

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the  
MidPointe Library System Board of Trustees  
Middletown Library, Community Room  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 1:00 p.m.**

**I Call to Order by President**

Mrs. Stewart, President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**II Opening Exercise**

**III Roll Call**

The roll was called, and the following members were present:

Mr. Tim Essex, Mrs. Deborah Houser, Mr. Michael Huff, Mr. Jay Marlow, and Mrs. Eleanor Stewart.

Those absent were: Mr. Andrew Dunn, Mr. Bill Jones

Also present were: Mr. Travis Bautz, Library Director; Ms. Rebekah Brate, Library On Wheels (LOW) Branch Manager; Mr. Zack Farrell, Middletown City Liaison; Mrs. Emily Foote, Fiscal Officer; Ms. Cari Hillman, Community Engagement Director; Mrs. Karen Jones, Deputy Fiscal Officer; Mr. Steve Mayhugh, Facilities Director; Mrs. Brielle Maynor, Public Services Director; Ms. Elizabeth Slamka, City of Middletown Mayor; and Ms. Kathy Stengel, Human Resources Director.

**IV Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Essex motioned, seconded by Mr. Marlow, to approve the agenda as presented.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-30

**V Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**VI Middletown City Liaison(s)**

Mr. Farrell gave an update on the Roosevelt school site; the Renaissance Point project; the ongoing street pavement projects; new construction projects near Atrium and Walmart; and new companies locating in Middletown which will result in an increase in the tax base. Ms. Slamka gave an update on the Main Street CSO basin project; the senior center which the city purchased the building and will hire a manager to run the center and rent out the activity space; the new quarterly newsletter which will be mailed to 18,000 households in the water bill as well as having it available online; the Cliffs hydrogen ready project which will ultimately result in a 90% decrease in emissions; and the city is looking at the 2025 budget.

**VII Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Marlow motioned, seconded by Mrs. Houser, to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting held on April 17, 2024, as presented.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

“Abstain” Huff

Motion Approved 24-31

### **VIII Fiscal Officer’s Report**

Financial Report, Investments, and Donations:

Mrs. Foote reviewed the April 2024 financial report explaining each page of the report. She reported that the audit is going well and is still ongoing.

Mr. Essex motioned, seconded by Mr. Huff, to approve the Financial Statement, Investments, and Donations report for April 2024 as presented by Mrs. Foote.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-32

(Report on file in Fiscal Officer’s office)

2025 Budget Request:

Mrs. Foote reviewed the 2025 budget handouts. She reported that the finance audit committee reviewed the budget earlier in the week. She added that it needs to be presented to the full board for approval before it is sent to the city and county. She also reviewed the estimated 2025 balances in the general fund, capital improvement fund, the Douglas J. Bean Progress Fund, and the Rothwell Fund, as well as the Combining Budgetary Schedule. Mr. Essex motioned, seconded by Mr. Huff, to approve the Fiscal Officer to submit the Annual Budget to the City of Middletown.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-33

### **IX Director’s Report**

Monthly Statistical Report:

Mr. Bautz reported that overall April was a good month; the monthly statistics are within 4%; that June and July are usually our busiest months due to the summer reading program; digital circulation was up by 20%; door counts and PC usage were steady; program attendance was higher even though the number of programs offered was lower; meeting room usage continues to remain high; 116 passports were processed; and just under an hour of virtual program minutes were watched daily with close to 70 social media engagements per day. Mr. Bautz mentioned that the full report is available for review.

**X Facilities Report**

Mr. Mayhugh distributed and reviewed the most recent change order log from LWC Inc. and to date, the changes have been minor. He reported that the recent rain has rendered the site waterlogged; the building footprint is now visible; concrete is scheduled to be poured next week and the steel delivered the following week.

**XI Public Services Report:**

Mrs. Maynor reported that 158 pairs of eclipse glasses were returned for reuse and recycling. The case manager that primarily works out of the Middletown branch has been collaborating with Butler County Children’s Services for a child who was a victim of human trafficking and they have been able to pull needed services together for the child. At LOW, since it is the end of the school year, they are going to the schools to collect book returns and have added two additional stops with the lobby stop vehicle.

**XII Community Engagement Report**

Ms. Hillman reported that new legislation has been passed regarding website accessibility, so we have installed new accessibility tools to ensure we are compliant. The summer reading program guide is now available online and in print. She presented a MidPointe book bag that will be given to the first 2,000 participants and other prizes. Approximately 10,000 participants are expected to participate in the summer reading program that begins on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Hillman also reported that we are pleased to announce that we are again participating in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

**XIII Human Resources**

Staffing Updates:

Mr. Marlow motioned, seconded by Mrs. Houser, to approve the following human resources report as presented by Ms. Stengel:

There were no personnel changes in April 2024.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-34

Ms. Stengel reported that turnover for April was zero and 2.00% for the year. As of April 2024, we had seven hires and two terminations. We are actively recruiting and interviewing for three openings that have been posted.

**XIV Holiday Policy**

Ms. Stengel distributed and reviewed a redline copy of the Library’s holiday policy. The change to the policy would give part-time employees, who work on the Library’s open recognized holidays, a floating holiday like the full-time employees currently receive. Mr. Essex motioned, seconded by Mr. Huff, to approve the change to the holiday policy as presented, retroactive to January 1, 2024.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-35

## **XV Financial Planning**

Mrs. Foote distributed a Financial Philosophy Presentation handout which listed goals of a decision of reserve goal; decision of levy; and decision on Liberty Township Mall location. Mr. Bautz reviewed the history of the levy; the options of when to put a levy on the ballot, such as place it on the November 2024 ballot since there is no cost to the Library; spoke with a company that can do a levy feasibility study about levy goals using community feedback surveys, although public funds cannot be used for this type of survey. Mrs. Foote discussed the Butler County Auditor’s recommendation of a 30%-60% reserve, and she recommends a 30% reserve; she reviewed the current levy which is a .75 millage on a five-year cycle, qualifies for homestead exemption so approximately \$300,000 is received from the county, and that the recent county property revaluation does not increase our levy revenue as we are locked in to the 2010 levy amounts except for new construction. She discussed the levy options of establishing a new levy with a collection starting January 2025; to renew the current levy; or renew the current levy and ask for an increase. During a meeting with the Butler County Auditor’s office, they were informed that the current .75 mil generates \$3.5 million, a new .75 mil would generate approximately \$6.1 million, and a .75 mil renewal plus .75 mil increase would generate approximately \$9.1 million. The Liberty Mall location and Yankee location branch operation costs were compared and a detailed forecast of the reserve and dollar amount of what each levy option would generate with having one Liberty branch was discussed. The renewal and increase levy option would allow the library to comfortably operate for 15 years with \$9.1 million in revenue and a 30% reserve, whereas a new 1.25 mil levy option would generate \$9.5 million and allow the library to comfortably operate for 15 years with a slightly higher reserve each year. Mr. Bautz’ opinion is that one Liberty location would be good for the community and to leave the hold lockers at the Liberty Mall while looking for other locations in our service area to place additional holds lockers in areas that do not have a physical location, which would give some additional library access to patrons. Mrs. Foote recommends a 30% average reserve goal to be reevaluated in five years except for financial need or planned capital projects. The board agreed with a 30% reserve goal and any exceptions would have a board discussion if an exception would cause the reserve to go below 30%; to close the Liberty Mall location and keep the hold lockers; and to move forward with a new continuing 1.25 mil levy with community promises of restoring Sunday hours year-round to branches that are open on Sunday’s, restore morning hours to pre-Covid hours, and have more convenience options, such as holds lockers, county-wide.

Mr. Huff motioned, seconded by Mr. Marlow, to approve the Executive Director to negotiate an end to the Liberty Center Mall branch with an exception of holding the lockers for community convenience.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-36

Mrs. Houser motioned, seconded by Mr. Huff, to approve a resolution of the board of library trustees of the MidPointe Library District declaring the necessity of levying a new levy of 1.25 millage with a collection of \$9.5 million on a continuing cycle in November of 2024.

“Aye” Essex, Houser, Huff, Marlow, Stewart

“Nay” None

Motion Approved 24-37

**XVI Board Comments**

Ms. Slamka inquired about the removal of the wall in the children’s area at the Middletown Library. Mr. Bautz responded that the wall needed major repairs and took up a lot of space that could be used for materials, but there is a physical break of tables and chairs that separates the children’s collection from the adult collection.

Mr. Bautz announced that he became a grandfather last week.

**XVII Adjournment**

Mrs. Stewart adjourned the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

24-38

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President

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Secretary