MEETING OF THE LIBRARY COMMISSION
Minutes

DATE: Thursday, May 25, 2017

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER
Chair, Alan B. Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. 

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Total Commission positions: 24
Commission positions filled: 19
Commission positions vacant: 5
Commission quorum: 13

With fourteen commissioners present, a quorum was established.
3. **INTRODUCTIONS**
The Chair requested everyone introduce themselves, reminding any members of the public they were not obligated to do so.

4. **ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC**
There were no speakers from the public.

5. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**
Corrections to the minutes included the following corrections:
- The Chair: Page 6, end of the first paragraph, please change “for a statewide campaign” to “for any campaign.”

Motion to accept minutes of the March 23, 2017 meeting, with corrections, by Commissioner Woodrow. Second by Commissioner Kelly.

The motion passed with 13 AYES, 0 NAYS and 1 abstention.

Commissioners adopted the minutes of the March 23, 2017 meeting with the above corrections as amended.

*Recorded votes –

AYES: Joyce Atkinson; Katherine Bracken; Vivian Faye; Arnold Fitzpatrick; Michael Fischer; Kathy Gilcrest; John M. Huh, Ph.D.; Juan Kelly; Diane Rilse; Alan B. Smith; Margie Valdez; Patty Wernet; Don Woodrow.

VACANT: City of Concord; City of Martinez; City of Pinole; City of San Pablo; District 3.

NOT PRESENT: Mary Ann Holisington, Lynn Meisch, Sandra Menichelli, Brian Miller.

Abstained: Laura Cancliamilla

6. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
No Changes were made to the agenda as presented.

Item was approved by consensus.

7. **ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- **Michael Fischer/El Cerrito Commissioner**: The El Cerrito Library has sponsored a State Poet Laureate reading at the Library attended by approximately 75 people. Commissioner Fischer is also working with his city council to create a city library advisory board and requests that anyone on the commission with experience in this regard please speak with him.

- **Patty Wernet/Moraga Commissioner**: Moraga is presently focusing on children; they are searching for a new children’s librarian and are spending funds to refurbish the children’s area and spruce things up a bit, sponsoring new programs and purchasing new materials.

- **Juan Kelly/Orinda Commissioner**: The Orinda Library is sponsoring a July 4th celebration, complete with book sales, costumes, etc. Folks are invited to come on down.

- **Alan Smith/Commission Chair**: Chair Smith recently attended a meeting of the Braille Talking Book Library in Sacramento well attended by staff of different legislators. Marrakech Treaty: This treaty was approved by 62 English speaking countries and attempts to sort out a number of issues relating to ebooks and copyright laws for foreign books translated into English, The U.S. is one of the signers of the treaty, however it was not approved by congress during the Obama administration. The issue is pending currently and appears that it will pass this time.
8. CORRESPONDENCE
No correspondence was received.

9. COUNTY LIBRARIAN REPORT
County Librarian Cervantes reported on library activities.

- County Librarian Cervantes began by welcoming several new alternate commission members.
- Antioch: For the past three years the City of Antioch has been unable to assist with the full maintenance costs which would allow their library to be open for 35 hours per week and so has been open only 28 hours. At the most recent city council meeting the city voted to approve payment of these expenses which will allow the library to increase their open hours per week back up to 35.
- Friends event: This fall the library will be sponsoring its first Friends and Foundations Forum. This is something County Librarian Cervantes has established in other counties and it has always been a good gathering and something to look forward to. It is normally a spring event but to get things started plans are underway to have the first one this fall. With the new legislature, it’s a chance to gather to share ideas and best practices. There will be some breakout sessions, and a light lunch will be served as well. The agenda is being worked on. The proposed date is September 23rd at the Walnut Creek Library. One obstacle is finding a facility that is both large enough and centrally located. After some discussion about conflicts, County Librarian Cervantes offered that some alternate dates will be polled and the Commission should watch for an email from Walter where preferences can be noted.
- Personnel: The library has been busy hiring and filling positions. Another new employee training class begins at the end of June with approximately ten new employees. Interviews for Senior Community Library Managers (SCLM’s) will begin soon. The county recently approved a new exam for experienced level clerks so that will be coming up quickly. Beth Killian recently hired for a Personnel Services Assistant Level III position that had been vacant for over a year.
- San Ramon Reopening: The San Ramon Library had a great reopening event. It was attended by over four thousand people. Four hundred new library cards were issued that day. As a result, things have calmed down and are a little quieter at the Dougherty Station branch.
- Brentwood: Library construction has already broken ground, just this week. Completion of the new library is slated to take approximately twelve months.
- Pleasant Hill: The site for the new library has been approved. The former library administration building and the current library site will be sold and the library will be the recipient of the sale proceeds.
- San Pablo Opening: The reopening of the San Pablo Library is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on July 29. Supervisor Gioia is scheduled to speak. The new lease has already been signed by the city. The new site is across the street from City Hall in a gutted and remodeled former Walgreens location.
- Ygnacio Valley Library: YVL has undertaken a project to refresh the service desk area. Any funds leftover from this project will be combined with Friends of the Library funds to also refresh the kitchen and staff area there.
- Library Budget: The proposed budget is quite a few pages. There is a copy in the packets for this meeting and it can also be found online on the county’s website. The budget was actually approved on May 9.
- Bequests: The library has received a significant bequest from patrons of the El Cerrito library, totaling over $179,000 (two separate trusts). There are no restrictions on the use of the funds (which are to be used for the benefit of ECL), so the money will sit in the trusts until a panel is created to determine the best use of the funds.
• Grants: The library has recently been awarded several grants totaling $3500 through the Richmond Community Foundation, the proceeds of which will be used to sponsor summer reading programs. Another $60,000 gift was received anonymously to be used for a reading room.

• Out in Public: County Librarian Cervantes next mentioned she had been a speaker at several public events, including May 11 at the Public Managers Association where the topic was Budgets & Funding and the state of the library. There were quite a few questions from the large crowd, many of whom had heard her presentation the week prior at the Mayors Conference. On April 15 County Librarian Cervantes spoke at the reopening of the San Ramon Library, and on April 5th was the open house here at the library’s new Administration offices.

• Summer Reading: The summer reading program begins the first week of June and County Librarian Cervantes encouraged everyone to participate. It’s not just for the children.

10. OLD BUSINESS

A. STATE LIBRARY FUNDING ISSUES AND LEGISLATION

Chair Smith updated the Commission on the status of the state budget process. The recent May revise of the state budget has been released and to no one’s surprise there is no increase in literacy funding. Given the current state of budgets and the uncertainty of what the federal government might do, it can almost be considered a victory that nothing was cut from the budget. Our state funding goes through a number of committees. Literacy funding has to be approved by the Assembly Education Budget Subcommittee. The budget is due by June 15th. It should be on time because the legislators like to be paid and the current rules, voted in by the taxpayers, say that if the budget is late, they don’t get paid, so there will be more about this in the news over the next three weeks.

B. STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT – 3

SCA-3 is currently very active. For those new to the Commission, that is the proposed state constitutional amendment authored by Sen. Bill Dodd from Napa that lowers the threshold for passage of library construction and renovation projects to 55% from two-thirds. This is the same as Prop. 39 did for school bond measures back in 2000. If approved it will appear on the November 18 ballot. The current status is that it has been through two committees where it passed by strictly partisan votes. It has had its third reading, which means it is now eligible to be voted on by the senate. It takes two-thirds of the votes to move forward so every democratic senator will need to vote for it for the amendment to pass. Senator Glazer supports it, as does Nancy Skinner. These issues don’t follow the same path as other bills so it is possible for it to languish in the assembly and be brought up again in the future.

Chair Smith requested that the commission members continue their calls to senators and assembly members in support of SCA-3 but as private citizens and not commission members. “Please” and “Thank you” go a long way in encouraging these folks, and they do all speak with one another. One will mention that they received 50 phone calls on an issue and that’s how support builds.

Commissioner Kelly inquired why the libraries weren’t involved with Prop. 39 when the schools were trying to accomplish the same thing. County Librarian Cervantes responded by saying that the libraries did come to the table late but did try to get involved. The school issue was pretty far along in the process and the authors, who sensed passage was likely, didn’t want to derail the progress they had made on the issue. Plus, there were some things in the legislation that libraries would have to agree to that the schools were agreeing to that made it less than perfect for libraries to get involved at the time.

Commissioner Fischer mentioned here that any commission members who were on various social media might consider putting something on their sites to encourage others to make calls to legislators.
Chair Smith brought up that in his recent trip to Sacramento to be heard on this issue, he was the only non-government speaker to step forward. The packet presented had twenty-nine letters of support in it, only four of which were from southern California. Chair Smith wondered if library folks in southern California were calling and writing as aggressively as those in northern California. County Librarian Cervantes assured him that they were getting involved as well.

Commissioner Kelly asked if an article in the East Bay Times would be constructive and Chair Smith thought that this late in the game it would probably not have much effect. County Librarian Cervantes mentioned that the State Librarian had written an op-ed piece that appeared in the SF Chronicle a few months back which may have been picked up by other sources.

C. INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Chair Smith referred to the letter in the packet and stated he had learned from this process. While the CLA has asked for letters to the California members of the appropriations committee on this issue, county policy is to write to those who represent us but not as CLA. Any funding that was authorized for the current year will remain, so the IMLS has survived through September 30. The proposed cuts will be back in for 2018, however, so more work will be needed for it to continue to survive. At a recent Bart Board meeting, Chair Smith mentioned several interesting conversations on this topic. Lobbyists have said that no one on either side of the aisle likes the cuts that are being proposed by the current administration so it is unlikely there will be a budget in place by September 30. An excruciating budget process is expected for the next fiscal year, and to the extent there are continuing resolutions passed the IMLS will continue on life support. A question was raised about taking current letters that had been written to save the IMLS in fiscal year 2017 and rewriting them to include fiscal year 2018 as well. County Librarian Cervantes stated that the issue here is not just funding for the IMLS but its continued existence. The current administration wants to eliminate the IMLS entirely. The CLA has issued some letters that were used previously. She thought that the letters could be reengineered to include FY 2018.

Commissioner Fischer mentioned that when speaking with the Poet Laureate in El Cerrito, who is very politically savvy, that keeping the pressure on by calling and writing is something that is very successful and would work for groups like the IMLS and the NEA.

D. DAY IN THE DISTRICT

Chair Smith began by saying that he and several other commissioners and library folks had been having some fun meeting with various legislators. The first visit was with Assembly member Tony Thurmond in Oakland. This was the first year they had been joined by Alameda County Librarian Cindy Chadwick. The meeting went very well as Mr. Thurmond is a big supporter of libraries as well as a frequent user. He uses the Oakland Chinatown branch himself and takes his two children to the Albany and Kensington branches as well. The next visit was with Assembly Member Catharine Baker. Ms. Baker, while not a big fan of new taxes, did say at the end of the meeting that the attendees had given her a lot to think about. When speaking at the San Ramon Library reopening a short time later, she did say in her remarks that she thought the state should be doing more for libraries, so perhaps the Commission’s visit had some effect. Vice-Chair Gilcrest said Ms. Baker was a big supporter of libraries in general and seemed sympathetic to the funding issues. It seemed like she might change her mind on taxes, particularly as they pertained to libraries and education. Next the team split up...Melinda met with Sen. Glazer and Chair Smith met with Sen. Skinner. The meeting with Skinner’s staff was good, with a lot of positive feedback and encouragement to call any time there is an issue that needs addressing. The meeting with Glazer was similarly encouraging. Next was the meeting with
Sen. Bill Dodd. This one went well also, as Dodd is obviously a fan of SCA-3...he wrote it! The final meeting was with Assembly member Tim Grayson. He handed the meeting over to his staff after a brief hello, but they were attentive and sympathetic. The Concord library is a big deal for Grayson, so SCA-3 is a good issue for him to be concerned with because of that.

Finally, Chair Smith mentioned that he had purchased quite a few of the PSC (Project Second Chance) poetry books and had been handing them out all over. They are a great messaging tool as far as what libraries can do and how they relate to education and he has been giving them out to the various state legislators to share with others.

Commissioner Fischer mentioned that in all of the meetings he had attended, he felt that Alan and Melinda had done a particularly fine job educating the representatives and their staff about the fact that libraries aren’t just about books any longer, that there is a whole range of services that libraries provide to the public.

E. STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

County Librarian Cervantes provided an update on the process of strategic planning. The effort to come up with the current strategic plan was quite an extensive process. It began by listening to the public in a variety of forums; A community survey was used, key informant interviews were held, as were several town hall meetings. From those were developed four key takeaways that were broad enough to develop a strategy beneath them and a way to measure for success: 1. The library ensures easy, equitable access to library services for all Contra Costa County residents; 2. The library champions personal and community engagement in literacy and reading to enrich lives; 3. The library delivers a consistent, high-quality, and inviting experience at all points of contact; and 4. The library successfully promotes its value, programs and opportunities to the community.

As the library nears the June 30th end date of the plan, we are assessing our progress in these areas. The managers and staff at the branches are reviewing what worked and what did not in their individual work plans and providing feedback to administration, which will review current strategies, revise actions and move forward. There is enough still to do to keep working under these four goals. We need to look at the things we were able to measure and come up with better measurements. The most difficult thing to measure is, what was the long term impact of different parts of the plan? This would require working with schools, some pre- and post-surveying to come up with hard data to be used to assess progress.

The current plan is to come back to the Commission with a proposed new strategic plan in September and to utilize the forum to generate some fresh ideas. County Librarian Cervantes would like the Commission and the friends and foundations to think about all the work that they do and how we can all align what we’re doing so that we’re all moving in the same direction. How we do it is very different. We all do different work, the heavy lifting of fund raising and so forth all ties in to support what we are trying to accomplish.

The library has engaged the services of a firm that helps libraries by creating a dashboard that allows you to follow your success by keeping data centralized, which allows for better reporting. The product of this will be shared with the Commission in September.

Commissioner Wernet inquired if there was anything that could be done in advance of the forum to come prepared with the sort of information that would be asked for. County Librarian Cervantes stated that the agenda was still in progress, but did mention that one particular area that there was no good feel for was when the various friends/foundations write a check directly to a performer or an author. Some method to capture this data would be helpful. Commissioner Wernet said she would be happy to help along these lines.

At this point, County Librarian Cervantes referred to a document that was prepared prior to her return to
Contra Costa County. It was authored by a sub-committee of the Commission that was chaired by current Vice-chair Kathy Gilcrest and included a number of members of the current Commission. The title of the report is Promoting Excellence in Library Services in Contra Costa County and is commonly referred to as the NPR report, for Needs, Priorities and Resources. It is a very well written and nicely presented, and after it was completed it was presented to the various members of the Board of Supervisors. Documents like this are the type of thing County Librarian Cervantes will look to when taking on a new position and so has read through it several times. She recently spoke with County Administrator David Twa to get his opinion of it. He was very complimentary, both about the content and the professional presentation of the material, and he thought it was very well received by the Board as well. The problem is there is no new money. County Librarian Cervantes considers this a challenge. There is a lot you can do with a little, it doesn’t always take money. Sometimes just adjusting your priorities is sufficient. She thought it would be good for the Commission to read documents like this NPR as it fills in a lot of the gaps in terms of the library’s needs and challenges.

Commissioner Canciamilla opined that reading it would give you a more global look at what goes on, as opposed to the narrow view of you own community. County Librarian Cervantes said she would make copies available to anyone who cared for one.

F. FY 2017/18 Library Budget

Linda Martinez presented an update on the Library’s budget for FY2017/18. The Board of Supervisors approved the proposed budget for FY 2017/18 on May 9th. The County Assessor’s Office is projecting a 5% increase in property tax collections for the new fiscal year. The budget includes a 3% cost of living allowance (COLA) for most county employees. The library as a result is adding eleven new positions and increased the hours of seven current positions to full time. The collection budget was also increased by 5%. These were all items Ms. Martinez had mentioned at the previous Commission meeting and all were approved as part of the new budget. The budget as submitted is included in the packet for this meeting. It looks different from what the Commission had seen previously. That is because this final submission is designed to mirror the look and categories of the State Controllers budget.

Vice-Chair Gilcrest had a question about the category Net Fund Cost. It looks like the library overspent here by $6.1 million and she wanted to know where the money came from to correct this overdraft. Ms. Martinez explained that this is a prior year carryforward and there is no overdraft. It’s all a matter of timing and how the numbers are presented.

Commissioner Fischer asked if the library lost the money if it was not spent. Ms. Martinez replied that no, the library retains the use of the unspent portion of the budget.

Commissioner Kelly then asked if there was a reserve fund in case of overspending as it looks like there were several areas in this year’s budget where we had not spent the entire budgeted amount. Ms. Martinez said that no, there was no reserve fund but reiterated that the library retains any unexpended portion of its budget for use the following year. Commissioner Kelly then asked about the timing of input on the next year’s budget. Ms. Martinez informed him that to have any input into the FY2018/19 budget, the Commission would have to get involved in the Fall, as the budget process for FY2018/19 begins in January of 2018. Chair Smith mentioned here that it had been previously discussed that the Commission would provide input to the library starting in September so that when they were formulating the budget for the following year they would have that input about what programs and so forth were important to the Commission and be able to consider those items.

Chair Smith then asked for clarification of the library budget being 1.5% of 1% of property taxes. Ms. Martinez explained that in Contra Costa County, the tax rate averages 1.1% of all properties taxable value, comprised of a 1% general tax levy, plus a portion for general obligation bond debt
service to come up with the 1.1%. The assessed value of property comes from the assessor’s office and that, plus things like school and fire districts, special districts and late fees, are totaled to give you your property tax bill. A question was asked about how much flexibility the county had to change the amount the library receives. County Librarian Cervantes stated that Contra Costa County, unlike some counties where libraries are structured as a special district, has their share of tax collections apportioned. They came up with the 1.5%.

Chair Smith mentioned here that libraries are not a mandated service. County Librarian Cervantes confirmed that the library does not have a line item in the budget as a special district would. We are apportioned a share of the budget, specifically 1.49%. We are a department of the County and our funding is determined by the Board of Supervisors.

A final question was asked about any rules regard who Commission members could reach out to in the friends and foundations with an idea for a program or event. County Librarian Cervantes stated that as long as the inquiry were coordinated so that everyone involved could align their efforts then the answer was no. She did mention that this sort of inquiry would be best brought to the branch managers to get things started.

Chair Smith ended this portion of the meeting by calling the question of sending the Board of Supervisors a thank you letter for their passage of the budget. Politicians love to hear “Thank you” and he thought it would be a good idea. A motion was then made for Alan and Kathy to draft and send such a letter to the Board. The item passed by consensus.

11.A NEW BUSINESS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE
Deputy County Librarian Gail McPartland presented an update on workforce development activities. Workforce development is really about the good work that has been talked about all evening, and what it is at its core is expanding and extending people’s livelihoods to allow them to flourish in their communities. The big effort in this county is called Project Second Chance. It is a county-wide adult literacy program, centralized here and at the Pleasant Hill branch. A cadre of people come together to identify volunteer tutors to work with students one on one. To qualify, a student must be reading at a 6th grade level or lower. The tutor and student work together to set goals. For example, if a student wants to be able to write a resume, then that is what they will work on for the year. Maybe they want to read well enough to be able to write a check, or read a job application, or obtain a certificate of some kind. Ms. McPartland asked if anyone present had participated in the program as a tutor. Commissioner Kelly responded that he had and commented on what a terrific experience it had been. Ms. McPartland said that there were tutors in the program with 50, 200, 500 and even a thousand hours of tutoring on the books, having spent days and days and days working with students in this amazing program.

Next, Ms. McPartland mentioned that the library was piloting an exciting new program called Career Online High School. It’s a fully accredited high school that is totally online. Like PSC it is a one on one experience. Students are assessed online, then are interviewed by PSC staff and if they are accepted, they have eighteen months to complete the program. The program pilot is being partially funded by the state library. There is a long list of career certificates available. Why choose this over a g.e.d.? Because it’s a diploma program that increases participants earning potential. Commissioner Kelly inquired if the pilot program was a nationwide program. Ms. McPartland answered that it was nationwide, and in California thirty-eight libraries are participating. We are a pilot library, so we are assessing how much staff time is required. We have provided ten scholarships this year, and all ten have been deployed in the public. The first graduate from this county is set to graduate soon. The library is planning to have a graduation ceremony of some sort, possibly at a Board of Supervisors meeting.

County Librarian Cervantes mentioned that the program has a five year history in California. It began down in Los Angeles County.

Commissioner Fischer inquired as to the cost to the library and about ongoing costs. Ms. McPartland answered that the scholarships are $1000 each. For this pilot, the library is funding five and the state is funding the other
five. Laura Seaholm, who runs the PSC program at the library, is looking for grant opportunities to fund the effort on an ongoing basis. She has already found, applied for and received a $5000 grant from the Fremont Bank Foundation. Commissioner Fischer asked about the possibility of asking the Board for money to fund scholarships, as increased salaries would benefit the tax base. County Librarian Cervantes replied that the library is looking for people to partner with before going to the Board for money. The Online H/S does not compete with schools or with adult-ed; it very much serves its own demographic. To participate you must be reading at a tenth grade level and have some high school experience.

Ms. McPartland then went on to detail some of the human interest stories of program participants. There is one mother/daughter pair in the program. Another participant is a single mother who is doing this to demonstrate to her son a sense of responsibility. Another woman had dropped out of high school to care for an ill grandparent and then was stuck in a cycle of low paying jobs.

Vice-chair Gilcrest asked if there was a waiting list or a set registration cycle. Ms. McPartland stated that the program is done on a first come, first served basis. The vetting process means that not everyone qualifies, so there is no waiting list.

Next on workforce development, library staff are always looking for partnership opportunities. The County sponsors a workforce integration network to share best practices and keep each other apprised of opportunities to help the public. Participants include the county’s EHSD, Diablo Valley College and Goodwill among others. Another agency we are trying to partner with is the Office of Re-entry and Justice. This is for people leaving prison. Statistics show that 60% of people leaving prison are functionally illiterate. Statistics also show that only 16% of those who seek literacy help return to prison vs. 70% of the general population. And last but not least, here are some educational programs currently happening at the branch level. Brentwood Library is sponsoring workshops on social media. Hercules has small business workshops. Lafayette has monthly small business workshops and Prewett offers resume writing classes. And finally, a number of branches are offering coding classes. These are very popular with the kids.

11.B SAFETY AND SECURITY UPDATE
This agenda item was deferred until the July 27, 2017 meeting.

12. AGENDA SETTING FOR NEXT MEETING and FUTURE TOPICS
Chair Smith called for agenda items for the July 27, 2017 meeting:

- Safety and Security Update (postponed from May 25, 2017 meeting)

13. ADJOURNMENT TO THE July 27, 2017 LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING

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Submitted by Walter Beveridge
Administrative Aide, Contra Costa County Library