

MEETING OF THE LIBRARY COMMISSION
Minutes

DATE: Thursday, May 20, 2021

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Chair Peter Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

LASTNAME	FIRSTNAME	TITLE	REPRESENTING	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
	Vacant	Library Commissioner	Town of Moraga			
	Vacant	Library Commissioner	City of Brentwood			
	Vacant	Library Commissioner	City of San Ramon			
	Vacant	Library Commissioner	City of Orinda (Primary)			
	Vacant	Library Commissioner	City of Lafayette (Alternate)			
Bracken	Katherine	Library Commissioner	City of Pleasant Hill	x		
Campbell-Miller	Brian	Library Commissioner	City of Hercules	x		
DeFraga	Matthew	Library Commissioner	City of Martinez	x		
Dozier	Julia	Library Commissioner	City of Pleasant Hill (Alt)	x		
Faye	Vivian	Library Commissioner	City or Brentwood (alternate)	x		
Ferree	Jacalyn	Library Commissioner	City of Clayton	x		
Fitzpatrick	Arnold	Library Commissioner	City of Oakley (Alternate)	x		
Fischer	Michael	Library Commissioner	City of El Cerrito	x		
Gemmer	Nicole	Library Commissioner	Town of Danville	x		
Harlan-Ogbeidi	Charlene	Library Commissioner	City of San Pablo (Alternate)		x	
Hildreth	Susan	Library Commissioner	CCC District 2			x
Hinton	Stacie	Library Commissioner	Central Labor (alternate)	x		
Hoisington	Mary Ann	Library Commissioner	City or Lafayette	x		
Huh	Dr. John M.	Library Commissioner	City of Antioch	x		
Koops	Barry	Library Commissioner	City of El Cerrito (alternate)	x		
LaLanne	Yvonne	Library Commissioner	City of Walnut Creek	x		
LeFrak-Bellici	Zelda	Library Commissioner	City of Pittsburg	x		
Maher	Janette	Library Commissioner	Town of Moraga (Alternate)	x		
McCormick	Don	Library Commissioner	CCC District 3	x		
Medrano	Antonio	Library Commissioner	City of San Pablo	x		
Merchant	Kathy	Library Commissioner	City of Orinda (Alternate)		x	
Molinelli	Jasun	Library Commissioner	City of Walnut Creek (Alt)		x	
Pena-Mendrek	Yolanda	Library Commissioner	City or Oakley	x		
Pursley	George	Library Commissioner	City of Pinole	x		
Robinson	Rich	Library Commissioner	CCCCD		x	
Rosekind	Rachel	Library Commissioner	CCC District 1			
Mackey	Lynn	Library Commissioner	Office of Education	x		
Smith	Alan	Library Commissioner	CCC District 4			x
Smith	Tommy	Library Commissioner	City of Concord	x		
Swernoff	Michael	Library Commissioner	CCC District 2 (Alt)			x
Thomas	Bryan	Library Commissioner	Central Labor	x		
Wichlan	Dan	Library Commissioner	CCC District 4 (Alt)	x		

With twenty commissioners present, a quorum was established.

Total Commission positions: 24
Commission positions filled: 20
Commission positions vacant: 4
Commission quorum: 13

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Peter Wilson introduced three new commission members to the group:

- Bryan Thomas / Central Labor
- Stacie Hinton / Central Labor (alt)
- Rachel Rosekind, Ph.D. / CCC District 1

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public comment.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Peter Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. No changes were suggested, so Vice Chair Michael Fischer seconded the motion:

The motion passed unanimously by consensus vote of the Commission.

5. ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS –

Commissioner Ferree: The Clayton Foundation met with Alison last evening. There was a productive discussion about the increased hours coming up and the various schedules changing as a result. Jackie wanted to thank Alison for both her clarity and her patience. As a result, the Clayton Foundation members are onboard and understand what is happening. They may want to circle back in 6 months or so to revisit the idea of Sunday hours once again.

Commissioner Hoisington: Lafayette just had their annual meeting which Alison was able to attend. The World of Wonder (WOW) program continues every second Wednesday of the month. For details go to friendsprograms343@gmail.com. The Thursday author events are continuing and you can use the same address for details. The bookstore is not yet open to the public but they are scanning their inventory online and people can shop that way and come pick up their items. The Pleasant Hill Friends have been very helpful in helping set up this operation. The Foundation just did a collaboration with the Lafayette School District for series of stories that sometimes had as many as three hundred viewers. The Foundation also continues to sponsor their author series. The event tonight features the man who wrote “ 21 Steps: Guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.”

Commissioner DeFraga: The Martinez Friends are also not able to open their bookstore yet, so to keep a presence in the community and do some outreach, the group has been setting up booths/tables at the Sunday Farmers Market in Martinez. They’ve done this twice now and have had 60 to 70 inquiries at each event. Patrons are happy the library has reopened and are wondering when the bookstore will be open too, as they all have lots of books to donate. For anyone looking to participate in similar events, Matt found the manager of the Farmers Market to be very helpful and he would recommend others try the same thing on their communities. Next, when speaking with the manager at the Martinez library, she is thrilled with the public’s response to reopening. Folks are happy and very appreciative of the ability to use the library once again.

Commissioner Bracken: Katherine began by letting everyone know the Friends had participated in a \$50,000 challenge grant sponsored by the Leshner Foundation. They were able to generate that amount with time to spare. Next Katherine asked Alison if the opening day collection had been solidified as they were

expecting some portion of the proceeds from the sale of the old library site. Alison's response: "One million dollars!" The foundation is very active and looking at more events during this year so stay tuned.

Commissioner Campbell-Miller: The Hercules Friends are having an outdoor book sale on Sunday, June 6th from noon to 5pm.

Commissioner Pursley: The Pinole Friends will also be sponsoring a book sale. Theirs is on June 5th from 10am to 2pm at the Pinole Farmers Market.

Commissioner Faye: Brentwood held their Friends/Foundation meeting yesterday. It was nice to be able to gather in person and you could feel the energy in the room. The group approved a very detailed application for membership as they close in on membership of one hundred. There was also a successful book sale two weekends ago and people were lined up an hour early to get in.

6. REOPENING THE LIBRARIES -

Interim Deputy County Librarian Lynne Noone presented a PowerPoint slide show that will be appended to these minutes.

Commissioner LeFrak asked what was meant about the parking lot at the Ygnacio Valley Library? Alison explained that the parking lot was being refinished to be more ADA compliant. Also, contrary to the dates in Lynne's presentation, there has been a delay in the RFP process so all of the dates have been pushed out slightly. Work on the parking lot is now expected to begin on August 9th and be completed by September 20th. Between the day the State vacates the library (June 13th) and the start of the work in the parking lot, staff has to do all of the same things going on now in Pinole: A deep clean, upgrade the computers, install plexiglass and move the furniture back from storage.

Vice Chair Fischer asked about patronage...are people coming back, and are too many people coming back, given the limitations? Lynne responded that it was a concern that throngs of people might overwhelm the libraries but folks have been erring on the side of caution, especially those with younger children that have not yet been vaccinated. There have been enough chairs and computers for everyone and they have largely been accepting of the rules that have allowed us to let them come back in. The lack of programming has also kept attendance in check.

Alison took a moment to thank Lynne for her leadership role in reopening the libraries. This has been her project and she has been on it since last summer. It has been a monumental undertaking and she has done a terrific job!

7. HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOU? –

County Librarian Alison McKee presented a PowerPoint slide show that will be appended to these minutes.

Commissioner Faye expressed interest in learning more about parade participation and how to put that together.

Commissioner Campbell-Miller is looking forward to being the social media ambassador. He also mentioned that Hercules has sponsored tables for the library at a number of public events and encourages others to do the same.

Chair Wilson remarked that while there were some items on Alison's list that he had not done, there were a few that he does regularly. Attending city council meetings and speaking briefly is a very helpful thing to do and is one that doesn't consume a lot of time. City council members always seem pleased when someone from the library shows up, as they tend to be the "good news" folks instead of coming in with complaints.

8.A. Legislative Working Group –

Vice Chair Fischer stepped in for Commissioner Hildreth to provide an update on the Legislative Group's activities. He first summarized the budget process as beginning in January when the Governor's initial budget is submitted to the legislature. As more factual data for the upcoming year is collected, the Governor then

submits a May Revise of the original budget using this updated information. While most years would see the May revise containing a lot of cuts to budget items, this year the budget seems to reflect budget increases in many regards. The budget next goes through the Assembly and Senate budget committees before being passed and sent to the Governor. This all must happen by the June 15th deadline. While a lot of the budget language is very broad to begin with, over the next few weeks more specific details will begin to emerge, so the answer to some of your questions this evening may be “we don’t know that yet.”

The first item on Michael’s list for this evening was a \$50 million addition to the budget to “modernize library facilities.” This contains more questions than answers, for example, does this apply to only new construction or renovations to existing libraries? And will the cities that receive these funds be required to match them from their own funds? These answers are lacking. Next is \$15 million to “add English language learning to the range of literacy programs offered by libraries.” Libraries have been asking for this for years so this is really good news. There is also a two year pilot program to offer online tutoring to anyone who needs it in English, Spanish and Mandarin. Michael asked if the library offered its Brainfuse service in all three languages and after looking it up, Liz responded that the library does offer Brainfuse in both English and Spanish but not Mandarin.

Michael moved on next to the “too bad” list of budget items not happening. First up is the funding allotted to various cooperative library systems like the Pacific Library Partnership (PLP) and others that had their budgets cut in half last year. There is no replacement in the revised budget for these funds yet, although Michael expects the various library organizations to lobby hard for this to be included in the final version of the budget.

Next, Michael moved on to the Build Back Boldly program. The main feature of this program is its size: One billion dollars for “public library infrastructure and technology investments.” Another vague phrase that we’re not sure exactly what it means. There was some debate about it by a variety of lobbyists and State Librarian Greg Lucas at a senate budget committee meeting. Another aspect of this program is called “eliminating library debt and provide ongoing sustainable funding for public libraries.” What is being referred to by eliminating debt is what the Contra Costa County Library did a few years back when they eliminated fines and fees, which were a small overall percentage of the library’s annual income but represented quite a barrier to many of our most disadvantaged patrons. The bit about “ongoing sustainable funding” is interesting because it may mean that libraries like CCCL may not be shut out from the program simply because they’ve already moved in this direction. Again, no one is exactly sure what this all means.

Michael suggested that any commissioners who are interested in legislative and budget matters sign up for the legislative updates from the various budget committees of the library organizations (ALA, CLA) as it is a fast-moving and intricate endeavor (when it hasn’t slowed to a crawl, which does happen). Michael uses this information when speaking at city council meetings in support of the library. Alison then mentioned that Michael had done exactly that earlier this week when speaking to the El Cerrito City Council about the Build America’s Libraries Act (Senate bill 127) which is \$5 billion federal program sponsored by Senator Reed of Rhode Island that provides for library construction nationally, which means roughly \$500 million for California as we usually receive about ten percent of this sort of legislation. The difficulty will be in getting the bill passed. There is a house version now that is supported by both Rep. DeSaulnier and Rep. McNerney, both of whom we met with during the legislative day visits this spring. The El Cerrito City Council was urged to send letters asking for support to both senators from California along with a thank you to Rep. DeSaulnier for his support. Michael stressed here the importance of saying thank you when the legislators do something we like instead of just moving on to the next thing. This is something Commissioner Alan Smith is always asking for. “Thank You” goes a long way with these folks.

The biggest hurdle in the way of the Build America’s Libraries Act is that it will require sixty votes to get out of the senate. AARP has signed on to support this measure. Michael in his role as a legislative advocate for AARP, knows that when they sign on to support something, they do not do so lightly. They do it because they really want it to happen AND because they think it has a likely chance to pass. AARP is a potent organization whose lobbying influence at both the federal and state levels is very high.

Chair Wilson asked if the letters stamped "Draft" in the packet were meant to be approved by the Commission this evening and Alison explained that due to the timing of submitting the packet for printing, the only letters available for the packet were these drafts. They have, at the direction of the legislative committee, already been sent for Supervisor Burgis' signature but signed copies on letterhead were not available at the deadline. Peter then asked if it would be appropriate to use versions of these letters to ask the various city councils to support the issues as well. Michael assured him that this was an excellent suggestion and offered that any commissioners wishing to do this should work through their city clerks to get the letters on the agendas for the city council meetings and plan to make a short presentation asking for support. Alison then mentioned that as these are issues our BOS supports, you are all free to write and sign letters of your own as a library commissioner.

Commissioner Gemmer asked if the [CLSA](#) funds cut from last year ended up not being restored, would the library have to cut their budget/programs? Alison thought the budget was in good enough shape that no cuts would be necessary.

8.B. Annual Report Working Group –
No report this evening.

8.C. Countywide Library Foundation –

Commissioner Gemmer explained that a group had been formed to continue former Commission Chair McCormick's work on establishing a countywide library foundation. That group is comprised of Alison, current Chair Wilson, Commissioners Gemmer and Hildreth and a former Commission member Kathy Gilcrest, as she has quite a bit of experience in this area. Alison is working on a list of programs she would like to see targeted with foundation funds at the county level. That list will then be taken around to the supervisors in the hopes of them offering seed money for establishing the 501(c)-3 status of the foundation and to secure a few thousand for set-up costs (attorneys and filing fees and so forth). If no other funds are available, the group may request Measure X funds. A Measure X Task Force has been formed at the county level to make decisions about how to spend 95% of the funds generated by Measure X, with the remaining 5% set aside for the supervisors to use as they see fit (with a 4/5 vote). Any ask of these funds by our foundation group would be referring to this 5% Measure X bucket. Nicole asked that if anyone had any thoughts about potential donors or suggestions for board members for the foundation to let her or any of the committee members know.

Chair Wilson then made two points: First, the list Alison is putting together is so when visiting with the supervisors there is a concrete plan as far as what the foundation intends to do, and second, this foundation group is NOT a working group of the Commission and therefore is allowed to have outside people associated with it to provide additional expertise.

Commissioner Hoisington then shared that when Lafayette was forming their own foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation was very helpful with advice on how to get started. She also suggested reaching out to the San Francisco library for similar help.

Commissioner Faye then asked if there was any thought given to having a tiered-giving structure for donations with different designations for different levels of generosity? Peter said there had not been that exact conversation, but they did have to be mindful of cutting in on the other library foundations in the county. Each of them had expressed concern that a countywide foundation would cut in on their donations and assurances have been given that we would not muscle them aside. We are after a whole other level of donor for the countywide foundation.

9. STRATEGIC PLAN BACKGROUND & HISTORY –

Alison began with a short PowerPoint presentation (attached to the minutes) outlining the history of the Strategic Plan for the Library. Peter then continued the slide show with a brief history of the Commission's Needs, Priorities and Resources (NPR) report from 2016. (The NPR is part of the packet for this meeting).

Finally, Alison took back over with a history of the library's strategic plan progress report (2018) and the new strategic Plan (2019).

Commissioner Rosekind asked how would someone go about getting updated information such as that shown in the NPR? Most of what is in the NPR is from 2015 or 2016 and she was wondering what more recent numbers might look like. Alison explained that for the presentation next month many of those numbers would be updated by Gail's team. Gail then offered that most of the information contained in the NPR (especially about other library systems) comes from the State Library report that all public libraries participate in. Friends and Foundation information is not captured in the State report but Gail knows there is another source out there that collects this information. She will search her records and share that information.

Vice Chair Fischer asked if there was any information (surveys, interviews, etc.) of people who DON'T use the library and why they choose not to? Alison answered that Gail is working on a new contract with our data [analytics](#) provider, OrangeBoy, that will include survey information from people in the county who do not use the library.

Commissioner Bracken commented on something she had seen on one of Alison's slides about reactivating the Friends Council (which would then have the final seat on the Library Commission). Cmmr. Bracken was of the opinion that this was not the responsibility of the county library but of the various Friends groups to arrange if they want to have that voice on the Commission. Alison agreed and mentioned that the library does not have any purview over the various Friends and Foundations within the county. They are independent non-profit entities that just happen to work for the benefit of the libraries. She agreed that it would be great if the Friends wanted to organize and fill that seat. Chair Wilson then suggested that this is part of what former County Librarian Cervantes was trying to accomplish with her annual Friends, [Foundation and Commission Forum to which the Commission was invited](#); an effort at cross-fertilization of these groups.

Vice Chair Fischer then mentioned that he had been reading the text of Measure X recently and several of the suggested uses of the funds might make appropriate avenues to request a portion of these funds for the library. He thought it very unlikely that any more general fund dollars would be forthcoming and this might be an opportunity to access funding from a new source. Alison agreed and thought this would be an appropriate segue into her County Librarian's report...

10.

COUNTY LIBRARIAN REPORT -

Alison's report contained an update on Measure X. All department heads across the county are invited to make a pitch to the Measure X Advisory Committee for funding for a variety of needs. The Advisory Committee will not make any decisions about where the funds will go but they will be making recommendations to the BOS who will make the ultimate decisions. The library's presentation will be on July 28th and the Commission will get a preview of that presentation at the July 15th meeting so Alison can receive feedback. ~~Spoiler alert: The NPR report will be part of her presentation to the Advisory Committee.~~

A few items that happened just recently, and thus were not included in the report, need mentioning. Both Concord and Walnut Creek have signed agreements to offer 12 additional hours to the 40 base hours so will be open 52 hours per week in FY21-22. El Cerrito and Hercules are also contemplating additional hours over and above the base of 40 per week.

One final item was that the FCC recently voted to allocate \$7.1 billion to schools and public libraries for the purchase of devices to bridge the digital divide such as tablets, laptops, wi-fi hotspots and the like. The library will ~~be watching how this goes and we will definitely be raising our hand for a piece of the action~~[this opportunity](#).

11.

AGENDA SETTING FOR NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE TOPICS –

Vice Chair Fischer had two topics to consider at future meetings. One is an examination of our relationship with the City of Richmond and their library and whether or not the reasoning that created the separation of

the two still holds today. Second, a look at the implementation of the new 40 hour per week schedules. If El Cerrito ends up signing on for 46 hours per week in FY 21-22, Michael would like to understand (so that he can explain it to others) why in the coming year the library there ends up closed 2 days per week (Sunday and Monday) when a 46 hour week last year had the library only closed on Sunday. No other topics were offered so commissioners were invited to send any thoughts to Walter.

12. ADJOURNMENT TO THE May 20, 2021, 2021 LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by Walter Beveridge
Executive Secretary, Contra Costa County Library