

APPROVED MAY 24, 2024

REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, April 26, 2024

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Alex Vancina, RAILS Board President called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, April 26, 2024 at the RAILS Burr Ridge service center.

2. Roll Call of Members

Fister called the roll of the Board members.

Burr Ridge: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Alice Creason, Gwen Gregory, Rene Leyva, Alex Vancina, Vanessa Villarreal-Kraenzle (arrived at 2:01 p.m.), Karen Voitik, Yolande Wilburn, and Catherine Yanikoski

East Peoria: Dianne Hollister, Tom Stagg

Absent: Rosie Camargo, Julie Milavec

3. Recognition of Guests

Guests in Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Sharon Swanson, Galin Iliev, Leila Heath, Ola Gronski, Dan Bostrom, Jody Rubel, Jessica Silva, Emily Fister-note taker.

Guests in Zoom: Kate Niehoff, Karen Egan -Illinois State Library

Guests in East Peoria: Antony Deter

4. Public comments and announcements

There were no public comments.

5. Consent agenda

Adoption of the Agenda

5.1 Adoption of the Agenda

5.2 RAILS Board Minutes of March 22, 2024 Regular Meeting

5.3 Approval of Disbursements: March 2024

Carroll moved for the approval of the consent agenda, Yanikoski seconded and a roll call vote was taken: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Alice Creason, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, Rene Leyva, Tom Stagg, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Yolande Wilburn, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: None

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported that the financial statements are preliminary and unaudited reports and the March 31 fund cash and investment of \$25.1 million would fund

an estimated 22 months of budgeted FY2024 operations. General Fund revenues through March were approximately \$628,000 above budget partially due to increased investment income, and lease proceeds from the Rockford facility. General Fund expenditures through March were \$532,000 below budget due to Lower Library Materials expenditures for group purchases, lower contractual services from timing differences for delivery outsourcing contractor invoices; unexpended My Library is grant funds (\$100,000); and unexpended Cataloging membership grants (\$89,188). Two box trucks for delivery were received in the amount of \$119,460. Of the total vehicle orders, RAILS has now received seven of the eight vans and two of the five box trucks.

7. Reports

7.1 Report from the RAILS President

Vancina had no report.

7.2 RAILS Board Committee Reports - Committee Chairs

7.2.1 Advocacy Committee – Monica Caldicott

7.2.2 Consortia Committee - Thomas Stagg

7.2.3 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee - Dianne Hollister

7.2.4 Executive Committee - Alex Vancina

7.2.5 Nominating Committee - Thomas Stagg

Stagg reported the Nominating Committee will meet on April 30 to review the nominations for the FY2025 Election. The nominating period ran from March 20 to April 19, 2024. The RAILS Communications team sent notifications to the regional email lists, social media accounts and L2 contacts. The Nominating Committee did a great job of recruitment with personal recommendations as well. The RAILS promo video featuring Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Rene Leyva, Vanessa Villarreal-Kraenzle, and Thomas Stagg edited by Ola Gronski was a great recruitment tool suggested by the Nominating Committee. RAILS received 10 nominations for 2 open At-large seats and 7 nominations for 3 open Public library trustee seats.

7.2.6 Policy Committee - Gwen Gregory

7.2.7 Resource Sharing Committee - Becky Spratford

7.2.8 Universal Service Committee - Alice Creason

7.3 RAILS Reports

7.3.1 RAILS Monthly Report

Harris welcomed new staffer Jessica Silva as the new Member Engagement Manager. For the legislative update, there was a change to [HB4567](#) which amends the criminal code to include library employees as protected in relation to threats and disorderly conduct. This bill was sponsored by Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias as an additional support for libraries facing threats and other conduct challenges. After its third reading on April 19th it was pulled by one of its sponsors, and it is not currently moving forward. Concerns regarding website accessibility and complaints to the US Department of Education came up this week. Some complaints refer to inaccessible calendar views and color contrast issues. RAILS is meeting with IHLS, ILA and the State Library to ensure support of our public libraries possibly affected by this issue. RAILS as well as all its partners need to comply. RAILS is in discussion with vendors who provide accessibility testing that could

be made available through Deals and Discounts and RAILS Continuing Education is pursuing avenues for sharing best practices and responses to complaints. Our attorney and insurance pool are talking about possible insurance coverage and compliance testing. The issue will be the main topic for the RAILS member update scheduled for May 8. There was some discussion about vendor responsibility when updating websites, as well as third-party vendors being required to achieve the same accessibility standards.

7.3.2 RAILS Discounts/group purchases

Heath reported on the RAILS philosophy of securing vendor partnerships that will benefit our member libraries; obtaining quality deals with proven resources or trending new resources that offer a deep discount that translates to savings for our libraries, and transparency and logical pricing and resources that will appeal to a large number of libraries. She discussed the budget implications of being able to bring greater economies of scale to the process with savings of over \$2,000,000 through deals/discounts in FY22. The program uses a system called Consortia Manager to keep track of all the vendor and library information, pricing structures and renewal dates. She appreciates all of the support from the RAILS staff especially the finance department and from libraries giving the program their patience and enthusiasm. Rubel reported that RAILS has launched eleven new resources to either existing offers or brought on brand new deals including:

- early literacy resources for ages 3 through elementary school
- a homeschooling and independent learning resource that includes exploration and interactive learning
- incorporated a tool to navigate the college application process.
- another option for patrons wishing to complete their GED.
- a small business advisor resource that customizes local geographical data

Each deal is its own project that can take a few weeks to many months to work through the different phases from exploring the product, negotiation, and the rollout process. As part of building the partnership with the vendor, we take into consideration libraries that already subscribe directly and plan to transition their libraries over to the RAILS discounted package.

7.4 Illinois State Library Report

Karen Egan reported that Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias is meeting virtually with staff from RAILS and IHLS on April 29 to discuss the state of public libraries in Illinois. The State Library staff is busy reviewing and awarding Public Library Construction Grants and Adult Literacy Grants. The Open Education Resource Grants would allow academic libraries to provide textbooks and other materials at little or no cost to students. Proposals for the e-resources packages are also being reviewed and the results are highly anticipated. Certificates were sent to those high school students who participated in the Read for a Lifetime program. Certificate recipients read a minimum of four of the 20 titles on the annual list, many of whom read all 20 titles. Over 3000 Illinois students participating in the Letters for Literacy program wrote letters about how a book changed or made a difference in their lives. Winners will be announced on May 1st. Ten adult literacy tutors and learners will be honored in May at the Spotlight on Literacy ceremony.

Egan asked that everyone encourage all poets over the age of 18 to enter the Emerging Illinois Writers competition for cash prizes and possible publication.

8. New business

8.1 Draft FY2025 Operational Plan outline

Harris reported that the staff put a lot of work into the Operational Plan. Her written memo highlights the expense increases and the new services for the upcoming fiscal year. Caldicott loves to see the plan maintains the high level of service while still striving for improvements. She is excited about the member engagement membership tool and how libraries will react to the results. Wilburn appreciates the social justice “Freedom Lifted” program and wants RAILS to continue to offer these types of programs that could be made available to all library staff. Hovanec appreciates the emphasis on trustee training throughout the plan. Gregory would like the cooperative efforts with CARLI to continue and grow. Leyva asked about keeping up with staff numbers and maintaining excellence as programs are added and increased, without piling on work to current staff members. Swanson said that in anticipation of the increases new positions are budgeted. Harris said that RAILS is very conscious of staff time and workloads and the benchmarking being done will help to retain the quality staff that comprises RAILS.

8.2 Bylaws and Library System Act Review

Harris reported that the materials regarding the System Act and the RAILS Bylaws were included in the packet to remind all of the rules regarding RAILS Board terms. Since no person can serve more than six consecutive years on the RAILS Board, any term, even if partial and regardless of the length, will be considered one full term. An individual can run again for a RAILS board seat once two years have elapsed since their sixth year of service.

8.3 Executive Director Evaluation Process

Vancina reported The evaluation for Monica will be in the form of a survey. The survey will include:

1. Organizational Goals (from the Board approved FY2024 goals. Each Board member will rate success on each (1-4) and have a place to comment at the end of the section)
2. Performance Factors (includes Core Values, ED Specific Competencies, Board Relationship, Leadership and Management Ability, Building a Strong Organization, External Communication and Relationship Building) (Rating and comment box for each section)
3. Summary of performance (overall rating [1-4] and comment box for summary of overall performance)
4. Goals for Next year (comment box including potential goal suggestions from each Board member)

He will send the link out soon and each Board member should complete the survey by May 15. The results will be sent to the board prior to the May meeting. The Board will discuss the Executive Director’s evaluation in closed session at the June meeting. The Board will also determine the change in compensation for the Executive Director to coincide with changes in compensation for all other RAILS staff at the start of the new fiscal year. He and Gwen Gregory

will meet with Harris and discuss the findings and recommendations of the compiled evaluation.

9. Unfinished Business

9.1 Board election and nominating committee

Stagg gave his report under 7.2 Committee Reports.

10. Board Development

9.1 RAILS Digital Marketing and Communications Initiatives

Gronski reported about the changes in marketing and communications since she last presented to the board in May 2023. She gave an overview of the platforms used and the principles behind our digital marketing strategies: real people, playfulness, authenticity, and short-form writing. Growth in social media engagement in the past year is Facebook engagement is up 60%, Facebook reach is up 45%; Instagram engagement is up 69%, Instagram reach up 35%. Some future projects and plans for digital marketing in the future, including a focus on data, promotional videos for services, and more interaction with members. Leyva said that RAILS is rocking their social media profile. Board members commented that material is fun, keeps RAILS connected and spurs many conversations with other library personnel.

10. RAILS board member reports

Wilburn reported that the Evanston Public Library had a staff training day on disability awareness. It was well received and the responses from staff was a request for more training. They also did a spring cleaning that received great feedback as everyone had a chance to clean out their space. Leyva reported that Fossil Ridge Library board approved a new website and their vendor will include accessibility and also asked to be a RAILS discount vendor. Hovanec reported that LACONI will be hosting their sold-out Trustee banquet and it is a great networking event. Hollister reported that she has been reappointed as a trustee for the Bloomington Public Library and they have finished their parking lot. The Library's citywide reading program featured the Eastland Disaster, which was a passenger tour ship that ship rolled over while tied to a dock in the Chicago River. In total, 844 passengers and crew were killed in what was the largest loss of life from a single shipwreck on the Great Lakes.

11. Next RAILS board meeting Friday, May 24, 2024

Vancina said the next meeting will be held on Friday, May 24, 2024 at 10 a.m. The agenda will include the review of closed session minutes, approval of the SAPC grant, RAILS CE and Consulting Program Overview, and for board development a review of the eBook Data Project.

12. Adjourn

Vancina adjourned the meeting at 2:49 p.m.