



HCLS Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2020 ♦ 7 pm
Virtual

Board members present were: Robert Mentz, Chair; Andy Dalal, Vice Chair; Phillip Dodge; Anne Markus; Tom Munns; and Antonia Watts. Also present were staff members/citizens Dorna Anderson, Lew Belfont, Angela Brade, Stacey Fields, Christie Lassen, Ben Sfanos, Stephanie Shane, and other members of staff and the public who dialed in.

Rob called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

The Board unanimously approved the June 24, 2020 Board meeting general and executive session minutes. I opened discussion on HCLS operations during the COVID-19 climate, noting that we are in Phase 3 continuity and reimagined services and currently at 7-day quarantine of materials based on the length of time the virus survives on materials as presented by test results from the REALM (Reopening Archives Libraries and Museums) project. I then shared our remote working principles which I will email separately to the Board. Stephanie will schedule behind-the-scenes tours at the branches for Trustees to see first-hand the complexity of HCLS' current operations of contactless pickup and virtual classes and events. Lew continued discussion on these last activities, presenting impressive statistics including a 14% increase in contactless pickup request since inception. He further explained branch activities, including hours of operation, split shifts, large numbers of materials in quarantine, plus support from other departments to make room on shelves and purchase new in-demand materials.

Lew then presented impressive virtual curriculum statistics, including 421 online children and teen classes, 475 adult classes, and 40 book group meetings. He mentioned virtual author events, including Joyce Carol Oates, as well as a new studio at the Administrative Branch to create live and pre-recorded classes. Based on these successful activities, it is anticipated that when operations return to normal HCLS will be delivering a hybrid virtual and in-person curriculum. He turned the floor over to Brooke McCauley who announced the recent initiative to loan Chromebooks and hotspots to the most vulnerable in Howard County for a period of up to six weeks. The effort will be a soft launch with 40 items, collaborating with partners like FIRN and the Department of Social Services to get the message out to their constituents. HCLS hopes to get another 100 devices in the next couple of months for lending.

Discussion followed on the difficulty of comparing current operations with normal operations, noting that there are many different variables, such as holds which are experiencing a surge. Lew continued by explaining reimagined services to reader's advisory and assistance where "Ask HCLS" enables customers to chat, email and call HCLS Instructors for advice. Anecdotal evidence shows that contactless pickup has been a success and that compared with other Maryland library systems, HCLS has one of the largest volumes of customers and among those with the largest variety of online classes. I look forward to sharing state data showing the volume of operations when next report is available. The Board commended the staff.

Angela delivered a presentation of e-resource statistics, showing marked jumps in the use of business databases, online books, streaming, and online classes. She noted that these items represent 64% of the FY 21 budget which had previously planned 22% pre-COVID. She summarized recent grants awarded for HiTech, including MathPlosion which is offered during the school year to help students with math and "Carnival in a Bag" the reimagined HiTech Carnival set to start October 17 where students can pick up bags of equipment to do their own experiments supplemented by video sessions recorded by HCLS instructors.

Christie updated the Board on the A+ Partnership, announcing this year's signature events – HCLS Spelling Bee and Battle of the Books will be virtual for safety sake. Scripps is providing HCLS with a virtual platform, while we are planning to create a more robust BOB experience from this past spring. We are still working through how to take the Rube Goldberg virtual. Discussion followed on the plan for a virtual Evening in the Stacks. Tom Munns offered to help based on his experience with HCC's Vino Scholastico virtual event. HCLS staff have been participating in such virtual events to include LHC's Big Event which had breakout rooms. and drawing upon partners to reimagine the Stacks gala. Discussion followed on the recently released *source* whose link Christie shared in the chat.

Katie DiSalvo-Thronson provided an update on HCLS partnerships with initiatives focused on increasing geographic, income and racial diversity. Two big efforts to facilitate this undertaken by HCLS were developing a social needs assessment for COAD and establishing a "Community during COVID" section of the HCLS web site to provide a listing of resources for residents. Additionally, these resources were listed and translated in flyers that were handed out through our partners. I continued discussion, explaining our internal work on racial and social justice, referring to pages 5-8 in the Board packet. These include REAL conversations that are optional for staff, plus work with the leadership team to ensure equity in our practices. As part of Staff Development, we will be hosting online training that is being planned by the HR team. Again, Board members commended HCLS for all that we do.

I presented the initial plans for a proposed FY 22 Operating Budget that would include allocations for (1) staff merit and COLA increases, as well as additional positions (a full time Virtual Strategy position and a full time Business Analyst position); (2) more funding for materials and tech infrastructure costs that used to be covered in the capital budget; and (3) additional costs for contracts and integrating EDI into the curriculum. Tonya referenced the rest of the document which contained supplementary details of the curriculum focus, noting that the strategic plan is on hold given the current pandemic climate.

Angela presented our proposed FY 22 capital budget, highlighting that there are no more funding requests for the renovation of Glenwood, that the Southwest Branch has been moved out, and that the top priority is the new Downtown Branch, for which \$1.9 M is being requested in FY 22. Additional funds are provided in outyears, with FY25 and FY 26 envisioned for construction. Discussion followed on this project in terms of the variety of unknowns that still exist in the space where the branch is to be situated. A recommendation was made to invite someone from the Howard County Budget Office to present to the Board at the November meeting.

The Board unanimously approved the proposed FY 22 Capital Budget, totaling \$1.499M. After which, Angela summarized capital project activity, providing an update on the Glenwood Branch renovation which is slated to begin late October and last six to seven months.

The Board approved no changes to the Policies & Supplement 1 sections of the *Board of Trustees Policies*. After which, myself and others thanked Bruce for his years of service, before announcing that Kelly Smith should be appointed October 5 by the County Council. I have prepared a virtual orientation for her after that happens. I referenced the financials at the back of the events which showed end of year for FY 2020 plus the beginning two months for FY 2021.

Rob thanked everyone for attending, adjourned the meeting at 8:42 pm, which was unanimously approved to reconvene in Executive Session pursuant to §10-508 of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, in order to discuss personnel matters.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for 7 pm on **Wed., November 18, 2020** via zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Tonya Aikens
President & CEO