leave could have been handled but the issue was it compounding with unexpected leave
- 5 open circulation positions
  - Filled 1 Library Assistant I position
  - 3 Library Desk Assistant positions (work at the circulation desk) and 1 Library Aide position (pulling holds off the shelves, shelving, back office things) expected to be filled
    - Waiting on HR, well in the works of hiring
    - How does it work when these positions are vacant?
      - Rely on subs, rely on staff from other branches, staff members we do have are spending a lot more time on the desks
- Library System position has been filled (Jaime Flores as the Assistant Director of Outreach and Programs) and another is currently listed (Teen Services Program Manager)
  - Never had a central position before that focuses on teens, lines up with the focus on teens in the strategic plan
- Programming
  - Hoped to have more of an update here but due to the aforementioned staffing issues there hasn't been as much movement
    - Now that things are hopefully back to normal, there should be an uptick in children's programming
      - This is a priority for Kate
      - Policies do not allow for volunteers to do things like story hour/children's programming, there are very strict rules about that
  - Summer Reading Update
    - Only have data going back 7 years but this was our best year for Summer reading

- Parents really liked that the library didn't give out plastic toys, lines up with the environmentalism focus, was an explicit decision
      - Instead gave out Nationals vouchers, FOL vouchers, paper bookmark, adding a sticker to the library's poster
      - This did not seem to affect interest meaningfully
    - Previously gave out a free book if you complete all four missions, this year they decided to flip that and gave out a free book at the beginning
      - This seemed to increase interest
      - 473 kids signed up here so presumably that was how many books were given out
- Collections
  - Going to work on weeding and moving things around
  - Going to begin launch a pilot program allowing children to check out Launchpad Tablets
    - These are themed with listed descriptions of what's on them
    - Learn more on the [MCPL website](#)
    - Can place a hold on these just like you can on books
      - Can have up to 5 of them checked out at a time
    - Question about if this was funded by the FOL, Kate thinks it was funded by MCPL directly
    - Launchpads are more specialized than generic tablets, only set up to do specific things so they're only geared toward children
- A polling site for the election this November
  - Hours for voting are longer than the hours for the library, other than figuring that out it's mostly on the voting people

#### Jim Montgomery's Board Update

- Next board meeting is 10/12/2022 (tomorrow) at 7pm and last meeting was on 9/14/2022
- Director's Report at the last meeting included staffing information
  - For the month of August, the library hired more people than had left
- The County Council had a hearing scheduled to discuss staffing/library operations on October 6, 2022 but it was canceled
  - Instead they are asking for a report from MCPL regarding staffing
- The strategic plan was on the verge of coming out and has since come out
- Considerable discussion about the upcoming joint FOL & Library Board/LAC joint discussion/meeting scheduled for 11/9/2022 at 7pm
  - Meant to precede and be in preparation for the upcoming budget cycle
  - Will be the first budget cycle faced with a new and larger County Council
  - Submit a few sentences/topics to Barbara about what topics you would like to be discussed
    - Speaking as yourself, not a member of the LAC
  - Everyone is invited to these meetings
- County Executive starts holding budget forum meetings about the upcoming budget process this time of year

- First one is 11/14/2022 (probably around 7pm)
  - There will be 7 of these meetings
  - Don't know the location yet
- These will be in person, one should be in Bethesda
- Very instrumental to what he proposes as a budget to the county council
  - Will be submitted in March, then Council votes in May

#### Chair's Report from Barbara

- Disappointed about the canceled Library Operations meeting
  - Received assurances from Councilmember Friedson's staff that he's very interested in library staffing
- Received lots of concern and comments from the lack of programming (children's, teen, family, etc.)
  - Barbara conveys that there is progress being made but people have heard that before and look to other libraries with more going on
  - If there are any ways the LAC can help, we would like to do so
  - Claudia asked about whether this is an issue of lack of things happening or lack of awareness, to which Kate Sweeney responded:
    - Some smaller libraries require fewer people to maintain basic library functions and can therefore more easily do programming
    - This library is chronically understaffed and has been for a long time with a staff that is exhausted, trying to balance community and staff needs
      - Connie Morella is now at a place where they can start ramping up programming but it's not like flipping a switch, people are still training and it takes time to get programming going
      - Have not yet been able to ask staff to focus on programming because there has been trouble keeping the doors open

#### Elisa on English Language Learning

- Has been working on English language learning programming for 10 years
  - Started with two tables and grew substantially over time
  - Would like to see English language learning programming grow again
    - A vital resource for many people who aren't native English speakers both functionally and for a way to build relationships
    - Story time is also very vital for this
  - Claudia points out that focus on English language learners and children are two big points in the strategic plan

#### Strategic Plan

- Jim Montgomery has seen many strategic plans over the years and typically has not been impressed with them, this current one is the exception
  - This one is over 3 years, not 5, which makes it harder to be "airy fairy" about it
  - Big priority for childhood literacy
    - Marc Elrich has prioritized this before as "the big enchilada"

- With work from people in the county, we can get the County Council to cough up the funds to make this plan a reality
- Claudia mentioned the plan seems like a lot of ideas/goals but not actionable
  - Jim disagrees, says if you go further into the plan there are specifics in the plan to see the goals met
  - Kate agrees with Jim
    - One example is the goal of helping prepare teens for the workforce, there has never been a Teen Services Program Manager before
    - The strategic plan is definitely central in all internal discussions in MCPL
- Barbara lauds focus on low income/marginalized communities but wants a base level of service/programming across the system so everyone can see themselves in the strategic plan

#### Outdoor space

- Claudia has been researching what we can do to get access to that space but is missing some information (maybe things that Eric was going to provide)
  - She is going to email Kate with her questions and Kate will see if Eric has the missing information