

Helen Hall Library
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 16, 2023
Helen Hall Library Board Room

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call of Members

In attendance were Board members Mark Lardas, Jeanne Avandsalehi, Mary Dugie, David Hoffman, Roxann Lewis, Kyrsten Garcia, Tina Coker, and Byram Lass. Also, in attendance were City Librarian Teresa Potter, Assistant City Librarians Meredith Layton and Darla Rance, Circulation Supervisor Kelsea Mesa, Technical Services Librarian Ashley Leblow, Volunteer Service Coordinator Jeremy Brewer, and Administrative Assistant Emily Holodnak.

3. Opportunity for Citizens to address the Board

Citizen William Pate talked about the success of the Galveston County Library Alliance meeting held on August 5. He stated his disappointment over the last-minute decision to move the Library Alliance's meeting from the library and expressed his concern for the Library Room Reservation policy review and the freeze placed on room reservations.

Citizen Peggy Zahler also mentioned the success of the Galveston County Library Alliance and her concerns with the reservation freeze. Peggy went on to talk about the budget workshops recently held by the city and stated how proud she was of the professionalism displayed by City Librarian Teresa Potter and staff.

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

The minutes for the board meeting held on July 18, 2023, were approved.

5. City Council Comments

Assistant City Manager Rick Davis thanked the Library Board for their active role in the community. Rick also addressed the citizens' concerns about the library meeting room reservation policy freeze. He stated that there are multiple opinions and perspectives about the library's room reservation policy and that city administration was addressing the "fundamental flaws" found in the policy. When asked by Kyrsten Garcia what the fundamental flaws were, Rick Davis stated that he did not want to delve too deeply into the issue without the city's legal department also being present but did state that the definitions between "political" and "partisan" were one of the issues, as well as the policy not looking into the content of what groups are presenting when they reserve the space. Rick also mentioned the recent budget meeting and the library's success in being able to redesignate staff positions. He also stated his continued work with Teresa in creating a professional development section for city staff.

No city council members were present for comments at the start of the meeting. City Councilmember Tom Crews later joined the meeting and expressed his appreciation for all that the library does and

encouraged the Board and Library Staff to continue their excellent work. He also made mention of the Community Standards Review Committee meeting being held on August 17 at 6:00 P.M.

6. Chairman's Comments

Mark Lardas thanked the Board for their time spent going to the city budget meetings and for any comments they made supporting the library. Mark also mentioned the Community Standards Review Committee meeting being held on August 17 at 6:00 P.M.

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

Teresa stated that the deadline for the Annual Board of Trustees Report to City Administration was the first week of October, and that the Annual Report would be delivered to City Council in November. Byram Lass, Kyrsten Garcia, and Mary Dugie expressed that they would like to see expanded usage data as an addendum to the Report. Teresa stated that staff would put together a couple of options for the Board to look at and approve.

8. Walter Hall House Progress Report

City Librarian Teresa Potter updated the Board that the Walter Hall House has been approved for use, but that no major modifications have been made towards improvement. Teresa mentioned that the library wants to host a Hurricane Harvey book release party at the Walter Hall House in September, since it has been a city landmark impacted by so many hurricanes in the past.

9. Friends of Helen Hall Library Update

Although the Friends did not meet in July, it is on their agenda for August 24 to elect a representative to come and speak to the Library Board about happenings within the Friends of Helen Hall Library.

Teresa stated that the current focus of the Friends of Helen Hall Library is their Fall book sale happening October 13 and October 14. Teresa explained that the books sold will come from donations made to the library and books that have been discarded from the collection.

10. Staff Reports

This month Teresa asked the Library Board to send questions that could be relayed to staff and Darla and Meredith read aloud their answers.

Questions:

- a. What are the top 3 biggest problems or challenges you face (outside of anything that may be related to existing personnel)?
- b. What made you want/take a job at Helen Hall versus other libraries?
- c. What's the one thing you don't have that would make your job easier?
- d. What's a library initiative you'd like to start but don't have the time for? (Assuming you have the same budget size)
- e. How would you describe the current role of the library trustees? What should it be?
* Answers to this question were shared anonymously with the board. *

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

1. Adult Services

Adult Services Librarian Joanne Turner's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - The lack of space for adult programming.

Local History Librarian Caris Brown's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Limited library space for programs.

Electronic Services Librarian Amelia Chau's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Having an area for people who need to make a phone call without disturbing patrons that are studying and working.

2. Children's Services

Children's Librarian Sarah Hultman's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Our library doesn't have enough physical space!

Children's Librarian Assistant Cody Kiser's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Our library doesn't have enough physical space!
- b. Answering Question #4 - Cold Case Files. This would be an adult program where attendees would get a cold case to solve. I think this would be a fun program for a lot of people, especially if it's advertised as a group activity.

3. Teen Services

Teen Services Librarian Sheldon Steven's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Limited schedule space since evenings work best for the teens' schedules. The teens always want more teen-only space.
- b. Answering Question #4 - Additionally, there aren't any evening times available to host these programs because we have teen programs almost every day of the week (the teens prefer evenings since it works best with their school schedules).

4. Volunteer Services

Volunteer Coordinator Jeremy Brewer's Answers:

- a. Answering Question #4 - Relaunching the Senior Book Buddies program with local retirement/assisted living centers. Jeremy explained the logistics keeping him from restarting this program including staffing, collection development, transportation issues, etc. This sparked a conversation among the Library Board who requested more information about how the program was done in the past and asked if this is something that could be reimplemented.

Mary Dugie asked for clarification between this and the Galveston County book delivery program. Teresa explained that this was more of a collection brought to the assisted living homes based on what the citizens might be interested in, rather than a delivery of a book that had been checked out.

- ii. **Access Services** given by Assistant City Librarian, Meredith Layton who was reading for Access Services staff as a whole:

- a. Answering Question #1 - Opposition from select members of a group that were voted into office, for existing as an institution, blatant dishonesty by select members of a group that were voted into office that purposefully paints the library in a negative light with staff members being targeted on social media. 2. I think library awareness is also an issue. I feel like if half the people who hate us so much knew what we wanted

and what we do *for* the public, then we wouldn't be under nearly as much scrutiny as we are.

- b. Answering Question #1 - 1. Lack of time. 2. Lack of storage/office space. 3. Attacks on the library from elected officials and the community. The people we are here to serve don't understand what we do and are actively trying to destroy the library. Additionally, it is hard to support marginalized groups when staff fear they/the library may be targeted for it.
- c. The reason a staff member has stayed at Helen Hall is because there were avenues to explore their professional interests, including how technical services is much more in line with their career goals than circulation, how the supers have been very supportive of their interest in archives, and the opportunity to move from part-time to full-time employment.

iii. Staff answers given anonymously to Question #5:

- a. I do feel like the board is in a better position than we are to advocate for the library, obviously, but the same way that the library, library staff, and certain members of the public who support the library are being disregarded, I think that that same application and measure of disregard is being assigned to the specific members of the board that do publicly advocate for the library, so it almost feels like they're in the same boat that we are.
- b. They should be a communicational bridge between the library, city council, and the public so that others not directly working in the library understand the processes and reasons of why we can/cannot do certain things and the different sections of the library that make everything work. I would like to see board members ask questions either in person, through email, or request a meeting with supervisors and/or sections when they have time available.
- c. I have no idea what they do. They should help us make decisions about library business by providing the viewpoint of our community and ensure that we are providing the best service to our patrons.
- d. It seems like the majority of what the library board of trustees is doing these days is looking at book challenges and attempting to deal with the new city policies and standards committee.
- e. They should be out in the community informing citizens of what we do and gaining support for budget increases, expansions, etc. They should be advocates for the library.
- f. I think the library board of trustees studies the needs of the community and decides how to deliver the best possible library services for League City.
- g. The trustees should also be strong, influential advocates for the needs of Helen Hall Library within the city government.
- h. It's my opinion that the sole role of library trustees should be to support the mission of the library.
- i. League City employees have job descriptions and a list of responsibilities for that job; perhaps the trustees should have the same. I think the library trustees should be proactive, vocal advocates for the library (in City Council meetings, within the community, on social media, etc.). As League City employees, we don't advocate for

ourselves/the library in an official capacity, so I think the trustees should be our champions.

- j. I want the library trustees to take a more active role in standing up for the library and placing library interests and values at the forefront of their work for us.
- k. In the past, they felt like passive, quiet library support. The support was definitely there, but it felt like no one actually asked us questions or tried to learn more about what we do past the surface level. Maybe they could shadow us and ask questions? I think that would be such an interesting experience and help them understand how different yet equally important staff roles are. What we probably need most right now are strong, informed voices to communicate who we are, what we do, and to support us.

Tina Coker stated that she would like staff to know that she has spoken to City Council in private. Kyrsten Garcia agreed with Tina but stated that from personal experience it helped to have people on the Board be a public voice to help improve staff morale. Kyrsten suggested that Board members who are not comfortable with public speaking should try to seek opportunities to personally show staff support. Kyrsten mentioned that public support is important because some negative voices in the community are so loud.

Mary Dugie asked if the League City Citizen University hosted a library session and Teresa stated that it does, and she will be paired with the Communications Department for this next session. Tina Coker asked about League City Citizen University, and Teresa explained that is a 10-week learning opportunity for citizens to learn more about city operations and inner-city workings. Roxann Lewis stated that she had started League City Citizen University but had to stop due to missing classes.

Teresa opened the floor to the Board members to ask questions to the staff. Kyrsten Garcia asked staff what they were reading. Kelsea Meza answered that she just finished *All My Knotted-Up Life* and *Hunger of the Gods* and is currently reading *The Library Book*. Kelsea also wanted to mention that she is reading *To Guide and to Grow: Your Baby's First Year*. Jeremy Brewer said he was pleasure reading *The Book of Lost Things* and was professionally reading *Gen Z @ Work*. Ashley Leblow just finished *The Twisted Winds* and is currently reading *The Refrigerator Monologues*.

Mary Dugie asked about staff work schedules. Jeremy shared that his typical week is 9:00am to 6:00pm. He mentioned this varies with volunteer needs and orientations as well as League City community outreach events. Teresa clarified that Jeremy is the only visiting staff member who was paid hourly and is therefore the only one of the three eligible for overtime pay. Ashley and Kelsea both stated that their schedules are fairly consistent, but Jeremy, Ashley, and Kelsea all mentioned that they do work supervising shifts on certain weekends out of the year.

Mark Lardas asked the visiting staff if there was anything they would like to ask the Library Board. Kelsea took the opportunity to ask the Library Board why they are Board members and what they're currently reading.

Roxann Lewis stated that she is a book lover and lifelong reader who heavily used her public library while homeschooling her now adult children. Roxann was asked by a friend to apply for the Library Board for several years, and recently decided to carve out the time in her schedule to do so. Roxann also mentioned that she prefers to speak to League City representatives privately instead of at a public forum. Roxann is reading *Woman Heroes of World War II*.

Byram Lass stated he has not been reading anything recently because he is focused on his Fantasy Football draft. Byram said he wanted to be on the Library Board to use his skill set to help League City maximize the library as a great asset to the community.

Kyrsten Garcia said that she believes in the importance of contributing positively to her community. She also stated that by not contributing people are not impacting change. She also said that she wants to be a role model for her kids and demonstrate investing time into things that are important. Kyrsten is reading *History of Wild Places* as well as *Dragons Love Tacos* and *Magic Treehouse* with her children.

Mark Lardas stated that he is a lifelong reader and an accomplished author. He said the library is an important resource to him due to the number of books he reads and stated that he wants to protect a place so special to him. Mark recently finished *The Six*, a book about the first female astronauts at NASA.

Tina Coker said that she was new to League City, and due to her involvement in her previous community she wanted to apply to be a Library Board member. She believes her biggest role is to support library staff and the library as an institution. Tina stated that she enjoys learning about the value of the public library in the community. She is currently reading *Mistress of the Vatican*.

Jeanne Avandsalehi stated that she grew up in a home where libraries were important which continued into adulthood. Because of her involvement as a patron, she got to know library staff who encouraged her to apply to the Library Board. Jeanne also mentioned a fun anecdote about how she had previously been a library aid for the late Susan Matthews, the city's first City Librarian, when she was in 7th grade at the American school in Germany. Jeanne also mentioned the importance of library advocacy. Jeanne is currently reading *Lapidarium*.

Mary Dugie stated that she grew up coming to the Helen Hall Library and spent her Friday evenings in high school volunteering at the Friends of Helen Hall Library bookstore. Mary applied to be on the Board to watch the library grow, but now as a member sees her role as an advocate encouraging people to come to the library. Mary also expressed her appreciation to staff for implementing the Library Board members' ideas. Mary is reading Colleen Hoover. Mary also frequently listens to whatever top books are available on the Libby app.

David Hoffman moved from Dallas to League City looking for a slower pace of life and chose League City due to the library. He sees his role as a member of the Library Board as an

opportunity to make a difference and believes the David said he was reading a science fiction series that he has read multiple times.

11. Statistical Reports

This month's statistical report included a broad financial report as previously requested. Mark Lardas asked about how current the report was, and Teresa informed him that the numbers are from late July. Tina Coker asked when the library will receive the results back from the budget meetings and Teresa stated that the information is still pending. Teresa said that there are proposed cuts, but nothing has been made official yet. Teresa also mentioned whether the library's computer budget will be moved to IT. Jeanne Avandsalehi asked what happens to money not used in the budget and Teresa stated that funds do not roll over into the next fiscal year, the money is returned to the city's general fund. Teresa used The Vollies, a volunteer appreciation banquet hosted by the library last year, as an example for annual budget line items that are requested each fiscal year and then reviewed each year. Roxann asked if money can be transferred between accounts and Teresa said that it could, but it requires extreme justification and approval by the City Manager.

Kyrsten Garcia asked if volunteer background checks came out of the library's volunteer budget to which Teresa answered yes. Kyrsten then asked if there are departments that are not paying for their own volunteer background checks. Teresa said yes. Kyrsten asked if Teresa knew which city departments that includes, and Teresa said yes. Teresa indicated this is supposed to be addressed in the coming year's budget, but there was a discussion about who pays for volunteer background checks and who is ultimately allowed to see that information.

Mary Dugie asked about the money being used for Kanopy and asked that if it was not used, would the library get that money back. Teresa stated that only a percentage of what was budgeted for the contract this year is allocated for this fiscal year and the remainder is allocated for next fiscal year. The contract was broken up in this way so that if there is a lack of demand, those funds could be available for other subscription services. Meredith stated that Kanopy, as a pre-curated collection is more like a database in terms of access and so it is part of the subscription budget rather than the materials budget. Byram Lass asked if it was used like a Netflix subscription. Teresa explained that when a patron watches something in Kanopy, the library pays for it. However, in Overdrive we pay for materials and then those materials are used by patrons. Teresa clarified that the materials the library pays for on Overdrive have metered access, and that when a licenses on popular materials expire, the library must pay for the licenses again. Meredith further explained that most materials on Overdrive are either based on the number of months or number of times the material is used. Byram Lass said he would be interested to see data based on the return on investment for the number of people accessing the materials paid for. Meredith stated that weekly emails are sent about expiring licenses. Byram also stated that he would like to see how Helen Hall Library's Overdrive data matches up with surrounding libraries. Teresa explained that being part of a consortium does help bring the cost down. Meredith stated that Helen Hall Library has the second highest consortium usage out of all the participating libraries.

Mary Dugie asked about how older materials are replaced with new materials. Meredith explained that if a book is not circulating then it is not "earning its keep" at the library and will be discarded and replaced by new material. Materials are replaced on nearly a one-for-one basis due to space limitations.

12. Calendar of Events

Teresa gave some Summer Reading Challenge stats that patrons contributed 1.35 million minutes or 2.5 years of worth of reading. Teresa also stated that 389 people came to Storytime with Orbit last week. Teresa stated that staff is getting ready for a full calendar of fall programming!

13. Board Comments

Kyrsten Garcia asked about the Seed Library and Teresa stated that we are at the point of refilling the library every week on Monday. She also stated that the library will be hosting an event on National Seed Swap Day in January. Kyrsten asked if donations are being made, which there are. Mary Dugie asked if the library had been connected to the man that runs the plant swap, which Administrative Assistant Emily Holodnak stated that they had. Mark Lardas asked where the library found the card catalog, and Teresa said that a retired teacher posted it on Facebook Marketplace and donated it to the library.

Mary Dugie asked about the possibility of loaning tools as part of the Library of Things and sent Teresa a link for a person in the community that has a tool-lending model like Amazon lockers.

14. Review of follow-up items generated during meeting

Teresa stated she would put together some updates for the Annual Board of Trustees Report to City Council and send them to the Board.

Mary Dugie stated she would like all board members to think about what they can do to educate the public about the library.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.