

Minutes
Friends of the Juneau Public Libraries Annual Membership Meeting
2:00 PM Saturday, November 30, 2024 Downtown Library

ATTENDEES:

Board members President Sandy Harris, Amy Carney, Anne Fuller, Secretary Betsy Longenbaugh, Treasurer Eva Varadi, Vice President Lauryn Framke, Sue Walker, and Andi Hirsh, and Juneau Public Libraries Director Catherine Melville.

Friends members: Louise Miller, Martha Moore, Bronze Ickes, Karina Reyes, Carolyn Spaulding, Nancy Waterman, Neala Pierce, Pam Morris, and Trina Lynch-Jackson

AGENDA: Betsy Longenbaugh moved to approve agenda; Eva Varadi seconded; Approved without objection.

MINUTES: Minutes of 2024-08-08 board meeting; Betsy Longenbaugh moved to approve minutes, seconded by Sandy Harris; Sandy Harris asked to add the date to the minutes. Approved without objection.

REPORTS

President Sandy Harris provided highlights of the past year:

- The Board got involved in Pick Click Give through the PFD. This resulted in \$970 in donations;
- Participated in fund balance prioritization exercise – top priority was to fund training/education for library staff, which was realized. Hope to continue to use the list for future funding discussion;
- She thanked the board members individually for their efforts and work.

Director Catherine Melville gave a report on the Library and Endowment Board:

- November of last year: Douglas Library had significant water damage – cleaned and reopened the building;
- Launched a newsletter for public use (all library users encouraged to sign up for it).
- In August, the state grant funding for libraries was reduced by about 75% without advance notice. Public response was fast and the funding was restored with legislative support. JPL gets about \$21,000 from the grant.
- In August, city responded to major flooding in Mendenhall Valley. Twice, the Valley Library became the site of major response and support for residents, including for FEMA response.
- The City and Borough of Juneau Assembly will be setting goals and budget guidelines at retreat next week. Last year, there were no increases or decreases in funding. The flooding has affected the city budget and may affect the libraries funding. She said she expects to know soon about the financial picture.
- Provided report from outreach librarian (Melinda Sandkam). Activities included pop-up libraries, adult and children reading programs, an estate planning workshop, craft

activities aimed at children and adults (including seniors), participation in Gold Medal Tournament, Celebration and a regional library conference held in Juneau.

- Library Endowment: Began in 1990s; the principal is invested and managed by city staff. Use it occasionally – most recently buying furniture for Mendenhall Valley Library. Total fund is \$1,440,438.26. The director said she would like to begin more publicity about donating to the endowment. Board of three people – library director, and two community members (including one member who also is a member of the Friends).

Board member Sue Walker gave the report on the bookstore:

- There are ongoing security issues often related to homeless people, doors not locked reliably in morning or evening. Two volunteers attending the meeting said they are sometimes followed when entering the store outside open hours. Described “being scared” when locking up the store alone.
- Also seeing patronage and profits decreasing because of the situation around the bookstore – Sue Walker said they are hearing from patrons that they are reluctant to use the bookstore because of the homeless population.
- Sue said the committee also believes there should be additional security provided in the building.
- The property manager is more proactive about cleaning up trash, including abandoned cars outside the halls and windows inside.
- The bookstore committee will begin offering books for sale online.
- The mall has a new major tenant.
- The landlord responded to the letter from the Board expressing concerns about sewage issues. We were flooded with sewage two times in 2024. Sue Walker said the landlord doesn’t make a credible argument that the bookstore is responsible for the flooding and for plumbing being plugged. Sue Walker said the bookstore committee would like to meet with Taku Plumbing and find out exactly what happened to plug the sewage lines. Sue Walker said she expects the problem will happen again. Sue Walker said the bookstore had to close because of sewage on the floor and lack of usable bathroom.
- Sue requested that we respond to the inaccuracies in the Property Manager's response to the Board's letter to the landlord to correct the many inaccuracies and false statements. We need to do this to ensure that we have an accurate administrative record. Sue Walker said that the new board will follow up with a draft letter circulated before the next meeting.
- Sue said the committee has received a copy of the letter to the landlord from Martha’s Flowers, ending that business’s lease five years ago.
- Sue Walker said the committee wants to continue to seek to end the current lease and move the bookstore elsewhere.
- Discussion: Eva Varadi asked if businesses broke their leases and left the mall. Sue Walker said Martha’s Flowers made a settlement with landlord before leaving. Another ex-tenant’s lease had lapsed before that business left.
- Relocation committee will meet again in January.

Amy Carney and Anne Fuller gave the Technical/Communications report:

- Anne Fuller introduced the Facebook page for Friends of the Juneau Libraries; one of most popular posts was in October about activities in the Valley Library. 600 people in Juneau, 100 in Anchorage and a scattering from elsewhere have viewed the page. Appreciate the library staff now providing Anne with library activities listing.
- Anne said the Facebook page will need to change its administrators; would like a couple more people to watch the page.
- Amy (website) also appreciates the library efforts to send information on library activities; she posts on the website's blog. She says the website gets messages and asked if we have a process to answer these messages.

Eva Varadi gave the Treasurer's Report:

- Went over balance sheet as of October 31, 2024. Two investment accounts (Juneau Community Foundation and Alexandria), one CD, a checking account. Total equity: \$959,031.36.
- Profit and Loss; Bookstore brings in most funds, other funds from donations, memberships, investment income. Eva said she does not budget for use of investment income; it rolls back into the principal. Bookstore had brought in almost \$25,000 through Oct. 31, 2024; most of that was spent in funds given to the libraries. So far this year, the libraries have used about \$17,000.
- Discussed proposed budget: Eva said it is a conservative budget. Board member Betsy Longenbaugh proposed setting up a second line item under expenses for funds to the libraries. She recommended a line item of \$10,000 to \$20,000 from investment income. Some projects could include a children's mural, more graphic books or bringing a guest author to Juneau (items from earlier prioritization exercise). Karina Reyes and Andi Hirsh discussed funding for audio books and e-books, which are expensive.

Budget Discussion: Betsy Longenbaugh moved to approve the budget as presented for purposes of discussion; Andi Hirsh seconded. Betsy Longenbaugh asked that the budget include a second line of expenses of \$10,000 for special projects. Eva Varadi asked that the money be tied to a specific project. Betsy Longenbaugh said it could be tied to spending items identified in the prioritization exercise (a children's mural). Anne Fuller said she would like to see more money spent (tens of thousands of dollars) every five years. Amy Hirsh doesn't want to increase the grant to the library until all the \$30,000 is spent (\$17,000 spent so far). Sandy Harris said we would like to put additional money into the libraries, which was the purpose of the prioritization exercise. Sandy Harris said the issue with increasing the budget is it takes staff time to come up with projects for funding. Martha Moore asked if the funds could be used to buy a building for the bookstore. Catherine Melville said perhaps we should be spending time getting ideas ready for funding. Some discussion about making the prioritization list public.

Vote in favor of passing the budget without amendments: Amy Carney, Lauryn Framke, Sue Walker, Andi Hirsh, Eva Varadi, Sandy Harris. Betsy Longenbaugh voted in opposition. Motion passed 6 to 1.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Affirm vote taken by email to reorder swag totes. \$1683.98. Sandy Harris moved to affirm email vote to purchase swag; Lauryn Framke seconded. Two opposed – Amy Carney and Sue Walker. Motion passed 5 to 2.

B. Discussion about letter from landlord in response to concerns about the sewage issues in the building. Sue Walker requested \$300-\$500 for plumbing consultation (Taku Plumbing) to get information about the ongoing issues with the mall sewage problems. Bookstore committee member Martha Moore asked why. A board member responded that the plumber would not have the discussion without being paid. Bookstore committee member Carolyn Spaulding said it is “essential to find out exactly what the problem was” and would ask plumber to examine the issue using cameras. Eva Varadi asked if it is found that the line is defective, is that something we can use to break the lease? Betsy Longenbaugh said she had researched Alaska law about landlord and commercial tenant law. She had investigated the law at the state law library and found no statutes addressing commercial tenants cancelling leases.

Sue Walker said the proposal is to ask Taku Plumbing about what they did, and then hire a third-party plumber to examine the work and determine what is most likely to happen in the future. Sandy Harris asked for the committee to get an estimate from a plumbing company for the work, and the funds could be voted on by email later. The funds are in the budget.

BOARD ELECTION

Officers and committee chairpersons:

Board members expiring this year: Eva Varadi, Sue Walker, Amy Carney, Betsy Longenbaugh and Lauryn Framke.

Sandy Harris: Moved that two of the board members elected this year serve a one-year term. Andi Hirsh seconded. Approved without objection.

Andi Hirsh moved to renominate Amy Carney, Sue Walker and Eva Varadi to serve another two-year term. Betsy Longenbaugh seconded. Approved without objection.

Andi Hirsh moved to nominate Karina Reyes to a two-year term. Seconded by Sandy Harris. Approved without objection.

Betsy Longenbaugh moved to nominate Martha Moore and Louise Miller for one-year terms. Seconded by Anne Fuller. Approved without objection.

Betsy Longenbaugh moved to nominate Andi Hirsh as president, Karina Reyes as secretary, Martha Moore as vice president and Eva Varadi as treasurer. Anne Fuller seconded. Andi Hirsh asked for the vote. Approved without objection.

Set dates and locations for meetings in 2025: President Andi Hirsh asked that Catherine Melville book the library locations in rotation.

February 26, at 6 p.m.

May 28, at 6 p.m.

Aug. 27, at 6 p.m.

Nov. 22, at 2 p.m.

It was asked that all members receive emailed minutes.

Betsy Longenbaugh will give Secretary Karina Reyes the draft minutes to be sent to all the board members for approval.

Adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Minutes taken by outgoing Secretary, Betsy Longenbaugh.



Respectfully submitted by incoming Secretary, Karina Reyes



Signed by outgoing president Sandra (Sandy) Harris



Signed by incoming president Andrea (Andi) Hirsh