Record of Proceedings

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OF THE

BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

Held: Sunday, August 11, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at the future home of the Gunbarrel Library, 6500 Lookout Road, Boulder, CO 80302.

Person preparing summary: Jennifer Phares

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Boulder Public Library District was called and held as shown above in accordance with the statutes of the State of Colorado. The following Trustees, having confirmed their qualifications to serve on the Board, were in attendance:

Doug Hamilton Benita Duran Tom Cosgrove Cara O'Brien Andy Sayler Sam Fuqua

Also present were David Farnan, Library Director; Jennifer Phares, Director of Business and Administration; Maria Tormos, Communications and Marketing Manager; and Chris Barge, Executive Director of the Boulder Library Foundation.

Tour the space

The Board toured the space and discussed costs/benefits of a food/kitchen-style makerspace.

Call to Order and Declaration of Quorum

Hamilton called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. noting that enough appointed trustees were present to create a quorum authorized to act on behalf of the District.

Preview of presentation to City Council and County Commission

The Board discussed the email received from the Boulder County Board of County Commissioners accepting the 2023 Boulder Public Library District Annual Report and declining to have a meeting with the Board. The Board reviewed the <u>draft printed slides for the presentation to Boulder City Council on September 19, 2024</u>. They discussed the order of topics, presenters and provided input on the information to be presented as follows:

<u>North Boulder Library:</u> The Board recommended including the number of library card sign-ups at the North Boulder Library, talking about the diversity of community members present at the grand opening celebration, and noting the proximity of the NoBo (North Boulder) Library to the manufactured home community.

<u>2024 Operating Budget:</u> The Board recommended focusing on certain highlights of the budget, indicating what is included in the Board Governance line item, describing how the District funding helped the library recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and appending the presentation with a deferred facilities maintenance schedule of costs.

Literacy and Outreach: The Board recommended clarifying orally that the statistics for literacy and outreach are from Boulder County data and that a few other library systems in addition to the District provide services to Boulder County residents. The District's service area covers only part of Boulder County. Fuqua asked if City of Longmont Public Library has similar programs to the District's Boulder Reads Program. Farnan said the Boulder Reads Program, from its inception, has served residents of Boulder County.

<u>Staff:</u> Farnan said he plans to simplify the information about hiring staff since the presentation will not be given to the Boulder County Board of County Commissioners. The Board recommended mentioning the efforts toward increasing the hiring of bilingual staff and highlighting that the District invested in personnel benefits and a compensation package that would retain staff.

<u>Deferred Maintenance:</u> The Board briefly discussed the deferred maintenance of library facilities. Hamilton commented, regarding the concept of libraries measuring "bricks vs. clicks," that most of the District's budget is spent on facilities and IT.

<u>Safety and Security:</u> The Board intends to talk with City Council about safety and security of the downtown Civic Area around the Main Library, partner with City of Boulder and the Downtown Boulder Partnership to make the area enjoyable for everyone, and highlight the District's plans to improve the Main Library "under belly" and conduct periodic trash pickup outside the perimeter of the building. Farnan said he will ask for Board support to move forward with these ideas to improve the "under belly" and pick up trash as it will cost the District money to do so even though the District is not responsible for maintaining the area.

Duran recommended focusing the presentation on deferred facilities maintenance, valuing and keeping employees, and safety and security. Sayler asked if the Board has any asks of the City. The Board had further discussion on the possible asks especially regarding the safety and security of the Main Library. Cosgrove asked if the conversation with the City Council will include encampments west of the library. Farnan confirmed that encampments are underneath and to the west of the Main Library today, and they also have been in front of and behind the north building. He went on to say there are more frequently days with encampments around the library than there are none. Sayler commented that the problem won't be fixed without significant changes to city policy. Duran added it should also be noted that the Community Resource Connector position was newly created by the District to address related issues. Denver Public Library has a social worker and a team of staff, and the District hadn't envisioned needing to go that route. She asked what the City's role is in addressing safety and security in the Civic Area. Farnan said the Community Resource Connector position was designed to form better partnerships with community resources and to help staff cope with issues with serving people who are unhoused, experiencing mental health issues, and living with drug addiction in the community. The position is intended to connect individuals with existing resources in the community, not to create another point of service.

10-year Financial Outlook

Library Services – what does it cost to provide X?

Duran and other trustees complimented Tormos and her team for the handout presentation. Farnan highlighted the 10-year financial outlook handout that shows operating costs by service area. The quarterly financial reports that the Board receives during their regular meetings do not group operating costs by area. Farnan said he wanted the Board to see the personnel and non-personnel cost relationship among the service areas and the respective total expense. Anticipating the two upcoming ballot measures that could impact property tax revenues, Farnan projected the revenues at the lowest increase scenario at a growth rate of 3.5 percent. The projection resets the assessment rates progressively lower and then caps them in the later years. The actual average rate of property tax revenue growth for the past 10 years is about 13 percent.

Cosgrove asked if the District is building a rainy-day fund. Farnan said there have been and will be several million dollars of unspent funds carried over into 2025. Sayler asked if the goal is to save a year's worth of operating expenses. The Board agreed in 2023 to carry 8 to 10 percent in reserves, or about a month's worth of operating costs. Hamilton asked Farnan to project what the property tax revenue will be if the tax reduction measure(s) are not approved by voters. Farnan did so but didn't include the information in the packet. That projection showed about \$40 million of unspent revenues would be accumulated over ten years.

The cost of Collection Development with staff equals about 14 percent of the District's operating budget. It is close to \$3 million, which is a best practice and dwarfs the cost of running a branch library. The branch libraries run lean, and the costs are mostly for personnel.

Once the Gunbarrel Library is open the District operating budget is at capacity. Further growth, i.e. new libraries, during the next ten years wasn't anticipated in the November 2022 library district ballot measure. Farnan said the lease for the Meadows Library expires in 2029; he presented the handout that shows the plan to address the deferred facilities maintenance and the potential acquisition of property or a lease for a new Meadows Library location. Hamilton said he thinks the Board will need to decide about the Meadows Library sooner than projected on the handout. The decision should be made by 2026 whether to buy or lease. Sayler pointed out that the projection doesn't include building a new library. Farnan confirmed and recommended the Board consider leasing or buying a building. If an opportunity arises sooner to buy or lease, given the slow commercial real estate market, it should be strongly considered as the District has the money now.

Farnan said the neighborhoods within a 3-mile radius around the Meadows Library comprise the District's second largest service area. Cosgrove asked if Farnan knew the number of frequent users of the Meadows Library who reside in the Frasier Meadows Retirement Community. Farnan: while those constituents are frequent users and should not be ignored, families with children are the largest user base of the Meadows Library. With respect to the East Boulder Subcommunity Plan, the Board discussed how any future development on the east side of Boulder could have designated community use components or dedicated land that may be an opportunity for expanding library services.

The Board discussed when the District would consider increasing library reserve requirements. Farnan said it is up to the Board. Sayler asked what the District's capacity for debt is since it doesn't own the library facilities. Debt would be issued with a commitment from the District to pay a portion

of the mill levy to the lender. Sayler said he would like to understand how much of a loan the District could get to offset the need to carry a large reserve. Hamilton agreed that the Board should consult with Kim Seter, Esq. Sayler asked for a projection showing the impact of a 5 percent decrease in property values over the next ten years. Farnan offered to send the financial model to the Board.

Hamilton asked for clarification about the programs and events costs. Farnan said he combined personnel and non-personnel costs in the handout. The \$1.8 million for programs and events includes \$1.3 million for personnel costs. Sayler asked what is not represented in services or capital investment and whether the handout show the entirety of the budget. Farnan said there is some expense that is not represented in the handout but that he could not remember what it was. Sayler noted that revenues look to be \$1 million more than expenses and asked if it is actual unspent money. Farnan confirmed that it is actual unspent money and that it will be used to build a capital fund.

Farnan explained that Districts are cash rich for the first 10 to 15 years. The financial model was built to project revenues so that the District doesn't have to go back to voters for an operating increase for approximately 30 years. Farnan said the District should use the revenues to fund library operations and not invest it to simply generate income. The unspent funds built up in these early years will be used for capital expenses and in the later years operating expenses will balance with revenues.

Hamilton and Fuqua asked for clarification on what expenses were included in the Administration Services. Farnan said the security services expenses are included under Administration and the custodial service expenses are included under Facilities.

Hamilton said a graphical representation of the 2025 budget like the handouts would be helpful to explain the 2025 budget to the community.

2025 Budget Preview and Discussion

Farnan said he solicited 2025 budget proposals from staff in July 2024 and he is putting together a facilities cost plan. Examples of the budget requests include expanding Literacy and Outreach and some additions in Human Resources and Finance. Gunbarrel operations are the largest addition to the 2025 budget. Noteworthy, non-personnel additions for 2025 are a facilities assessment for the Carnegie Library and increased investment to address deferred facilities maintenance.

Hamilton asked about new programs for 2025 that will bring the community together. The One Book One Boulder program returns in 2025 on the topic Bridging the Divide. The Literacy and Outreach team has been organizing programs that bring people to the libraries. The Studio 24 makerspace at the NoBo Library and the Main Library Canyon Theater pilot are expected to grow visits. Currently theater bookings on various topics are being scheduled by community groups.

Hamilton asked if there is an opportunity to do participatory budgeting. Guidelines would need to be developed. Community members would submit program ideas and vote on them. Cosgrove said he has seen this type of thing go sideways but there are software programs to manage the process, and he has a platform that he would gift to the District. Cosgrove recommended offering some budget resources to middle and high school students to design library programs of interest to teens. Duran said participatory budget is a big civic engagement movement in communities and

would be interesting for the District to take on, but she cautioned that it shouldn't appear like a grant program. She recommended doing some community outreach and inviting people to come and speak about the District's 2025 proposed budget at the upcoming public hearing for it.

The conversation turned briefly to the uses of the Main Library Teen space and to including the Teen Advisory Board members to participate in its refresh or expansion. Barge recommended talking to the Community Foundation about the 15 Forever endowment, although what the District would do is different than teens granting money to the community. It would focus on creating library programs of interest to teens. Hamilton said teen budgeting exercise should be done when the kids are in school and that it is a great leadership opportunity for kids. Farnan spoke about the Library Staff Program Summit and that he would float the Board's participatory budgeting proposal and the opportunity for public input about program selection during the summit. Cosgrove asked if the Board members could observe the summit. Farnan said one or two Board members could attend or more if they rotated through the day so that summit doesn't need to be publicly noticed.

To increase visits at the Main Library, Barge suggested investigating the opportunity to partner with the Boulder Bookstore to host some of the monthly author talks at the Main Library. The bookstore arranges and pays for the author. The Foundation would buy books, and the library would provide the space. It could be held in the Canyon Theater or staged on second floor of the Main Library in the south building. Farnan said the main cost to the library is in the staffing of such events.

Discussion of Strategy and Strategic Objectives

a. Investing in buildings. What is our message with county and city regarding assets.

[Board Goal- transition of all the assets?] Carnegie, Meadows, Main.

Farnan referred to the facilities cost handout saying that it was designed to show the minimal cost of deferred facilities maintenance, \$55 million and assumes no cost escalation. The Carnegie and Meadows Libraries represent most of the cost. The Carnegie Library is not in good shape and there is an assessment that will be budgeted in 2025 to recommend how the building might be renovated to work as a 21st-century archive. The Meadows Library lease expires in 2029, and the library has outgrown the facility.

Meadows Library

Hamilton said the timing of a decision for the Meadows Library is too far in the future on the timeline. He doesn't want any break in library service at Meadows. He suggested that 2027 is a more realistic timing to move and to begin planning in 2026. The \$3.5 million identified for Meadows should be moved up on the budget schedule. Duran said it would be a good public signal that the Board is interested in moving Meadows to a better, larger location in that area of the city. Fuqua asked if the Carnegie and Meadows projects were staggered on the timeline for any reason. Farnan said the timeline was meant to illustrate that the District has the money for these projects.

Carnegie Library

Farnan said the Carnegie Library is in desperate need of a repair or a change to improve access, the archival environmental conditions, and the staff workspace. The District would not give up preserving local history if the building were to be closed and/or returned to the City of Boulder. Even

with building improvements, the archive is not expected to significantly increase visits. The archive is a gesture to the community that preserving Boulder's history is valuable and important.

Hamilton said \$3.5 million is low and to add \$1.5 million move the project up to the 2025 and 2026 budgets. He asked about the vision for the Carnegie Library at the \$3.5 million level. Farnan said to clean up the public reading room so it is appealing and has a feel like The Western History Collection at the Denver Public Library, and improve the staff workspaces. He wants patrons' visits to feel like a special experience and that it become a 21st century working archive. The 2025 plan for the Carnegie Library is to complete a facilities assessment (Q1) and gather community feedback (Q1 and Q2). Farnan said some critical repairs that were estimated at \$1 to 2 million will be necessary in the short term.

Duran asked about the District's relationship with the Museum of Boulder. The Board briefly discussed meetings that Farnan and Barge had with the new museum director and some museum board members to discuss the museum's future. Farnan described the current Memorandum of Understanding the District has with the Museum of Boulder for the permanent loan of Boulder Historical Society photograph collection and expressed that it would like to strengthen the partnership.

The Board agreed that the Carnegie Library is a valued service the District is providing for the community. They discussed several options to invest in the archive to keep it going in the current building. The Board agreed they should ask the City to give it to the District if they decide to invest a significant amount of money in the facility. Sayler asked if the Board's goal is to acquire more assets. Hamilton said one of the benefits of leasing the facilities from the City is that the District is not committed to them long term.

Duran suggested looking into partnerships with state historical preservation agencies that would be advantageous. Fuqua asked if the District could find appropriate storage and a facility for the archive is the Board prepared to turn over the Carnegie Library building back to the City. Cosgrove asked the Board to consider if the building is part of the core mission of preserving Boulder's history. He said the archive can fulfill its mission anywhere. Farnan and the Board agreed having a functional historic archive is important.

Hamilton: reaching out to the historical community is necessary before deciding whether to invest heavily in renovating the building. He commented that relocation of some of the collections to other library facilities might be a good idea given the area's potential natural disasters. Farnan expects that a thorough community engagement process could take 12 months. Sayler said if the District chooses to keep the building and invests significant money into it, the Board should consider not only the historical uses but the other uses of the building (such as a podcasting studio). It could provide significant community benefit if the community is flexible about how it is used. O'Brien wants to understand the various levels of cost to renovate the building in addition to the maximum investment to turn it into a 21st century archive before a decision is made because the building is such a sentimental space to the community. Sayler agreed and suggested that the cost of building or finding a new facility also be investigated. Sayler asked if it is possible to expand the Carnegie Library. Farnan said that would be part of the assessment.

The Board continued to discuss leveraging the possible investment in the building to obtain ownership from the City. Sayler offered that the investment could be used to leverage ownership of all City owned library facilities. Fuqua said the opposite could be argued. It may be ridiculous to invest in a building that can never become a 21st century archive and give it back to the City for another use. The District could do right by the archive collection and house it in a better, more convenient location. Cosgrove suggested that the District could relocate the archive and put the Carnegie building to a new historic use. He speculated that community push back in 2016 (in response to the City's investigation of closing the archive) was related to the community's sentimental value of the building. He said archives grow and currently the archivists have a very crowded, dysfunctional workspace. When the District looks for a new space for the Meadows Library it ought to include functional archive space.

Hamiliton asked the Board what information is needed to facilitate making an informed decision. The Board agreed that the following information is needed: a clear vision for the historical collection, the most suitable location options for a functional and accessible archive and the associated costs, and input from the historical community including what they like about the current archive and what they want from it. O'Brien said she is not yet convinced that the answer is to move the archive out of the Carnegie building. She repeated the need to obtain the range of costs for any solution before a decision could be made. Duran suggested getting some of the community input during the reopening and for the Board to think about how it wants to frame the conversation for the City Council. Cosgrove cautioned that gathering community input immediately following the assessment might prematurely signal to the community that renovating the building is the chosen path.

Fuqua asked if Barge had any thoughts on behalf of the Foundation. Barge advised that donor groups are small for this type of niche investment. There may be little donor appetite to invest in the Carnegie Library after the struggle to keep the Museum of Boulder funded and open. The challenge is to get the donors to see how their contribution could enhance the District's investment.

Hamilton concluded the conversation by summarizing the decision time would be after the 2025 budget or by the next Board retreat unless an opportunity comes along in the meantime.

b. Digital provision and access

The digital divide became evident during the pandemic. Farnan asked about the Board's appetite to grow the library's digital presence further. Examples were a pilot to extend the reach of Wi-Fi internet access in north Boulder to the manufactured home community and/or distribute more wireless hotspots. Duran said she volunteered during that hotspot distribution program during the pandemic and there was lots of participation by older adults. Sayler said he believes that access to information via internet access and access to computing devices is a core goal of libraries. He wants to understand the need and the cost to ensure growing the library's digital presence in this way is solving the right problem and that the District is not just picking up the slack from underfunded government programs. Duran asked if Colorado's broadband access plan would be an avenue for people to apply for funding to get internet access and if there is a coordinated Boulder Couty program. Sayler said the State plan focuses on improving rural infrastructure for internet access. Farnan said the school district has a coordinated program for families with children and discounts the cost of internet access. Sayler asked if there is any data about the need for internet

access in the manufactured housing community. Tormos recommended the District work with the City's Community Connectors to get the data. Sayler recommended that staff invest some time in finding out what the need is and more information about the infrastructure and cost. The Board supported Farnan's proposal to further explore expanding Wi-Fi in north Boulder.

c. Library use.

Fewer people are coming into the facilities to use the services or browse the collection. Farnan said browsers have new methods using the online catalog and holds. The increased use of the holds has continued after the pandemic. The holds service is one of the most expensive services. The result of this change in use may dictate decreasing the depth of the collection to increase the number of popular materials available, increasing comfortable seating and study areas. Farnan said some polling of patrons will need to be done.

Children's books account for 50 percent of total circulation. Farnan said staff are working to understand children's use of eBooks. He surmises that children's eBook and audiobook use has grown from 5 percent to upwards of 25 percent. Digital audiobook use, overall, is the fastest growing use of the collection. The conclusion is that some changes to physical collection and spaces are forthcoming and will be in response to these use trends.

Cosgrove asked when the last statistically valid patron survey was conducted. Farnan said 2018. Cosgrove recommended that another survey be conducted to understand use and how the community perceives the library as a community institution and space. Duran agreed a survey should be conducted because the District is new and has a larger user base. Hamilton said a survey could be a preliminary step toward a strategic plan. Farnan suggested doing non-intrusive, quick, spot surveys like when patrons pick up their holds. Tormos talked about her expertise conducting market research and the plan to conduct annual tracking to learn how use is changing, trends in use, and satisfaction with services including Carnegie. It would be a survey with core questions. Sayler would like to see the trends. Hamilton agreed. Tormos said the focus of the annual tracking would be getting input from a specific number of people from different customer groups. Duran suggested that current practice employs survey panels to see their use trends. Tormos advised the opposite. The groups surveyed one year would not be surveyed the subsequent year. This will provide the overall community use trend rather than the specific use trends of the cohorts. Farnan is interested in public feedback that would validate or not trends observed from the data already collected. There will be questions on use, safety, impacts of programs and outreach. Feedback will be sought from users and non-users. Hamilton asked when staff would present an engagement plan to the Board. Farnan said there will be an item in the 2025 proposed budget and will have a plan by March or April 2025. Duran said these efforts should feed into the strategic plan and should be for residents in the District, not county-wide. Hamilton said there will be greater and more robust engagement for the strategic plan. O'Brien said the type of survey being discussed is to conduct more consistent engagement to see how patrons are using the library. Hamilton said programs that occur outside of libraries should be counted as use. Farnan said that data is collected.

d. Safety Issues

Farnan asked for the Board's interest investigating with the City possible safety improvements to the outside of the Main Library. He believes the District should take a leadership role in maintaining the grounds to support safety. The Main Library "under belly" and behind the 1961 building are places that people setting up encampments gravitate to. These spaces have been occupied consistently since the pandemic and there is persistent drug use and other criminal activity around them. Farnan wants to coordinate with City to address the areas. He thinks there are things that could be done to improve the safety and appearance of these areas, including picking up trash. Sayler asked if Farnan was looking for guidance from the Board to pursue architectural changes that break up the space and discourage large encampments. Farnan said yes because it will cost the District money. Duran said the Civic Area and the "under belly" is dark in the evening and the City should consider adding lighting. There was a brief discussion about the feasibility of closing off the "under belly" and the associated liability issues. Farnan said in 2027 the City will move out of the Civic Area and the issues are not going to get better. The Board supported the exploration of options.

When do we begin the strategic plan?

Farnan recommended that the District does strategic planning and solicits user and non-user feedback on a regular basis, every 1 to 3 years. Ten-year finance projections and a capital development plan will be created. Hamilton said he would much prefer an annual update on use trends. Sayler doesn't support 5- or 10-year strategic planning. He would like an annual plan.

Barge said we're not browsing in our libraries but we're browsing more than ever, and we're being browsed. Many parents are encouraging their kids to put down the screens and experience the real world. We're beginning to understand that there are healthy styles of obtaining information. It makes sense to have philanthropy support the library to develop these new methods and healthier relationships with our phones. We shouldn't be lamenting that people aren't in our libraries browsing the books, that's 30 years ago thinking. We need to be where are kids are right now. They are more deeply involved in media resources than our generations ever were.

Duran said she was thinking about community spaces, and the library being the community's living room. There may be an opportunity to introduce more visitors to the library by sharing information about the library's offerings with the new Moxy Hotel. She also recommends staying aware of the project to redesign the plaza at the St. Julien Hotel; the library may be able to contribute. She mentioned the statewide initiative called the Belonging Initiative being led by the Denver Foundation. Colorado ranks as a top state for belonging and connectedness. She said there may be some funding the library could get from the Denver Foundation to support some of the library's community building programs. Related to the Sundance Film Festival, she said the Stanley Hotel is in the running to be the campus of Sundance. If Sundance chooses to headquarter in Estes Park, it could complement our support of these efforts.

What is the Board going to work on from 2025 to 2026?

Hamilton summarized the Board's upcoming work as follows:

- Develop a 1-to-3-year strategic plan.
- Conduct outreach to the high schools about the program budgeting idea.

- Move up the search for a new location for the Meadows Library earlier in the budget planning timeline.
- Identify a clear vision for the historical collection, gage community support for improving the Carnegie Library building or relocating the archive to a more suitable facility.
- Conduct future library use assessments and space planning.
- Explore offering free internet via Wi-Fi to the NoBo community.
- Reviewing staff's plan to conduct annual patron surveys with periodic updates to get community feedback.
- Investigating options to improve safety around the outside of the Main Library.
- Targeted invitations to get attendees for the 2025 budget public hearing and to build community awareness of our efforts and the budget.

Duran asked the Board members to share their takeaways from the retreat. Cosgrove said it was one of the best Board meetings. He valued the open discussion and challenging of ideas. O'Brien appreciated taking a longer-range view after all the detailed work getting the District running and the opportunity to take a step back to think strategically. Sayler said he sees the monthly meetings as more reactive and liked that this retreat was more proactive. Fuqua said he appreciated discussing the role of libraries, what do we do in them, and what they become as use patterns change. He thought the Board pushed the conversation forward regarding the future of the community historical archive. Hamilton said the meeting was intended to set the foundation and make plans to address the problems. We can try something and build on it or abandon it depending upon if it is successful. One thing that was accomplished is that we agreed to collect library usage tracking data for the libraries, including Carnegie, to inform future decisions.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at about 3:00 p.m.

Sylvia Wirba
Sylvia Wirba (Oct 17, 2024 16:25 MD

Attestation

Record of Proceedings Retreat for signature

Final Audit Report 2024-10-17

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