

CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
MINUTES OF THE LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, September 11, 2023

A. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Bond, Doll, Jester, Jones, Millea, Chairperson Levitt

Absent: None

Others Present: Parks and Recreation Director Leyman; Senior Recreation Manager (SRM) Melissa McCollum; Senior Recreation Supervisor (SRS) Kari Bell; Recording Secretary Rosemary Lackow

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 14, 2023

Chair Levitt called for any changes to the minutes.

Commissioner Jones requested on Page 3, Item G. under 1.c. (Library Appreciation Events) that the paragraph be revised to accurately that there are two types of events. Reword to read:

“c. **Library Appreciation Events**—Commissioner Jones noted that this item will go forward as in the past with two events, thanking the library staff with a brunch in May and lunch in November, and in June giving certificates of appreciation to school librarians.”

Commissioner Doll noted on Page 4, item G.1.f (Photo Op Day) while the minutes are accurately stated; due to a misunderstanding, she requests that the record reflect that she has not volunteered to serve as chair or co-chair.

It was moved and seconded (Bond/Millea) to approve the August minutes as revised.

The motion passed 6-0 in a voice vote.

C. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Chair Levitt welcomed Mr. Hani Sayegh, Commissioner Doll’s father to the meeting.

1. Librarian’s Update - Manager Josh Murray

Library Manager Murray made the following announcements regarding upcoming library programs:

- September is “Library Card Sign Up Month” – giveaways are available with signups.
- September 15, 4:00 pm, meet and greet, book signing with author Melissa de la Cruz.
- September 16, 1:00 – 2:30 pm - “How to Make Mooncakes” led by Phoebe Chow (waitlist)
- September 25, 6:30 pm, kids 10+ and teens: seminar: “Create a World Without Bullying”
- October 16, 6:00 p.m. – meet/greet Henry Winkler, Dan Santat and Lin Oliver, for launch of their new “Detective Duck” series for early grades

D. GENERAL BUSINESS

1. 2024 Work Plan Discussion

Chair Levitt stated that first Director Leyman will discuss the role of the Library Commission within the context of the Parks and Recreation Department and annual Work Plan process. Following that, the commissioners will present new ideas for next year's Work Plan.

a. Staff Presentation

Director Leyman thanked the Commission for their service and proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the Library Commission's responsibilities, the City's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County Public Library, and related Department of Parks and Recreation budget and operations information. Director Leyman went over the library surplus fund balance (\$9.5 million at the end of Fiscal Year 2021-2022), and explained that property taxes paid into the system by Manhattan Beach residents exceed the cost of operating the branch. The surplus funds accumulate for the benefit of the Manhattan Beach Library. The surplus has been used in the past to fund additional services and has been discussed as a funding source for enhanced eastside library services, but this has not yet been decided by the City Council.

Director Leyman responded to questions and recommended that at this time, the Commission hear presentations of possible 2024 work plan items submitted by individual commissioners. After discussing these, the Commission should look at its list of 2023 Work Plan items, with an eye towards whether to carry over to 2024. At the next meeting in October, the Commission will further discuss and vote on the list of recommendations for the 2024 Work Plan.

The Director explained that a new work plan process will be used for 2024 for all commissions. The commissions will no longer present the plan in person to City Council; instead, their recommendations will be provided in a written report presented by staff. For each commission the first consideration should be whether a proposed plan item is aligned with their mission, and if so, then the fiscal issue will be evaluated by staff and this will be provided to the council.

b. Commissioner Presentations

Chair Levitt invited the Commission to present their suggested new work plan ideas. The Commission will discuss and get feedback from staff as to feasibility, and from Library Manager Murray. The Chair emphasized that no decisions are being made at this time.

1. **Watts Book Drive:** (Commissioner Jones submitted) A book drive held the weekend of October 14-16 (this year) collecting gently used and new tween and teen books to create libraries for each of the 16 classrooms of the KIPP Middle School in Watts. A downtown business, Bella Beach Kids, is willing to sponsor this which would involve assistance on social media and having a book drop box.

2. **Professors Talk:** (Commissioner Jones submitted) Invite local professors to give talks once a month on areas of expertise. (possible sources: UCLA, LUM, USC, El Camino, etc.) Topics to range from AI to Sports Medicine, to Pop Culture. She has talked to a representative of a speaker bureau at USC and they are interested in this and will do it at no cost (except travel to the city from USC). The USC program would hand-pick the speakers.

3. **Music at the Library:** (Commissioner Jones submitted) Diverse performers at the Library (in or outdoors); could also perform at the Photo Op Day event. Idea taken from "LAX Presents" and would be a series, possibly every other month. This requires a robust budget to

cover performance and transportation.

4. ***Jellyfish Hunt:*** (Commissioner Jones submitted) A month-long children's event; a hunt for mini replicas of the library jellyfish sculpture placed throughout the library, and these would be turned in and entered in a raffle for a prize from a local business (e.g., Pages). A closing event could be relay races and a talk on jellyfish, possibly a speaker from Roundhouse Aquarium.

5. ***James Webb Space Telescope Talk*** (Commissioner Jones submitted) An event at the library dedicated to the Webb telescope built locally at Northrop Grumman. Engineers involved could speak about the project and its impact to scientific research at the library and perhaps speak to science students at MBMS and Mira Costa.

6. ***One City/One Story*** (Commissioner Bond submitted) Functionally a giant book club for the city, two books chosen over the course of a year; authors invited to speak; promotion through city, library, book clubs. ***Community Read*** (Commissioner Levitt submitted): brings city community together around one single book, with various events (book groups, "read alouds," book sales) and culminating in one community wide event with the author. Suggest forming a subcommittee of librarians, library commissioners and staff to identify potential authors and related events. Estimates a budget of \$25k or more.

7. ***Poetry Month*** (Commissioner Bond submitted): April is Poetry month. Highlight this genre through workshops, displays, and speakers, and possible collaboration with Mira Costa.

8. ***Preparedness Plan with Fire Department*** (Commissioner Bond submitted): Work with MB Fire Department to develop a presentation and activities on being prepared for natural disasters.

9. ***Program with Botanical Garden*** (Commissioner Bond submitted): How to incorporate native plants into your garden. Perhaps partner with a local nursery.

10. ***Local Artists Displays at Library*** (Commissioner Bond submitted) Idea is to do more to enhance art but with art in the library, with focus on local artists.

11. ***Learning at the Library*** (Commissioner Bond submitted): A speaker series; some ideas: a play by an actors' workshop; mahjong workshop; film screening; health seminars; musicians; authors. ***Speaker series*** (Commissioner Levitt submitted): This could be similar to that done by the Malibu County Library, featuring well-known experts, authors, and notable figures discussing wide range of subjects. Suggest funding through library surplus funds.

Feedback from Staff: SRM McCollum explained that the Malibu's speaker program has a large budget (about \$125k) funded through its property tax surplus, with a price point for speakers as much as \$50k. If Manhattan Beach had such a program, larger venues would be needed.

12. ***Library Awareness*** (Commissioner Levitt submitted): Continue from current work plan to build out, create assets, prepare Commissions and schedule Library Commission talks at city nonprofits organizations, schools, and business associations.

13. ***Investigate Possibility of a Makerspace as part of any Eastside Library project*** (Commissioner Levitt submitted) Makerspaces are highly recommended and described by the

American Public Library Association as “transformative spaces, inviting library users to create, innovate, and collaborate” and can support growth of small business and startups. Found in libraries across the country, they provide space for designers and residents to brainstorm and create simple products to make life easier; provide a place for youth, teens and adults of all ages to imagine and create. Commissioner Levitt feels that an eastside library use with a makerspace could be something new and different – not just a replication of the main library.

Commission Discussion/Feedback

Commissioner Doll: feels that there should be fewer but bigger, more high profile events to raise awareness of the library in the community. She supports events that target a range of ages to promote literacy, personal enrichment and entertainment. She feels the community read and speakers series could be such events (perhaps Manhattan Beach could donate the community read books, when done, to another community?). Commissioner Doll also endorsed: Makerspace idea and incorporating into it a tool lending service as is offered at a few other county library branches and using surplus funds for enhanced programs unless the funds are already earmarked.

Commissioner Jester: speaking from a student perspective, feels that the city should tap into what people want to see and do. She likes that the book giveaway is in line with the philanthropic nature of the community and suggests that this could be coordinated and promoted by a high school group.

Commissioner Millea: likes the idea of the Watts book giveaway but asked whether if in taking up this effort would this be “stepping on the toes” of any other organization? **Chair Levitt** understands that there is an organization in the city that already does book drives and has a relationship with KIPP Schools of Southern California; this may be a duplicated effort. **Commissioner Jones** believes there still may an opportunity to do this book drive by activating high school students motivated out of a sense of philanthropy. **Chair Levitt** suggested she can pass on the contact info for the organization she is thinking of, for the math teacher at the Watts KIPP middle school to see if this could work.

Chair Levitt noted that she feels the role of the Commission is more aligned with that of advisory and as liaison and suggested that perhaps some of these ideas can be implemented not by the Commission but through the library. She invited input from Manager Murray.

Manager Murray stated that he felt that many items on the Commission’s list are things the library could do as regular library programs, perhaps with some “twist.”

Chair Levitt endorses the “**Professors Talk**” item, but suggested that speakers be recruited from other local universities, in addition to USC. She also cautioned that a professor well versed in a field is not necessarily an adept speaker. Manager Murray stated that the Library has certain criteria and would want to determine the topic and speakers. Chair Levitt suggested that the Commission, as liaison could give the library some professor names and topics as suggestions, and then release to the library to implement.

Chair Levitt likes the **Webb Telescope** idea, feels this may be something that the Commission can implement, but more needs to be worked out.

Commissioner Millea: likes the **One City/One Story** OR the **Community Read**, and suggests that there be a mechanism for people to find and join a book club.

Manager Murray noted that a community read program requires much advance planning. The program he has experience with at a former branch involved meetings on Saturdays related to the topic for different age groups. He can envision the City being involved in choosing the topic and/or book. There are many options which can be discussed.

Chair Levitt explained that the \$25k cost for the Community Read was just an estimate and would cover a speaker fee, travel and lodging, and possibly some books. This may be able to be folded into the Speaker Series to be handled by the library.

Manager Murray commented that he is very interested in hearing what the community wants from the library and is available to meet to discuss.

Chair Levitt, seeing no more comments, stated that at the next meeting in October the Commission will be discussing these ideas with the objective of deciding which to go forward with.

2. 2023 Work Plan Discussion

Chair Levitt opened discussion regarding the current 2023 plan items and which of these should go forward in some form or which should come off the list.

a. Learning at the Library—Chair Levitt suggested this item (for 2023 - quarterly author events) be continued as discussed, in some form through the County Library. Commissioner Doll expressed concern that there is overlap between the 2023 item and some of the 2024 proposed ideas (e.g., Professors Talk, Webb Telescope Talk, 2024 Learning at the Library etc.) and she feels more discussion is needed to clarify more what this item is envisioned to be. Chair Levitt acknowledged there is overlap but this will be discussed and resolved in October.

b. M.B. Poetry Event—Commissioner Bond proposed to be continued in 2024, to discuss at the October meeting.

c. Library Appreciation Events—Commissioner Jones noted that this item will be continued for 2024.

d. Library Commission Book Giveaway—Chair Levitt noted that she has discussed with the volunteers and believes they understand that this will no longer be a Commission program and a conversation might be held with the Friends of the Library regarding continuing by FOL.

e. StoryWalk—Commissioner Bond noted that this project is complete but needs some maintenance quarterly when new books are installed. She plans to next install the book “Ducks on a Bike” which was supported by the other commissioners.

f. Photo Op Day—Commissioner Jones provided a background on the 2023 event held in early June which featured entertainment and an opportunity for people to have their photo taken professionally at the *Lightgate* sculpture with an indoor Library story time. This was privately sponsored by a local restaurant owner and no new sponsor has been identified.

g. Entertainment Series – Commissioner Jones described, as a background, the two events that were held in 2023. This was privately sponsored by a local restaurant owner and no new sponsor has been identified.

h. Library Awareness Campaign—no new discussion.

E. STAFF ITEMS – No report

F. COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Jones requested that the Commission clarify whether it would like to support going ahead with the Watts school book giveaway in mid-October as part of the Commission's 2023 book giveaway work item. Director Leyman advised that this idea is not in the current work plan and feels that the idea can be further discussed at the October Commission meeting.

The Commission briefly discussed the idea of doing book giveaways to disadvantaged communities; Commissioner Jester expressed interest in spearheading such a project. Chair Levitt tabled this discussion until the October meeting.

G. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded (Doll/Bond) to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 pm. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.