



HCLS Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020 ♦ 7 pm
Virtual

Board members present were: Robert Mentz, Chair; Andy Dalal, Vice Chair; Tom Munns, Treasurer; Phillip Dodge; Anne Markus; Kelly Smith; and Antonia Watts. Also present were leadership team staff members/citizens including Dorna Anderson, Lew Belfont, Angela Brade, Vera Davies, Katie DiSalvo-Thronson, Stacey Fields, Cari Gast, Allison Jessing, Christie Lassen, Steve Lewicky, Diane Li, Brooke McCauley, Lauren McCloskey, Emma Ostendorp, Ben Sfanos, Michael Scott and his team from Equity Matters, Stephanie Shane, Sabina Taj, and other members of HCLS staff and the public who joined in.

Rob called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Board unanimously approved the November 18, 2020 Board meeting minutes. I introduced discussion of HCLS' Racial Equity RFP, summarizing HCLS' efforts, including signing on to the Urban Library Council's Statement on Race and Social Equity, which serves as a baseline upon which libraries can build policies and actions that make their communities more inclusive and just, receiving requests from the community to do more in this space, creating an internal equity team, and subsequently soliciting proposals from vendors to assist HCLS in these efforts. The desire is for the vendor to work the balance of the fiscal year, through June 30, 2021, engaging the community in naming and exploring top racial equity concerns through a sustainable, ongoing public story collection process, gathering; and analyzing qualitative data to create current and future data visualization models and reports that inform and empower stakeholders in their decision making process on equity-related issues; Creating an innovative communications campaign that brands the equity work, educates the community, fosters significant community interest, and leads to engagement and collaboration; and provides before and after racial equity training supports, including generating a replicable sensemaking training plan that educates and models the process of sensemaking at the individual and community levels.

I shared that Howard County benefits from many recent, reputable reports providing quantitative data on local inequities and disparities, and posited the missing, and key component, is the qualitative data, the personal impact stories. I further shared why HCLS is poised to lead this work, helping to build community and bridge racial divides. I recounted internal efforts, like the REAL (Racial Equity at the Library) Conversations held with staff as a means of sharing, listening, building understanding, and creating deeper connection across the team.

I then presented Equity Matters, the proposed vendor, whose members under the direction of Michael Scott introduced themselves and their backgrounds, plus role on the project. They announced that this effort would be focused on gathering stories as the building blocks of culture shifts. They demonstrated the proposed sensemaking tool with a powerful backend that collects stories and allows for pattern sifting. A major benefit of the sense-making software is the ability to explore actionable insights in a cycle of collecting, analyzing and returning stories to the community. I announced the funding requirements for this effort, with the bulk coming from prior year encumbrance and the balance covered in this year's Object 1.

As part of this racial equity effort, we solicited testimony from community members in support of this initiative. Written testimonials were distributed to Board members prior to the meeting, with one citizen, Sabina Taj, delivering her testimony orally at the meeting. Questions from the Board yielded the following responses: there is a way to collect stories orally, and HCLS will use networks and relationships to capture stories from all demographics. The Board approved the motion to select Equity Matters as the vendor and the related funding to be

expended. Tonya thanked the board, the Equity Matters team, and gave a round of thanks to all who took part in this initiative.

Angela presented an update on the Downtown Columbia Branch and how it might fare in the FY 22 budget. She reviewed the history of the project, noting the space limitations in the current building and why a new building is needed. She further addressed prior year \$488K funding that was for planning, highlighted the past accomplishments, and showed pictures depicting the new branch's location. The preliminary estimate for construction of the new building rests at \$55M, with an additional \$13M slated for the library's portion of the parking garage. Pending availability of funds, next steps are to continue with the design process, seek state grants, and collaborate with the County on project funding and timing. Angela then presented slides from the County that detailed where this branch would figure into the tax increment funding, plus FY 21 cost analysis and estimates covering the Library and Housing. I pointed out that the bulk of downtown funding would come from the County's second available set-aside in FY 25, noting that if the set aside is not there, we will need to push out our funding requests. Questions from the Board included concerns over sufficient and designated customer parking in the parking garage, and the length of time it would take to construct and open the branch (~2 years) relative to the overall timing for the buildout of the Downtown Merriweather District. Regarding the branch garage, HCLS has visited other library systems in Maryland that have shared garages and will also take a look at the Owings Mills Branch. HCLS will come back to the Board once additional information is received from the County on their fiscal outlook and funding for the Downtown Columbia Branch.

I delivered a presentation on the \$200K Rise to the Challenge Grant that HCLS received from Howard County, explaining the breakdown of where funds would be expended. \$40K would go to device lending in the form of additional Chromebooks and Hotspots to members of Howard County; \$40K would go toward distance learning to outfit team members in their delivery of virtual classes and events; and \$120K for a new mobile unit focused on equity under the title of "On the Road to Kindergarten." For this latter item, I provided a more in-depth discussion with the plan to roll out this vehicle in fall of 2021. My presentation included examples of other mobile units exterior and interior, and the flexible use for not only materials browsing but functionality as a potential STEM lab. I gave an overview of the preferred sole source vendor, Farber Specialty Vehicles, who has served many library systems with custom vehicles in this space. The total cost for the van is \$193,143 with \$120K coming from the County's grant and the remaining from HCLS gift funds. Questions from the Board centered driver safety, and the flexibility of the vehicle to do multiple things like provide Internet access, serve as a bookmobile, and deliver classes externally. Additional costs in the form of insurance and maintenance were discussed. Angela is to follow up on the former, and I provided a listing of what is covered in maintenance. No new staff is needed for the unit and there are no special licensing requirements to operate the vehicle. The Board approved the motion to purchase the vehicle from the sole source vendor and related funding. I thanked the board and the team for their efforts in securing the grant and thorough review of the scope of work for the unit.

Rob adjourned the meeting at 8:21 pm. The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for 7 pm on **Wed., January 20, 2020** via zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Tonya Aikens
President & CEO