



## HCLS Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

January 25, 2023 ♦ 7 pm  
Virtual

Board members present were: Antonia Watts, Chair; Phillip Dodge, Vice Chair; Elizabeth Banach; Rob Mentz; Julie Parham; and Sabina Taj. Also present were leadership team staff members/citizens including Ruba Abukhdeir, Dorna Anderson, Lew Belfont, Angela Brade, Mary Brosenne, Kelly Clark, Stacey Fields, Cari Gast, Kelsey Hughes, Nina Krzysko, Addison Landers, Christie Lassen, Suki Lee, Steve Lewicky, Diane Li, Tanya Malveaux, Lauren McCloskey, Carol Murray, Emma Ostendorp, Nana Owusu, Ben Sfanos, Margaret Smith, and Stephanie Shane.

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

The Board unanimously approved the November 16, 2022 Board meeting minutes.

The Operations Update followed, starting with the introduction of newly hired DEI officer Dr. Kelly Clark. I then explained the *Library Journal* star ranking for 2022 in which HCLS dropped from five stars to four. The most recent ratings are based on 2020 data which was right in the middle of the pandemic. Many factors added to the 2022 star ranking having the most variance ever, including differences in the number of months states, counties, and cities were open and the corresponding number of months library systems provided in-person or virtual service, levels and types of service provided, and differing methods of counting atypical services.

Turning to 2023 legislative priorities, I reported that Maryland libraries are working with legislators on a bill that is aligned with state law and is fair to library staff, systems, and boards. The bill number is forthcoming. Another collective bargaining bill, HB 65, has also been introduced. There are several concerns with the bill in its current format as it relates to libraries, including removing authority from library boards that is given to boards under the law. SB 205 addresses library funding and HB 243 calls for expansion of the Young Readers Act, giving oversight of the program to the Maryland State Library Agency. We are looking to operate the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program through the library system or co-operate with Bright Minds Foundation to enhance the ability to reach the target audience of families and caregivers of children ages 0-5.

Cari Gast provided the history of early learning classes before highlighting the newest program Mother Goose on the Loose featuring Hatchlings classes, a pilot program with the Maryland State Library. She reported that there is positive feedback to the program which emphasizes the importance of early literacy to new parents. HCLS is now applying for a grant to continue these classes, including adapting them for our customers, such as those reached through On the Road to Kindergarten. Cari further explained that some sessions were offered in Spanish.

I related the efforts to reinstate service to the Detention Center which consists of replacing their collection of approximately 3,500 items. HCLS staff will be training HDHC staff on our circulation software.

The Board reviewed the latest financial report, followed by my presentation of a proposed FY 2024 Operating Budget, which calls for COLA and Merit increases for Object 1, no increases in Objects 2, 4, and 5, and an increase in Object 3 to cover demand in materials and STEAM curriculum supplies.

I provided an update on the Strategic Plan process. We have received two proposals that are currently being scored. A late February/early March project kickoff is anticipated.

Christie provided Evening in the Stacks details, soliciting ideas of sponsors and explaining how the raffle tickets can be both purchased in the branches and online. We will look into whether people can be refunded if they win the raffle for tickets to the event if they have already paid for tickets. The HCLS Spelling Bee will be in person, the first time since 2019. Battle of the Books will take place at Merriweather Post Pavilion again and is drawing a record 322 teams. She related activities from both the website redesign and wayfinding/signage vendors. Both vendors are in talks to secure common elements for consistency across HCLS' digital and physical appearance. We will revisit which branch will be the test facility for the newest signage.

Nana Owusu, Chair of the Friends & Foundation of HCLS, summarized recent Friends activities. The Annual Campaign has raised \$115K so far and is 78% to goal, including a \$20K bequest. There are 46 new donors. The Friends has received grants to support HCLS efforts, including those focused on early parents, food insecurity and teen initiatives. There will be a flower basket fundraiser in the spring. The Communications Committee has introduced a new newsletter that will be going out to Friends members.

Phillip adjourned the meeting at 8:04 pm to reconvene in a closed session. Below is a summary of the closed session held on January 25, 2023.

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:
  - a. Time of closed session: 8:05 pm – 9:16 pm
  - b. Place (location) of closed session: Virtual via zoom
  - c. Purpose of the closed session: to discuss personnel matters, public security, consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, and property acquisition and matters related to
2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:
  - a. Names of members voting aye: Elizabeth Banach, Phillip Dodge, Rob Mentz, Julie Parham, Sabina Taj, and Antonia Watts
  - b. Members opposed: none
  - c. Members Abstaining: none
3. Statutory authority to close session: This meeting was closed under the following provisions of General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b): \ Topic #1: § 3-305(b) (x ) ◇ Topic #2: § 3-305(b) ( ) ◇ Topic #3: § 3-305(b) ( ) (add others as needed)
4. Listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:
  - a. Topic description: Personnel Matters, public security, consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, and property acquisition and matters related to
  - b. Persons present for discussion: Tonya Aikens, Elizabeth Banach, Lew Belfont, Angela Brade, Phillip Dodge, Stacey Fields, Christie Lassen, Steve Lewicky, Rob Mentz, Julie Parham, Kelly Smith, Sabina Taj, and Antonia Watts
  - c. Action Taken/Each Recorded: The board discussed personnel matters, public security, property acquisition and matters related to, and consulted with counsel to obtain legal advice. The board voted unanimously on direction provided to counsel.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for 7 pm on **Wed., March 15, 2023**, and will be virtual unless otherwise noticed.

Respectfully submitted,



Tonya Aikens  
President & CEO