

Helen Hall Library
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 18, 2023
Helen Hall Library Board Room

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

2. Roll Call of Members

In attendance from the Board were Mark Lardas, Jeanne Avandsalehi, Kyrsten Garcia, Mary Dugie, David Hoffman, and Tina Coker. Also in attendance were Director of Parks and Cultural Services Chien Wei, City Librarian Teresa Potter, Assistant City Librarians Meredith Layton and Darla Rance, and Administrative Assistant Emily Holodnak. The group was joined by Manager of Community Engagement and Special Projects Amber Pedigo and Assistant City Manager Rick Davis for a short period of the meeting.

3. Opportunity for Citizens to address the Board

Amber Pedigo introduced herself to the members of the Board and explained her role within Communications. Amber told the Board about special projects, such as a citizen web forum, and mentioned several other engagement initiatives she will be working on within the community. Amber briefly answered questions about the projects she had mentioned.

4. Approval of Helen Hall Library Board Meeting Minutes for February 2023

The minutes for the board meeting held on March 21, 2023, were approved.

5. City Council Comments

No city council members were present for comments. Assistant City Manager Rick Davis took a moment to introduce himself to the Board.

6. Chairman's Comments

Mark Lardas noted that this was his first time to chair a meeting and asked for patience from other members of the Board.

7. Executive Director Comments

Executive Director was not present to comment. Director of Parks and Cultural Services Chien Wei took a moment to speak about the recent statistically valid survey done by the city and mentioned that there was a question on the survey asking citizens what they thought about a west side community center and library. Chien gave credit to former Councilman Dugie for the idea of a west side multipurpose facility.

8. Walter Hall House Progress Report

Teresa stated that the false walls on the first floor had been removed to open the space. She also said that the second floor was being cleaned up and slightly renovated. In the coming months, budget meetings with the City Manager will be held at the Walter Hall House. Teresa noted that as of June 1st

the library will be able to hold some summer programs in the space, but no formal plans have been made for permanent programming.

9. Discussion of Public Library Statement on Library Website

City Librarian Teresa Potter stated that the library was advised by the City Attorney's Office not to pursue a public statement on the library website. When Teresa asked if the Board would like the City Attorney to attend the next meeting to answer any questions, Jeanne Avandsalehi stated that she would like to wait to see what transpires with CCISD before any further decisions are made.

10. Discussion of Annual Board of Trustees Report to City Council

City Librarian Teresa Potter opened the discussion by asking if any of the Board members had ideas from last month's discussion. Kyrsten Garcia asked for clarification on if a presentation before City Council is allowed. Teresa said that anything within the three-minute public comments is allowed. Mary Dugie referenced Nearpod that she had discussed in the last meeting and stated that she had interactive ideas for geographic statistics, the importance of library services, and demographics. Mary stated that she would like to include the data for how many citizens voted to have a west side library.

Mark Lardas stated that he would like to structure the report with a summary, or annotated table of contents, to give an overview of what the library is asking for, and then going further in depth within the contents of the report. Mark thinks it is important to capture Council's attention with the first page and elaborate with details in the rest of the report. Kyrsten wanted Mark to elaborate on what he meant by a summary. Mark reiterated his point about listing the basic items the library wants Council to know, and then explaining those items in detail when they are listed in the report. Mark continued to explain what he wanted in the summary. Kyrsten stated that she worried a summary would keep from being able to tell a story about what the library wants and suggested a table of contents. Mark replied that the summary would be an annotated table of contents. Mark also explained that if the Board is worried about Council not reading past the first page, then it is important to list everything in the first page. Kyrsten stated that she is concerned with engagement throughout the entirety of the presentation. She explained the way she would structure the presentation and stated that she doesn't want to forego creating an engaging presentation if Council would not read it in its entirety.

Mary began pointing out information within the previous presentations that could be cut in order to keep the audience engaged. Mark again explained the importance of the first page summary. Mary asked about the deadline for the presentation to City Council, and Teresa stated she would want the Board to vote on a final product in July. David Hoffman commented on the difficulty of easily explaining complex topics and noted his admiration for the way the *Wall Street Journal* handles the task. David believes that structuring the presentation in a likeness to the *Wall Street Journal* would be a good way to deliver the report to City Council. Mark reiterated his ideas and the need for a summary. Kyrsten mentioned the idea of an introduction video, but the Board mentioned their hesitation with if the Council would be able to watch it. David suggested a workshop session for this report. Teresa asked about Board members' schedules to schedule something. Some Board Members suggested using the same report format that has been used in previous years to streamline the process. Mark repeated his desire for a one-page summary.

11. Staff Reports

a. **City Librarian Report** given by City Librarian, Teresa Potter

i. **General Library Update**

Teresa began the update by noting that the library's two new hires started this week, a part-time circulation clerk and a part-time children's page.

All the library's budget documents have been turned in. The library asked for increases in subscriptions, technology maintenance, and operating equipment. The most substantial item being asked for is the reclassification of entry level positions. Teresa explained that the goal is to have the descriptions better represent staff and the work that they do. The total increase to the budget would be approximately \$8,000 a year. Teresa noted that this is not a guarantee and mentioned that the library budget meeting with Council is scheduled for July 31st. She encouraged Board members to attend if they are able.

Mary asked about the process of budget meetings, and Teresa said that this year is different because they are adding more departments into sessions in the hope that there will be less questions. She also stated that it would not be an itemized list of what each department was asking for. Teresa continued that the Board's position is to advocate for the library and that there is a public comment session before each budget meeting.

Director of Parks and Cultural Services Chien Wei explained the process of how the budget is sent up through the chain of command and how the Assistant City Manager Rick Davis will make a list of items to be approved for all of the departments he oversees, which will then go to the City Manager. Chien stated that if items the library wants did not make it onto the final budget list, the Board would be made aware before hand and could go to the budget meeting to advocate for the library and the removed items.

Teresa announced the beginning of a new Seed Library to be contained within the library. Teresa found a double drawer card catalog on Facebook Marketplace and asked the seller to donate the item to the library to house the Seed Library. The seller was excited about the new project and brought the item the very next day. Garden enthusiasts amongst staff have been asked to meet and discuss what type of seeds will be available in the Seed Library.

Girl Scout Troop 139135 revitalized the Butterfly Garden in front of the library and planted 120 milkweed seedlings for monarch butterflies. Teresa noted that this was the third year in a row that this troop has come back to plant milkweed.

Teresa announced the closure of Dickinson Public Library for renovations through December.

ii. **Friends of Helen Hall Library**

The Friends of Helen Hall Library are exploring a new logo, have rewritten their by-laws to be voted on, and attended Jazz Night to recruit new members.

b. Assistant City Librarians' Staff Reports

This month Teresa proposed several questions to staff and had Darla and Meredith read aloud their answers.

Questions:

- a. Is there anything we still do that you wish we didn't do anymore?
- b. Do you have a unique story to share about a patron interaction from the last several weeks?
- c. Identify a great statistic for a different section and use it to tell a story about impact in the community.

i. Public Services given by Assistant City Librarian, Darla Rance

Assistant City Librarian Darla Rance's Answers:

- a. Darla would like to discontinue the breaks the library takes in May and December in order to continue programming.
- b. Darla always loves her interactions with her English Conversation students. Last night they laughed about how some of the countries don't follow traffic laws and how they had to learn how we do things here.
- c. Darla is impressed by the 89 checkouts of Curiosity Kits!

1. Adult Services

Adult Services Librarian Joanne Turner's Answers:

- a. Not at this time.
- b. A patron Joanne regularly speaks with came in to visit recently and Joanne did not have time to speak with her as long as they normally do, the patron has since passed. This incident reminded Joanne of the importance of human connection offered at the library.
- c. Joanne is happy that we are now serving the gamers in our community! The video games were checked out immediately and have been on hold lists since then.

Electronic Services Librarian Amelia Chau's Answers:

- a. No.
- b. A one-on-one appointment with an elderly lady who needed assistance with her new smartphone. Amelia was able to teach her basic skills such as calling, texting, and viewing her contact list. Amelia was even able to list the woman's daughter as a medical emergency contact in case the woman needed immediate assistance. Due to the help the lady now carries her phone around all the time.
- c. Ard Law Firm Legal Workshop had 24 participants!

Local History Librarian Caris Brown's Answers:

- a. End the initial 60-minute limit session on public computers. If time limits are needed, perhaps a 3-hour block may work due to the inconvenience to the patron having to ask for a new log in every hour.
- b. Caris chatted with a patron who had been dealing with family matters in India for the last year. He mentioned how happy he was to be home and how much he had missed the library.
- c. Technical Services fulfilled 114 interlibrary loan requests in March!

2. Children's Services

Children's Services Librarian Kate Guynn's Answers:

- a. Kate mentioned being happy to have gone fine free.
- b. A gentleman at self-checkout seemed to have a disability and was making loud noises. The woman with him kept asking him to be quiet, and Kate assured her that everyone should feel comfortable in the library and that we serve everyone!
- c. There has been a huge increase in facility usage statistics for FY2023. This data shows that the library is valued by the community as a meeting and gathering place.

Senior Assistant Children's Librarian Cody Kiser's Answers:

- a. Constant rotational programming. This is not to say we should stop it all together, our basics should still be rotational (storytimes, book clubs, computer classes, etc.), but we should try creating programming that is unique to reach further into the community.
- b. A kid gave me a rose because she thought it would make me smile!
- c. Cody mentioned the success of Sip and Sew and how it reached a 21–30-year-old demographic the library is consistently trying to do more for. Cody also gave Volunteer Services a shout-out and mentioned how well the volunteers do with Jeremy's leadership.

Children's Librarian Sarah Hultman's Answers:

- a. Sarah would like tasks to be assigned based on people's talents and passions. She believes allowing employees to strength or creativity to shine would better help the library or community.
- b. Sarah had a grandmother tell her that she and her granddaughter love to play "storytime" at home. She and her granddaughter will take turns being Miss Sarah or Miss Cody and do a storytime with songs, dancing and a book.
- c. In March, Sheldon had 8 teens attend Teen Crochet Club. This program is held in our Teen Room, and teens can come just hang out at the library and crocheting with fellow teens. Sarah believes this is valuable because there isn't the promise of volunteer hours, snacks, or any other incentive, but that the teens are choosing to spend their time at the library and feel safe at the library.

3. Teen Services

Teen Services Librarian Sheldon Steven's Answers:

- a. Not that I can think of.
- b. Sheldon met a new teen named Esteban for the first time. He was reading our posted program information and was very excited about everything we offer. He asked many questions, signed up for Teen Book Box, and is planning to join the other programs, including Teen Advisory Board. He said that his older sister is "too cool" to hang out with him now, but that he is so happy that he can make friends and have fun through our programs.
- c. Get Lit Book Box had 12 participants in March! Sheldon believes this is a great way to get people in the door and utilize the library for more than just the book box!

4. Volunteer Services

Volunteer Coordinator Jeremy Brewer's Answers:

- a. Not being able to accept credit card payments for bookstore purchases if there is no volunteer working.
- b. A volunteer was struggling to make an origami bird and Jeremy helped them. Although it was a little thing, the success felt great, and Jeremy felt like it was a great teaching moment, not just for the origami project, but life in general—to keep trying and persevering.
- c. Cody's Nature Journal Challenges received 1500 online views during the month of March!

ii. Access Services given by Assistant City Librarian, Meredith Layton

Assistant City Librarian Meredith Layton's Answers:

- a. Semester-length program schedules, it may be fun to shake things up by planning December-February, March-May, June-August, September-November sort of rotation.
- b. Meredith was able to help two moms pick out Curiosity Kits! Most of them are checked out!
- c. Early literacy programming is going gang-busters, with a 34% increase in attendance so far this fiscal year!

1. Technical Services

Technical Services Librarian Ashley Leblow and Staff's Answers:

- a. Not at this time.
- b. No.
- c. The number of interested volunteers and quantity of hours they perform every month shows the community's great interest in helping the library. Some of the tasks they perform may not seem as they are really helping, but everything they do is another task lifted off someone's to do list.

2. Circulation Services

Circulation Services Supervisor Kelsea Meza's Answers:

- a. Not that I can think of.
- b. Not at this time.
- c. The clear crates! Although, they are not counted as a library statistic, the public loves them! It's a great resource that the foundation gives us, and that we can give back to the community.

c. Statistical Reports

Teresa noted that all statistics have trended upwards and that things are going well. There was registration for 105 library cards last week, which is the highest week yet for FY2023. Teresa believes a lot of the new traffic can be attributed to our new library of things!

Some time was spent discussing how the library calculates their statistics, specifically patron questions, which are tallied at the desk in different categories. Assistant City Manager Rick Davis asked about digital vs physical trends. Teresa explained the lower numbers during the pandemic, and how we have since recovered but how the numbers have changed.

d. Calendar of Events

Teresa noted Darla’s comment about taking a break in May but explained that our May calendar is full.

10. Board Comments

Tina Coker updated everyone on her success of reaching out to the Boy and Girl Scouts. She stated the appreciation expressed by the Boy Scouts, and complimented Kate Guynn on her program.

Jeanne Avandsalehi told the Board that she was happy *Pride and Prejudice* won the March Madness Battle of the Books. She also asked about Cookbook Book Club which Meredith and Emily will be hosting this summer.

Mary Dugie shared her Galveston County Library update. Mary’s biggest take away was a cohesive calendar for all Galveston County libraries.

Kyrsten Garcia mentioned that she would love to see some evening kid’s programing for working parents.

Mary also mentioned how she would like to see a Car Seat Installation event at the library. Kyrsten asked if this could be a part of the Family Place Library.

Teresa informed everyone that the Utility Billing/Sign Up for a Library Card initiative will be starting May 1st.

11. Review of follow-up items generated during meeting

Mark Lardas asked for Teresa to schedule a special workshop session for the Board of Trustees Presentation to City Council.

12. Adjournment

7:39 p.m.