

CHARITON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MARCH 5, 2020

The Chariton Free Public Library Board held its regular monthly meeting in the meeting room on Thursday, March 5, 2020 pursuant to notice given under the Iowa Open Meetings law. The meeting was called to order at 5:31 pm. Trustees present were Dixon, Esper, Fenton, McGee, Mefferd, Pillsbury-Allen, Sharp and Utesh. Watkins-Schoenig attended part of the meeting, from 5:50 pm to 6:50 pm. Librarians Kris Murphy, Dawn Morgan and Laurie Ghormley were present. Ten visitors representing and/or supporting the Genealogy Society were in attendance: Mabel McGee Schluessler, William L. Shelton, Don Volenes, Mary Ruth Pierschbacher, Suzanne Terrell, Frank D. Myers, Kathy Loynachan, Mayor Denny Bisgard, Chelsy Arnold, and Jacob Johnston.

Public Forum: Mefferd introduced the Board members to the visitors, and then went over the information contained in a hand out entitled March 5, 2020 Talking Points March meeting. (Please see Attachment #1.) Mefferd then invited Librarian Murphy to present her case as to why the library needs to be able to have all of its rooms available for library purposes. Murphy read a statement containing facts and figures concerning both the library and Genealogy visitors, library programming needs, and her plans for the future of the space currently occupied by Genealogy, if vacated. She also provided everyone with color printed pictures showing the new features and arrangements. (Kris, can you please provide a copy of all of this and we'll call it Attachment #2.)

Bill Shelton was the first visitor to respond. He stated that the library is a place to find history, and a place to find family history. Mefferd described the most recent contract between the library and Genealogy, and explained that the Board will give a 90-day notice to Genealogy as required ^{by} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~contract~~ if the decision is made to terminate the contract. He also said that the decision of whether or not the contract would be terminated would be the only decision that the Board would make during this meeting. Mefferd referred to his printed motion dated February 24th 2020. (Please see Attachment #3.)

Frank Myers spoke next. He reminded everyone that Murphy had asked Genealogy if they would like to use the old music room several years ago. He said that Genealogy has been part of the library since 1975, occupying the History room at one time, and that possibly at another time the current board room was to have been the Genealogy room. Mefferd disagreed about the board room ever becoming the Genealogy room. Myers said he is currently the chairman of the Lucas Co. Historical Society, which collects primarily physical artifacts, while Genealogy has a renowned collection of information concerning cemeteries, families, scrap books, original photos, etc. Myers claimed that hand-written documents from Iowa pioneers had been thrown out by library staff and he felt that all archives need to stay in the library. Murphy disagreed that these items had been thrown out, and Mefferd defended the Murphy's obligation to weed out materials from the library collections.

Mefferd continued to explain his motion (Attachment #3,) pointing out an unexpected budget cut to the library's annual payment from the Lucas Co. Board of Supervisors that occurred immediately after the 2015 lease agreement was made.

Mayor Denny Bisgard asked if the library has a money issue or a space issue. Mefferd replied that Genealogy is not legally part of the library, and the library is part of the city of Chariton.

Fenton suggested there was another room that could be used by Genealogy, the Laura Curtis room.

Pillsbury Allen encouraged everyone to work together.

Sue Terrell was the next to speak. She said the books, pictures and artifacts that are in the Genealogy collection are very important to keep and, while methods of storing information change over time, the physical pieces will last and must be protected. Terrell felt it was very irresponsible and unprofessional of the librarian to disclose on the internet the amount of money that Genealogy has in their bank account. Terrell said the proposed increase in rent was way too high and would spend down Genealogy's account into non-existence. Mefferd responded that the library has responsibility to the city and the county.

Chelsy Arnold spoke next. As a high school teacher, she uses the library website and the Genealogy archives to teach her students to look up information about themselves and other people. She believes that physical artifacts are very meaningful to the learning process. Arnold also spoke of her positive experiences in the library as a parent of small children. She encouraged civility between Genealogy members and Board members. Mefferd then replied that if the current contract is terminated, he would be willing to consider a new contract during this meeting. Arnold added that \$6000.00 per year is too much for a new rental amount and there's a need to talk about more realistic ideas.

Shelton spoke of Ancestry.com and his dislike of digitizing records because they are often not retrievable years later due to technology upgrades. He stated that Genealogy is all about the libraries of people's lives.

Bisgard reminded everyone that Chariton residents do consider Genealogy to be part of the library, and Genealogy needs a good "landing spot." He said a plan to move forward together is necessary. He also said that the community will support the funding of much-needed library improvements if Genealogy can stay in the library.

Terrell offered that more Genealogy volunteers do need to come forward. Health and life situations have taken away much time from the main three volunteers, and new volunteers are just now becoming more available. She said patience is needed while more Genealogy members prepare to become active volunteers.

Watkins-Schoenig asked for everyone to work together because Genealogy is so special. She apologized that she had to leave the meeting and encouraged everyone to let the past go.

Myers said the Genealogy archives are irreplaceable and need to be kept safe as they are the most valuable and most permanent of all records.

Mefferd agreed that the board could work out a compromise and he agreed that the library has a responsibility to provide services to the community. He said he realized that Genealogy would like a new contract.

Terrell said that "terminate" is a very frightening and intimidating word. She suggested that there be meetings and mediation prior to deciding the terms of a new contract.

Myers said that "renegotiate" would be a better word to hear.

Shelton reiterated his dislike of digitizing because the digital records often deteriorate. He asked the board why rent is charged at all for Genealogy to be in the library, and added that housing them shouldn't be a business prospect.

At this time, there were several comments and questions concerning the Laura Curtis room. Everyone was invited by Murphy to take a tour of all rooms of the library's lower level. After everyone returned to the meeting room, Tim McGee was the next board member to speak.

McGee claimed that there is no animosity but no one likes change. He said that much of the ill-feelings have been caused due to poor communication because everyone has allowed the library staff to do almost all of the communicating. He encouraged everyone present to speak because this meeting was a great opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions.

Mefferd asked if anyone had further thoughts.

Mabel McGee Schluessler expressed the desire to save the Genealogy archives and have them open and available to the public at all times. She said it all needs to be preserved.

Jacob Johnston stated that because ancestry is becoming so much more popular, he hoped that the board would allow Genealogy to fit in the back rooms of the library and that there would be a plan to give them a place where people can go. He said he really wanted to keep Genealogy in the library.

Don Volenes admitted that currently Genealogy has more space than they need, but the physical archives are the best and they mean the most. He said the proposal for a 500% increase in rent and no phone service felt like the library is pushing Genealogy out. He asked for everyone to work it out.

Fenton wondered what would be a fair amount for rent, and Volenes replied that \$100/month for the much smaller room and some storage sounded fair to him.

Mefferd stated that the lowest rent amount to be considered would be at least \$200/month.

Pierschbacher asked about Genealogy moving to the book sale rooms instead of the Laura Curtis room, since they are in much better shape. Murphy said she didn't know where the book sale could move to. Ghormley added that the library clears at least \$100/month profit on book sales.

Terrell said as she was thinking of a possible rent payment amount, she felt that there's a need for more open meetings so there would be better communication to help everyone work together. She asked for mutual respect. Mefferd replied that all library board meetings are open to the public.

Kathy Loynachan stated that people expect Genealogy to be in the library, and it's very important to keep it that way.

Alyse Hunter added that all of the historic preservation groups in Lucas County want to preserve our great community, and the groups all have the same goal.

Volenes explained that the Genealogy funds were built up over many years through donations, memorials, bake sales, etc., and the donations were not given in order to be spent on rent. He also said that he had checked around quite a bit and found that the biggest share of genealogy groups are housed in libraries. In response, Mefferd gave a brief explanation of the library expenses and lack of enough staff.

Mefferd asked the Board if anyone had a final comment. Several board members expressed their thanks to the visitors for their information and participation in the Public Forum. Ghormley added her thoughts that some of the Genealogy materials are not being kept safe enough from further deterioration. She encouraged the group to make a long range plan to keep the materials safe.

Mefferd returned to his motion and made some amendments. His new motion (please see Attachment #4) included the original termination of the current agreement with a 90-day written notice, and added an execution of a new agreement for the lease of the Laura Curtis room with 90 days to work out the terms. Mefferd replaced "an annual rental payment of \$6000" with "a rental payment would be negotiated but it will be at least \$200/month." He stated that there would still be no phone service, that Genealogy would not be

allowed to install their own telephone line, and that internet access would continue to be provided by the library. Mefferd said that this would be a one-year agreement. He added that Genealogy would need to have their own liability insurance policy and that the library would be the named beneficiary. There was some discussion and explanations given to clarify why Genealogy does need its own insurance policy. When everyone understood the amended version of Mefferd's original motion, Mefferd declared at 7:48 pm that the Public Forum was over.

The Agenda was unanimously adopted on motion by Dixon, seconded by Utesh.

The Minutes of the last regular meeting were unanimously approved on a motion by McGee, seconded by Sharp.

Correspondence: An email from Susan Prattis will be deferred to next month's meeting after Mefferd and Murphy have a conversation with the City Manager.

The February Financial Statement was accepted on a motion from Esper, seconded by Pillsbury-Allen.

Claims were unanimously approved on a motion by Fenton, seconded by Dixon.

Grants: Murphy submitted a grant request to SCICF for the amount of \$6000 to be used to purchase collection items.

Old Business A: Genealogy Lease Agreement

Mefferd went over his amended motion (Attachment #4.) Because Dixon had only been able to add notes to the original motion, Mefferd said he would provide a cleanly typed motion if it passed. Esper seconded the motion. When all discussion had ceased, Mefferd asked for a roll call vote:

Utesh - Yes.

Sharp - No.

Pillsbury-Allen - No.

Mefferd - Yes.

McGee - Yes.

Fenton - No.

Esper - Yes.

Dixon - No.

Mefferd stated that the result was a tie which meant that the amended motion did not pass.

Old Business B: RFP Bids

Two bids have already been received but because nothing has come from Bryce Travis yet, this decision will be deferred to next month's meeting when hopefully the City Manager will be able to attend and can participate in the conversation. Murphy was asked to telephone Travis to ask him to submit his bid.

Old Business C: Long Range Plan

This item will be deferred to next month's agenda.

New Business A: Closing for STEAMFEST

Murphy explained that the library will need to be closed at 4:30 pm on Thursday, March 26, 2020, so all library staff can participate in the Lucas County STEAMFEST. The early closing was unanimously approved on a motion by Esper, seconded by Fenton.

New Business B: Selling of donated items at ½ Price Books or online.

This item will be deferred to next month's agenda.

There was no other business.

Murphy briefly went over her Director's Report. The Board is interested in helping Mary Katherine Laird celebrate her retirement. After a short discussion, Murphy was asked to do something for Laird on behalf of the Board.

Pillsbury-Allen asked the other board members to consider a fun method to help everyone get to know each other a bit better.

Being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:34 pm on a motion by McGee, seconded by Esper.

Lois Dixon, Secretary

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lois Dixon, Secretary". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'L' and a decorative flourish at the end of the word 'Secretary'.