



BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

September 24th, 2020

CALL TO ORDER – Board of Trustees

A Board of Trustees meeting, of the Peru Public Library, was held on Thursday, September 24th, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM and was presided over by President Alison Paul.

ATTENDEES

MEMBERS PRESENT: *Melissa Duckwall, Bryan Maggart, Leslie Murphy, Regine Brindle, Deb Swihart, Austina Reed, and President Alison Paul.*

MEMBER APOLOGIES: *None*

DIRECTOR PRESENT: *Maryann Farnham and Assistant Director, Michelle Spangler, were present.*

GUESTS: *30 members of the public were present. Sign-in sheet is attached. Staff member Lisa Rummel was also present, to take the minutes.*

After roll call was taken for the board members, President Paul explained how the meeting would work and the 2-minute time limit for all public comments.

2021 BUDGET HEARING

The budget hearing is for the proposed 2021 budget of \$497,167. There being no remonstratives, the first hearing is accepted.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Spangler is timing the comments, with 2 minutes allowed per person.

Betsy Wolfe was first. She asked everyone in the audience in support of the statue to stand, which most of those present did. She shared her excitement about this project and said that almost all of the community was excited about it, Marie Edwards was an incredible lady who did incredible things and Wolfe can't believe she spent her whole life here, as a citizen of Peru, and she never knew Marie Edwards existed. Wolfe reiterated her excitement and said she hoped the library board would reconsider placing the statue on the library lawn. She also said that she had reached out to the 3 board members who originally voted nay, to get their thoughts on the project and their concerns with it, but that she had heard nothing. She would really like to try to work towards coming up with some sort of solution so that this project can move forward.

Murphy interjected that she didn't respond because no one reached out to her when the group was taking this to city council to override their vote. She said that Wolfe only asked if she would consider changing her vote, but that Wolfe did not say there was another board meeting coming up. Murphy said that she is the type, according to the code of ethics that the board signed that night, that she will have the discussion within the library board. Murphy was not aware that it was going to City Council. She thought that if they cared enough about her opinion, she would have been asked prior to the city council meeting knowing that it is coming to the city council meeting.

Wolfe said that she still thinks that the important part is to work together to reach a resolution. Murphy said she wished that could have been done from the get-go. Wolfe replied that just because things weren't done the

way Murphy wanted them to be done, she can't just take her toys and go home. That we have to be open minded; that is how we accomplish things. Murphy said that was correct, but that there were also things they have been trying to get here, for our library, that we do not have the funding for. She knows they were told that they would have matching funds for this, and said that we were told to accept the gift and then write down the stipulation. She is not going to accept a gift, she is not comfortable accepting a gift until she knows what our funds are going to be for the tax payers and our patrons. Wolfe asked if, once she got that information and her concerns answered, she would be for the project. Murphy replied that she is not saying she would be 100%, she also feels our role as a library is to promote literacy in our community, and that she wishes they were able to provide the students who are now virtual, who don't have access to books. She wants to see literacy as a part of what this library's mission is, that is important to her. Wolfe said she agreed with her, and that Murphy probably knows this, as a teacher but also as the mother of a daughter, that nothing inspires literacy more than looking at somebody for inspiration, like Marie Edwards. That makes you want to read about the women's rights movement; that makes you want to learn more. So you've got to have not just books, it's more than that, it's the whole experience. Murphy responded saying that they can agree to disagree on how they see the meaning of this, what they think brings literacy to the table for the kids in this community. She ended by saying those are just her concerns, her reasons, as of now.

Patricia Russell spoke next. She was here, as a citizen of Peru, to advocate for the Marie Edwards bronze statue to be considered for placement at the library. She thinks the benefits of being on the national registry of tourism could bring big benefits to Peru. To understand the issues about the statue's placement, she is requesting that the minutes from the August meeting be read. Her main question is, why not accept this statue? She heard there were concerns about the expenses for the insurance, maintenance, and possible vandalism associated with the statue. She asked if these were addressed, if their objections would be changed.

Shelley Sheneman was third. She said her concern with the project is the sustainability of the statue. She said she has asked on numerous occasions and to numerous people how this will be financially sustained for years to come. She said we have a county full of children who are not receiving literacy and she feels that the focus is the statue. She thought it was maybe Brindle who said she was putting the cart before the horse on something, but in her opinion, the cart before the horse is putting a statue out on the lawn versus getting children literacy. She said they don't even have that option to come into this building. So that is first and foremost. Secondly, the project lead on this was also the project lead on another More for Miami grant, correct? Reed called point of order on that, as being beyond the scope of the meeting. Paul sustained the point of order, declaring that was not what we were talking about now and that the statue belongs to the city. Paul requested that Sheneman move on to her next point.

Sheneman continued, saying that they have honored Marie Edwards legacy and everything else, and yet have stepped on two women's votes right here. She said she thus needed someone to justify that to her. She claimed it was not a matter of whether you agree with Marie or not, her politics or whatever else, her fight was that women had a right to vote and two women did vote. She said they were circumvented when the statue was given to someone else to try to override those two votes, so why don't their two votes matter? She thinks that should be first and foremost: there are two women who exercised their ability to vote, and basically what they were told is that their vote doesn't matter. Sheneman then said she is not opposed to the project itself, she is opposed to how the project was handled. She thinks that transparency is key and that there has not been any transparency, in her opinion, on the statue. She thinks that's a shame and thinks that's who marred the statue, it was those who could not be transparent. Reed called point of order for personal affront, which Paul agreed with saying she was out of order and that what she was discussing had nothing to do with what

we were talking about this evening. The statue belongs to City of Peru. We do not have jurisdiction over the statue anymore. It does not belong to the library or library board. Sheneman again asked where the transparency was, in how it would be handled: who's going to pay for that, who's going to do all of that. Paul said we will get to that in a moment, as she will be reading a letter.

Moving on, Kathleen Plochow spoke next. She wanted to thank the library board for allowing this discussion. It has generated more discussion, and she has learned more in the past two weeks, than she would have ever had the opportunity to learn if everything had gone smoothly. She said that, as a citizen of Peru, she loves this and is excited about it. She thinks it is wonderful seeing this group here, and that there is nothing better.

Missy Edwards Ward was next. She really appreciated the opportunity to come and speak tonight. She is thrilled about this project. She lived in Peru from birth to when she was 23, she left with her husband in a military career. But she had never heard of Marie Stuart Edwards until she talked to Laura in February. She spent last night flying in from Florida and reviewed the grant on the plane. She could not be more excited after what she read. The amount of organizations that came together to support and write this grant gave her chills. She wanted to finish by reading her letter of support to Mr. Hanlin.

Good morning. I am a 5th generation Peruvian – she might be more but 5 is all she could verify – and I cannot even begin to tell you how excited I am about the grant submitted by our home town to celebrate Marie Stuart Edwards. Many thanks to OCRA for this grant funding and for allowing us tell Marie's exciting story. We have so many great ideas that are being collected across this entire community on how best to portray Marie and her contributions. We believe this project has the potential to positively influence generations of future activists.

She thinks that goes from an education standpoint, as far as civics and as far as also installing a value that nothing is impossible. That the amount of challenges Marie Edwards faced and overcame is a story that has to be told. And we as a nation, are facing those challenges today. And so, she continued, the ability for this town, of this size, to have this treasure – we have got to just accept it, we've got to make the most of it, and we have a lot of lives that we can absolutely influence. Ward ended by thanking the board for their time.

Vincent Edmunds spoke then. He has lived here for 6 years now and loves this community. He said it is one where you can definitely hear crickets and find peace. One of the things he would like to remind everyone of is that we are on the national stage right now, today. State wide and throughout this nation, people will be looking at Peru and hopefully they come to Peru. He just hopes that every single person in this county will use the opportunity to welcome and invite people here, tell them their favourite places to go, tell them their favourite things to see. This is tourism and economic development, and it's coming in the form of a 12 year old standing next to a bicycle. He said that if we can't rally behind that, then it really puts to question what is a community and how will we make our community better for all people who live in the community. Economic development gives any person, whether you're a child or an adult, an opportunity to create something and sell it. Edmunds stated that Marie Stuart Edwards gives us that tool. She gives us something that we can market, that our kids can market, so that the challenges that our city council and that our city as a whole are facing, in terms of revenue, can be addressed from a different point of view. There are many historical attributes to our community that should be raised up, and raised up collectively, and this statue is one opportunity for all to shine. So let's just shine, was his final comment, which was greeted with a round of applause.

Next was Steve Anderson. His question was that last month when this was voted down by the library board, was there an explanation as to why it wasn't accepted or a possible solution on how to maybe make it work, as opposed to just saying no and walking away from it? Paul started to respond, as did Murphy, so Murphy spoke first. Murphy said she did reach out to the president and, with just the two of them, shared her concerns and

some of her issues with it. She did not say whether it would sway her either way, but she wanted her to know as to why she did this, or why she voted the way she did. But after that, nobody except for one person reached out to her before the city council meeting. But nothing was ever brought up to Murphy about “hey, what can we do to do this?” And she wanted to speak to Russell again, that she is not one to just, she doesn’t want to talk with everybody out in the community about what’s going on, she doesn’t post on Facebook, she doesn’t do all of that. Murphy could tell Wolfe had something to say, so asked her. Wolfe said that it seems like Murphy doesn’t want to: doesn’t want to talk to someone via email, doesn’t want to talk to someone in person--- Murphy interjected that she wants to talk about it in the board room, like this, and she wants the people that she’s on the board with – Wolfe here interjected that she could contact them as well, to which Murphy exclaimed that she didn’t know that, that she wasn’t told that her vote was being ignored and going to city council to override--- Wolfe again spoke up and asked if Murphy was against this project or if she was just against getting her vote--- Reed here called point of order. If a discussion about the process by which we presented to city council, Steve Anderson asked about objections, so if we want to wait until the debate to discuss the process further, he is asking specifically about objections. Murphy defended herself, saying she was speaking on that. Reed again said that the point of order is, we address how we got this to city council during our discussion. Murphy said yes, unless another question comes up. When a question comes up, she wants to respond to it. Paul sustained the point of order and said to move on. Anderson then restated his question, that prior to city council, during the meeting, prior to their vote, were there brought up other solutions to how to do this before you made the motion that was not accepted. Paul answered, saying that when we read the minutes, he would hear the discussion.

Lynette Smith introduced herself, saying she lived out in the county. She had been sort of aware of this project. She had no idea there were bad feelings; she has no explanation on that, at all, but she sees this a positive thing for Peru and Miami County. What’s not to be celebrated about this woman? She’s inspiring, she did a lot for her community and for women’s rights. Smith continued, saying that we live in a time that’s pretty scary right now. Where all these controversial statues are being taken down, people are questioning why they’re up – there is nothing about Edwards that cannot be celebrated and praised and excited about. Smith feels certain that people would come from out of town eventually – maybe not now, but eventually – just to see this and some of the other attractions that we have in Peru and the county. She added on that as far as the literacy for children out in the county, it seemed to her that was a whole separate issue and that maybe that was something they could tackle too. But why not go ahead with this program? It seemed to her that they can work on kids getting their library cards later. They need to talk to their commissioners and their elected officials about that; it seems to her that they are two separate issues. But proceeding with this statue, to her, seems like a positive. Everyone needs something good to happen, and this seems like it is good. She said sorry that there has been some bad feelings, but let’s work past that because this is such a positive thing for our area and she is so excited about it. Her kids and her grandkids have loved the statues over at the Honeywell, of Mark Honeywell. Kids are just drawn to them, kids love them, and kids are going to want to know about this women.

Rose Miller spoke next. She had recently been informed about the project and she wrote a letter to Mr. Hanlin that she wanted to read quickly.

Dear Mr. Hanlin, my name is Rose Miller. I’m writing to you as a resident of Peru, Indiana. I was born here and lived here most of my life. I have always been an active supporter Miami County and its heritage. My father was one of the incorporators of the Circus City Festival, which embraces the rich circus heritage of Miami County. The circus heritage has taught me that all members of the community have importance and value. When I recently learned about the life work of Marie Stuart Edward and the important role she played in securing suffrage for women, I realized that it’s so important to commemorate the lives and works of historical figures that have built our community and have made it

strong in culture and heritage. I very much admire the work of Marie Stuart Edwards and others like her in her movement. I am a registered nurse and a licensed social worker. I work with patients and clients in medical and emotional crisis, seeking to assist them in services they need for success in their care needs. I teach patients and clients to be physically and emotionally healthy, and to be responsible for their health needs. This [words lost on recording] will empower individuals to make life long health and learning. I have been a life-long patron of the Peru Public Library and its many services. The Peru Public Library remains a beacon in this community as a center for life-long learning and community gathering. I believe that the best location for a statue honoring Marie Stuart Edwards is in Peru, Indiana, on the grounds of Peru Public Library. The library was pivotal in launching and maintaining the movement of suffrage. It should also be placed at the Peru Public Library as a symbol to all in our community, especially the young people who frequent the library services. Children, adults, and families from all backgrounds in the community visit and participate in many services daily. All of the community, especially the children, benefit from the messages this entire project speaks.

Time was then called, so the letter reading was cut short. Miller joked about there being more later as she sat back down.

Peter Sahaidachny Introduced himself as being on City Council. He started by singing a line from I'm Into Something Good, by Herman's Hermits. He then said that this is a good thing happening, that this project is going to be a good thing. He taught for 26 years in a Lafayette school cooperation, and the thing he learned about being a good or a great teacher, you have to inspire students. And he thinks that carries over. So if you want to make this a great community, you want to inspire people of all ages. This is an opportunity. This historical, cultural icon. We've got Cole Porter, we've got the circus, there's things happening. So, he is here to support that and he is really happy about it.

Laura Bretzmen spoke next. She is a resident of Miami County and she is the current Miami County chairperson for the Democratic Party. She says that because she has been in women's organizations for a long time. She was the first chairperson of the Women of Steel local union. As she looks around the room at all of the women, they all have one thing in common: they can thank Marie Stuart Edwards and the women like her that went out and put their lives literally on the line, for us. She said that when someone talked about education in the rural area, she and Brindle did that. They went to North Miami and registered students to vote, they went to Maconaquah and registered students to vote. She said they took posters about women's suffrage with them that they put up in the schools. So the schools are getting educated, she said, and they're getting educated about Marie Edwards. It's a good thing. She said the girls who sat down at their table, who registered to vote, were excited about it. This statue is about a woman who helped change the world. Not Miami County, the world. She commented that we should think about that. She apologized for getting a little emotional about this, but said this is important. This is a chance to put up a statue of a woman who changed the world, and she lived in Miami County. Clapping commenced.

Paul asked if there were any more numbers and when there were not, if anyone else wished to speak. Cheryl Lee said she wanted to comment. She noted the tension in the room, ever since the meeting started, and said that maybe, perhaps, Wolfe didn't follow the right procedure in going to the board, but she thinks that the suffragists had so many things going on they probably had issues like that too. But let's look at the big picture: we have the right to vote. The majority of the women in here would not have had that if the suffragists hadn't put down their lives 100 years ago, so she just wants to support Wolfe and ask us to forgive her for not following protocol perhaps, maybe, the right way. But still the main thing is that we got the right to vote and we're here to honor her and all the other suffragists that followed her steps and made the country and the world a place where women could vote.

Another women spoke up, saying that to address literacy, having the statue out there, in front of the library, could inspire little girls to come into the library and learn. They could bring students over and show them different things, even inspire kids, by bringing them to the library and giving them a reason to come. It's very important for them to learn how to read, but you have to inspire them first.

Plothow said she would bet every penny she made this year that those who voted against the statue, it's not about Marie Edwards, correct? Murphy affirmed this. As Plothow started to say something else, Murphy said it isn't about the work that's been done, it's just about other issues that she felt, even within our budget, she's looking at our budget and she knows now that something new is coming up later on for discussion, because it went to city council, she gets that, but from the get-go it's – she wished we could have been made aware throughout the entirety of the process and could have been a part of being informed of what was being written into the grant and how all this was working, from the get-go. Just those things. She doesn't want to take away from the hard work that Brindle and Reed have done. She doesn't want to take away from the point that she can vote. There're a lot of people, a lot of women, who have helped her become the woman she is today. But, with the way it was handled, she felt that her vote wasn't appreciated. Reed spoke up and said that was the only reason she brought point of order, she feels she is boxed in in the comments to be able to address that, but that she looks forward to that in our discussion. Murphy continued, saying she was just trying to answer Plothow's question. She reiterated that no, she is not against it, she wants to bring literacy to the community. She sees these kids every day, she knows what they come in with, she knows what they go home with, she knows what they live with. There is so much more, in her eyes, of what the library can do to motivate, to educate, to inspire these kids of today, in her eyes, right now, where they are in this community. That is where her passion lies.

Bretzman commented again, saying that when they were at the schools and they showed the suffrage movement stuff to the young girls, it did inspire them. She feels this is something that they could put a bright spot – and they so need bright spots now-a-days with all the chaos and everything going on in the world – we need something positive, that the community can bring their kids down to. There are other statues here, at the library, that when you bring your kids and grandkids (and she has a lot of grandkids), she likes to show them those things and explain that this is here because someone cared enough to put this monument here. And that's really what it's all about.

Bruce Brindle spoke up then. Speaking to Murphy, he said that she had mentioned that the library is going to have to outlay funds in some way or another for this statue. To his understanding, he believed the money is being raised outside of the library completely to pay for this – to which Murphy interjected that now it is – that another group is volunteering to maintain the statue, that another group is going to take care of landscaping around it, and then another group is going to pay for the insurance. What monies is the library going to have to outlay to cover this? He'd like to know that. Murphy replied that her concern is how much money will they raise for that? How long will that support, the landscaping, the things that we need for this – she feels more comfortable having the proof in the pudding. To know that they would have the financial ability or sustainability. Paul spoke up at this point, and said that we would get to this point in our meeting, mentioning the letter from the city.

An unidentified woman in the audience asked who pays for the monuments which are outside the library now. Murphy responded that the library does. She said we, the board of trustees, own the property.

Paul asked if there were any other comments, and another women spoke up, saying she had a question. She opened by saying that maybe this would be discussed later, and if so, just to tell her. She is extremely sensitive to being within budget and to being financially savvy. She asked Murphy, since Murphy said “the proof is in the pudding”, what that proof is. Paul answered that we will cover that later and get to that.

Sheneman spoke again, asking the three who had voted no at the previous meeting if these questions were covered before that vote, if that was ironed out or if that was part of the nay vote. Paul said it wasn't specifically, but that we would get to that in the minutes. She stated that in the minutes, there is the discussion

so we will get to that. Sheneman said that she had watched the city council meeting and they had said those things were covered, but it was her understanding, when she looked through our minutes, she didn't see those things covered. Paul paused before asking, "you've looked through the minutes?" Sheneman answered in the affirmative. Paul replied that we haven't even processed our minutes yet. Sheneman responded quickly, saying that they are public record. Paul replied in the affirmative to that, but stated that they aren't up anywhere yet, adding that she just wondered, that was all. Sheneman said that she can request them, as they're public record. Paul clarified that Sheneman did, in fact, have a copy with her now.

Smith had a question for Murphy, and said she didn't mean for this to sound rude at all – to which Murphy said she'd try not to answer it that way. Smith clarified that Murphy was a teacher and said that Murphy has a vision and some ideas as to how to reach kids with literacy and education and just the general, wonderful time you can have here at the library, but – and this, she mentioned, is the part she thought might be touchy – does having this statue interfere with what Murphy's vision is? Or are those both things that we can proceed with? Murphy replied that she feels there are other needs that the library board has brought up that our patrons need, that we have not had the money in our budget to deal with. So her concern is the maintenance and the sustainability for years to come. Even though she knows there's something new in the works, but from the get-go, if we were to accept the gift, she wanted the terms laid out. She feels more confident before she says yes, she wants to see those terms laid out, she wants to know that the statue, the maintenance, the landscaping, the cameras, the stuff that we don't have yet to support this. She knows everyone keeps bringing up the literacy with the statue, and she thinks it would be great if it would work that way, but she says she also knows how things do work today in the schools. She wasn't sure how else to say it and mentioned that she wasn't sure if that answered the question.

Steve Anderson spoke up then, saying that, from what he was gather, if it was not a financial burden to the library it would have been a yes – or could be a yes vote if it was written out to those words. Murphy said it could have been if she could see a point to it, that her big thing is literacy. She wants to see how somehow this whole thing could be tied into literacy and it could be sustained for times to come – the outcomes. She wants the outcomes to show her. Anderson asked if that meant the financial part of it or – Murphy interjected with "both!" She then asked how that doesn't make sense. Anderson continued, saying that the statue, it's just a piece of yard, it's not like it's taking away from something that a kid could eventually read about. Murphy responded that they were all saying that it's going to pull in so much of literacy – he replied that even if it doesn't, what is the burden for the library if it's already paid for? Other than being just a pretty piece of art in the front yard. Murphy again said that they didn't know it was paid for. Anderson reiterated that it's just a piece of land that is being utilized, even if it was just art.

Paul stated that a board member would like to speak. Swihart said that when we talked about this at the last meeting, it was a question of who would pay the insurance: we would, who would pay for maintenance: we would, to the tune of about \$500 every couple of years to re-wax it. That was our understanding at the time. Swihart shared that Reed did say that if we accepted the statue, we would list a statement of understanding of some sort that would say what we were willing to pay for and what we were not willing to pay for. But nowhere when we made our decision – and Swihart stated here that she had voted for the statue – was there any financial backing other than the library paying for anything. Murphy interjected a correction at this point, and Swihart continued, saying that we can't afford many things we'd like to do. She added that there is also the concern of vandalism, because, she said, we can't have a drop box because it gets vandalized. Someone spoke up, saying she didn't think it was outlined in the grant, the budget or where the money was going to come from or who the partners were going to be. That was agreed upon, by Swihart and Paul, with Swihart saying that we were told partners would be looked for and Murphy adding "after the acceptance". Paul had to

request that only one person speak at a time, so that they could be heard and understood. Swihart said that was all just to clarify that we did not have any financial understanding in place when we took the vote.

Gennell Taylor spoke up, saying that security, like cameras, had been mentioned and asking if we have cameras for the stuff that is outside the library now. The board answered that no, we do not. Murphy added that we have asked for that, have wanted that, but that our budget just doesn't allow it. Maggart said we just recently reached out to the county for a grant to provide card services for county residents, which was extra cushion that helped with our budget constraints that we already have, and the county decided for this upcoming year that they would not provide that money anymore. So that is where his concerns lay, where the money was coming from, who was providing it. He said that when we had our meeting last month, we were told to do it and then the partners would come along and so those were the concerns that he had. He said his concerns have all been fiscal, and mentioned that he is the only man who sits on the board, saying that he has tried to not say a lot of things because he doesn't want it to look like he's against Marie Stuart Edwards, or the statue, or the work that Brindle or anyone has done – it is all a lot of hard work that has gone into this. He reiterated that his whole thing has come from who's paying for it, how's it getting paid for; if he can see those things he can read through it, he can agree that he thinks those are fiscally sound decisions, he would move forward on the decision based upon the information he was given. He said that is what his rebuttal would be.

Sheneman asked if the monuments already outside the library have been vandalized before. Paul didn't know of any cases, while Sheneman said she grew up in a house around the corner and it definitely got vandalized then – she saw spray paint on it several times. The vandalism on the back of the building was mentioned then as well, and Murphy said that is why the drop box got taken away.

Edmunds spoke up again, saying he just wanted to add that like life, every project happens in phases. So the phase that is happening right now is a story-telling phase, where everyone is trying to understand who Marie Stuart Edwards was and what she means to us today. The next phase phases into something totally different. So you can't ask for all the details up front, of any kind of project, when you're trying to rally support, trying to rally a call to action for the community to not only know who this woman was but how we all can make the most of what she has provided. He said to keep in consideration that this is just a phase. The next phase is getting the artist involved. They too will have something to say about where the statue should be placed, based on their talent and skill.

Antonia Sawyer spoke up then, saying she has worked with many stakeholders and leaders in the community, she's done several projects, implemented programs, and she has always included the individuals who are going to be fiscally responsible for the project. She said she has never personally built a project first, and then asked the fiscally responsible person second. She said she is in support of this project, she thinks it is great, it's a learning experience, it's for women, but, and she added this emphatically, she is not for a lack of transparency and not having the fiscally responsible people involved in the project from the beginning. She said it made no sense to her to say, "I'm going to write a grant, and these are the people I think are going to help pay for it, but they don't even know I wrote the grant". So, as she put it, that is her two cents. She doesn't believe – Reed called point of order here, stating that information Sawyer just shared is incorrect. She said we could pick it up when we're in the next discussion about why they brought it to city, but Sawyer's facts are incorrect. Paul confirmed the point of order and said Sawyer could continue with something else though, if she wanted to. Sawyer said yes, and said she has done projects where she did not ask for fiscal last, stating that that is a fact. Reed responded, stating that the library is not the fiscal agent in this. Sawyer said she didn't say fiscal agent, she said fiscally responsible, adding that they – meaning the library board – were told they would have to pay for things, so that doesn't come second. She said that is inclusion, not exclusion and then

expectation. Reed said that the fiscal responsibility, as the grant is written, doesn't lie with the library. Sheneman said okay and then asked why they were told they would have to pay for things. Reed replied that they weren't. Reed and Paul both said that we are going to be reading the minutes. Reed reiterated that that was incorrect and called it misinformation, which is a point of order. Paul confirmed the point of order and moved it on.

Gennell Taylor commented that from what she understood at the council meeting, Miami County and two other counties are the ones that received this grant. So we – meaning everyone in the county – should consider ourselves fortunate. We are one of the [few] counties in the state of Indiana she stated, which was met with applause. She added that she thinks this will be great. Indiana is a big state, and look at Miami County – we did something.

Smith added on to the end of Taylor's comments, saying that she certainly hopes that everyone can work past these bad feelings and concentrate on something good because she thinks it's very distinctive and positive. It is something good, and everyone needs that right now.

Sheneman then spoke up again, saying the apology needs to be as big as the offense, if Smith is talking about getting past things. And that Maggart, Duckwall, and Murphy were talked about on Facebook by the organization that is going to bring the statue. She reiterated that she thinks the apology needs to be as big as the offense. No one seemed to have any idea what she was talking about, which Reed even voiced and Paul stated as well. Sheneman said to ask them and Murphy said something about a post on Facebook from the Saturday before, while Sheneman asked them if they were talked about on Facebook. Reed spoke up and said that our attorney has weighed in on that. The attorney is not here, so it's probably something we should table for executive committee. Reed again stated that she is not sure what is being referred to, to which Sheneman said she was referring to them being slandered on Facebook. Reed said to be careful what language Sheneman uses in a public meeting, and Sheneman said of course. Sheneman said she won't ask anyone to read out the minutes for her. Paul clarified that someone has asked to have the minutes read, with Reed adding that it is public record. Sheneman agreed with Reed's statement.

Paul asked if there were any more questions. As no one spoke up, she stated that we will now move forward with our meeting.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

August Minutes

The minutes were read aloud and corrections made at the end of that. A few words were changed, as well as a date. Reed motioned to accept the minutes as corrected and Maggart seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

There were no remarks from Farnham on the financials and Swihart had reviewed everything, although she hadn't been the one to sign the checks due to being on vacation, and thought it looked good. Maggart motioned to accept all of the financial statements with Brindle seconding. The financials were approved with all ayes.

AGENDA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Paul announced the letter that the library board had received from the city regarding the Marie Stuart Edwards statue, and read it aloud to the board. It was dated September 15th, 2020.

To whom it may concern: On behalf of the City Council of Peru, Indiana, we formally accept the women's suffrage movement statue as a gift to the city at the Monday, September 14th, 2020 city council meeting. By this action, we acknowledge that the statue will be placed at the Peru Public Library and will be owned by the City of Peru. We also acknowledge that the statue will be maintained by various community organizations throughout the city of Peru. We are excited for this new addition to the city of Peru and the rich history associated with it.

Paul informed the board that the letter was signed by Tom Gustin, the City Council President. She also shared that the vote, she believed, had been 6 to 0 in favor of accepting ownership of the statue by the city. Reed asked if the letter was going to become part of the library's public record and be placed in the minutes, to which Paul responded in the affirmative.

Paul asked if anyone had any comments about the letter, and Kathleen Plohow, a city council person, spoke up. While she hoped she wasn't misspeaking, and she needed to go back and look at the video, she didn't recall voting to place the statue at the library. Paul responded, stating that that was the motion they had voted on, and Reed added that the City Council's attorney had assured that was the case, which she remembered because the attorney spoke up about it. Swihart then asked if the attorney addressed how the city council could vote to place the statue on the library's property. Paul replied that no, they didn't, because it was not known that the city didn't own the land here. Murphy asked what that did to the letter then. Reed answered, saying it is not a land issue. By statute, the board of trustees owns and manages the library land. She stated that the group had gone to city council on the advice of city council. She wanted to thank Betsy Wolfe, because when they heard the 3 library board trustees vote with concerns towards insurance and maintenance and fiscal responsibility, they thought that perhaps, city council would be able to address those concerns by accepting the gift. So, it wasn't that the three nay votes didn't count or were disrespected, it is that city council was willing to be the partner in accepting the gift. Murphy commented that she needs to check her notes, but that she was told this couldn't happen because the library owns the land. Reed said that it didn't go to city council as a land issue; it didn't go to override your vote, your vote stands. Maybe there is a procedure issue, which there isn't – City Council is simply accepting the gift as the fiscally responsible body. Murphy asked again how they could place it on the library's property, with Reed answering that it is a condition. If, when the library votes again later in the agenda, the trustees vote no again, then, in Reed's understanding, that would negate the city's vote. Murphy clarified that that means that now they are being asked to accept the city's gift. Paul interjected, stating that no, the motion will be a little different from that. That it is her motion and no one has seen it yet. Plohow commented that the city retains the gift still, and Paul affirmed that. Reed clarified that as she understood it, the City Council's vote stands on the condition of the statue being placed on Library ground. So that is an issue they will have to take up again if the library board decides against it once more.

Shelley Sheneman asked if any of the "no" votes from the Library Board of trustees were represented at the city council meeting, or if any statement from them as to why they voted no. Paul reiterated that it wasn't about that. Reed stated she wasn't quite sure how to answer that, that it had been a question of somebody accepting the gift. The grant applicants had been awarded a grant by Indiana Humanities and OCRA, and so, because we're dealing with city bodies, legislative bodies, the question being who would accept the gift. Paul stated that we had said no, as a board, so they decided to take their gift and

ask if the city would be willing to accept their gift on behalf of the citizens of Peru. Paul also clarified that she and the other members of the library board who were at the city council meeting did not go for the statue issue, the gift was from the recipients of the grant. The recipients of the grant are ReDiscover Downtown Peru, a main street district as Reed pointed out. So, they went to city council based on the library board's "no" vote. The library board has no control over that.

It was asked if anyone on city council had asked why there was a no vote. Reed and Paul both stated that they did. Sheneman again asked if those no votes were represented at the city council meeting, either the people or the reasons why they had voted thusly. Plothow was asked directly if anyone at city council asked directly why any of the three on the library board had voted no. Plothow said she had reached out earlier in the day and heard no response. Duckwall spoke up, saying she had called back and left a message. Plothow apologized and said she didn't see that then. Another council member then spoke up, saying he had asked Brindle prior to the meeting and she didn't have an answer for him. This was expounded on, with Brindle sharing that she said that because she didn't understand why they had voted that way and that she had been told she could not ask why, because she is a board member and needed to support the decision of the board.

A member of the public asked why one of those three didn't speak for themselves. Murphy stated that they didn't know this was being taken to the next level with Duckwall saying they weren't invited. Reed spoke up, saying it is a public agenda. Murphy responded, saying that even Swihart, who was for it, didn't hear about it, which Swihart affirmed. Reed again stated that it is a public meeting. Sheneman said that, being honest, she doesn't check to see if she's on the agenda. Reed commented that she might want to, going forward. Sheneman said she didn't think she would, to which Reed replied that she was sorry about that. Sheneman hoped that someone would reach out to her, someone on the board here that was aware of it, would reach out and say they're going to meet at the city council for this meeting. Over the overlapping voices, Swihart finally got a word in: Her question about the letter is then, they're saying by this action we acknowledge, they're not saying that they are requiring the library to have this statue placed here. They are acknowledging it could be placed here, not saying it is absolutely going to be. Paul quickly responded, saying oh no and that they did not know that the library owns the land. Swihart then asked for clarification on if they were absolutely saying that the repairs and maintenance will be done by various community organizations, as they don't know that yet. Paul stated that they just own the statue, and affirmed that Swihart was correct in saying that they are responsible for it. Paul added that the library board said no to receiving the gift; so because the vote is no, the grant recipients – which is ReDiscover Downtown Peru – took their gift to the city and asked the city to accept the gift of the statue on behalf of the City of Peru. So the city accepted the gift and are the owners of the statue and are therefore, the people who will maintain it.

Ralph Duckwall then had a question about that. He did mention that maybe it was covered in the motion, but if the city owns the statue and the library still owns the land, that could be a conflict at some point down the road so he would think that the library would actually need to give the land to the city, in order to keep that from being a problem. Murphy spoke up, saying that was a concern she had as well. He continued: unless there is some formal agreement that says that land is being taken care of by the city as well. Reed said that they will have to have an attorney weigh in.

Paul asked if there were any further comments before the board moved onto the director's report. Sheneman spoke up, asking what the alternative locations are if the statue is not placed at the library, and then directed that to Plothow. Reed called point of order on that, as being beyond the scope of the

library board, which is whether or not the library board wants to place the statue that the city accepted with the condition of it being placed on library grounds, so alternative locations is getting ahead of where we are in our vote. Paul sustained the point of order as being beyond the library board's scope at the moment. Swihart commented that they had been told there were alternative locations and Murphy then asked if they could ask that as a board member. Plothow was granted permission to address that, as being from City Council. She said they have meet with others to discuss possible alternatives, at the behest of Betsy Wolfe. There are some sites in discussion that would lend great opportunities as well, but the consensus is to have it at the library because of Marie Stuart Edwards' connection to it, but they cannot force the issue. It was clarified that the statue will still be in Peru even if the library votes no again. Swihart brought up the Civic Center as a possible location with connections to Edwards, but the location must be in downtown Peru because of the grant. Swihart mentioned that her sister did suggest that they combine the statue with the drop box, which added some levity to the conversation.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Moving onto the director's report, Farnham shared that all 2016 to currently approved board meeting minutes are now on the library's website, per State Board of Accounts monthly engagement requirements. It requires both the minutes and financial statements be put up, as well as receipts and vouchers. She said they attended the City Council meeting on Monday, September 14th, at 6 PM at City Hall to declare our fiscal body as the City of Peru City Council. That was approved and she has sent in the appropriate paperwork to the state library as was required before October 1st. Next month, October 22nd, 2020, at 6:30 PM, will be our 2021 budget adoption. The governor also surprised her by opening up the state, so everyone is going to stage 5. She shared that the library will stay at the same hours for now, but that the play area and meeting rooms will be opened up – except for the upstairs meeting room as that is being used for quarantining all returned materials. All the computers in the computer lab will also be opened for use. Cleaning and quarantining will continue and they will be waiting a bit longer before starting in-person programs to make sure the state doesn't have to go back a stage or two.

There were no immediate renovations to discuss at this point. Swihart brought up the heat pump in the basement, so Farnham answered that, stating that yes, they had had an issue with the new one leaking so she had called about that, and they had already come to look at it. They are now waiting on a replacement part to come in so the library is currently running on one pump. It was clarified that the new pump was still under warranty.

OLD (UNFINISHED) BUSINESS

Maggart reported on the long range plan, saying the committee met on the 9th and started going through the plan. They have another meeting scheduled for the next week and will hopefully present the plan next month at the board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

First under new business was the Intent to join Indiana State Library Consortium for Public Library Internet Access for funding year 2021-2022, the ERATE funding. This is the library's commitment to join the Indiana State Library Consortium, which provides our e-rate funding and gives us an 80% discount on our internet. Paul motioned to join the consortium for the coming year of 2021 and Maggart seconded. Voting for this is done by signing, so the paper was passed around to each board member who signed it.

The next item on the agenda is the Marie Stuart Edwards statue. Paul would like to make a motion to graciously give permission for the city of Peru's statue of Marie Stuart Edwards, girl with her bicycle, to be placed on our grounds while the city maintains ownership and provides for her care and upkeep with community organizations. She asked for a second but Swihart first had a comment about the wording of the motion, in case the artist changes the design of the statue. Paul didn't think it made much difference, Reed said that as a grant writer, they would have to ask the funder so the integrity of the grant application is as it is. She acknowledged that while some of the questions are great, as a grant writer, some of the integrity of the grant is becoming undone. She further clarified that there is a contract in place, with the grant, which means it has gone through a peer review and evaluation and been awarded, and that the statue being of Marie Stuart Edwards as a little girl with her bike is part of the grant.

John Schwartz spoke up, asking if there were two people, out of the seven on the library board, who wrote the grant. It was clarified that Reed wrote the grant while Brindle did the historical research. He then asked if there was any reason then why there weren't 7 votes regarding the statue last time, instead of 6, if both of them were part of it. He thought that legally Reed should have still voted, and said that he assumed it would have passed if she had and wouldn't have come to this. Reed explained that she recused herself because she wrote the grant, even though she hadn't received payment for it. She thought it was best for the optics that she not vote, but she wasn't counseled not to, she just choose not to. Schwartz then asked if Reed could vote tonight. Reed stated she didn't have a contract with the city of Peru and Paul responded that Reed would be voting tonight. Maggart asked for the motion to be reread, which Paul did. She again asked for a second, which Maggart answered with a yes. Paul motioned that we give 15 minutes to discussion and Swihart expressed hope it would take less than that, which Maggart agreed with. Swihart seconded the motion to allow 15 minutes for discussion. With all ayes, the motion passed. Spangler kept the time.

Maggart opened the discussion. According to the motion from Paul, the letter from the city council, and the discussion, the city will accept all fiscal responsibility for the statue, it will simply be on library grounds. Paul affirmed this was correct, the city would be responsible for everything. He then asked if we would have that in writing – that the city is responsible for the statue and that the library is merely accepting their gift on our property – and if Paul would sign it. Paul thought the city letter accomplished some of that, but also that yes, depending on the vote, her signing an agreement stating that the library agrees to that would be the next step. Paul then said that this woman [Marie Stuart Edwards], not only was it about suffrage, she did so much for the community here. She was the first women elected to the local school board – which took 13 ballots. Thus, she was also the de facto first women on the library board, because the school board at the time oversaw the library. She has such a special history, Paul said. She was one of the initial people in the founding of the civic center and in 1922 she became a member of the board of education, per the governor's request. She was also part of the parole board review here in Miami County. She was remarkable and Paul believes this is a way to honor her. It all started here, in this library, upstairs in our room. She became the person who gave voice, not just to women, but to what happened here in our county. She made sure that children received books to go to school. Part of her effort to make sure that literacy happened here in our county. This is not just a Miami county person, she was a state figure for suffrage. Paul thinks that the voice that she discovered was done here in our library. And Paul thinks that this whole suffrage trail is going to be built and will pull tourism into this town, but it will start here at the library. It will always start at the library, because this is where it happened. Reed spoke next, stating that she is so proud of women sitting in this audience today, for showing us that emotion is good and that we run with integrity to serve our

community. Speaking to the city council women, she thanked them for that and for carrying on. As a library trustee, her experience with boards previously often asked their board members to bring resources. This is the best that we could do at this time, to bring attention to our library. She stated that she is so proud of this library. This is the public's house, a public institution. For those who are spiritual, you can find the light of god here. For those who believe in democracy, we find the seats, the foundations of discussion and deliberation. As citizens who look each other in the eye, this is where we learn to be open minded. Literacy is greater than reading, and here she interjected that she loves to read, but that literacy is greater than reading. And for their emotion, for their celebration, for their consternation, she is most grateful. What she can now assure them of as both a grant writer and a trustee, that there were partners all along and there will continue to be partners. City Council now is a good example of it. She called out several people and groups for being willing to step up. She then thanked Murphy for speaking with passion this evening and standing up for her vote, telling her "right on" for that. She further stated that it was never their intention, it was to address the concerns about maintenance and insurance, and city council members who were willing to brainstorm with them and take it to vote. That passion heard from Betsy Wolfe, is just that; she's excited about it and can see a way forward, if we should so choose to honor the city's wish to accept the gift and their request to place it on our land.

Murphy responded, saying she appreciated Reed saying she is not ignoring their vote, as she thought it felt like that with social media and everything. Paul agreed that that is social media, but that no, they were not ignoring them, adding that people say anything they like on social media. She also said that she understood it is a matching grant, so the money that the grant has raised others now have to step up and find the money to complete this process. Paul stated very firmly that this is not money that we, the library board, need to furnish. We are not going to pay anything towards the cost of the statue from our budget, in any way shape or form.

Murphy asked if 100% of the matching funds go to the statue, to which Paul responded with an absolute yes and Reed agreed. Paul stated that that was part of the grant application.

Reed wanted to highlight Maggart's work on the strategic long-range plan, which leads into this. She discussed his excitement and concerns about literacy and ways we can creatively link these economic development and tourism opportunities, widening our tax base – things we all need to hear as city officials that we can sustain. She reminded everyone that this is a Carnegie library, and that the direction of Mr. Carnegie all those years ago was that we all have a responsibility to support this institution, or we would not have received the Carnegie library, as that was part of how that grant was set up all those years ago. She said we have honored that 100+ years later, and that as long as she is sitting on this board she will do her due diligence and fiscal responsibility to serve the citizens and residents of Peru, and be fiscally responsible. This grant is not a draw on the library, but there are opportunities.

Paul spoke up then, stating that this is our library, as the public of Peru. And that this is our statue. She then said that the motion is to allow the library board to give permission for the public's statue to be placed on their city library property. Although we do not own it personally, we are in trust, as a library board, for the library. It is owned in perpetuity by the trustees and the building of this library. But we will not have any cost to this gift. This gift is now the responsibility of the City of Peru, because they have accepted the gift.

Paul asked if there were any other comments, and when there were none, for the time left. With 3 minutes left on the allotted time, Duckwall asked for time to think. Paul announced a recess for 5 minutes. During the recess, Maggart did double check with Paul to see if we could get the agreement with the city that they own the statue, in writing and signed to ease his mind. Paul assured him that was always the plan. Paul reconvened the meeting at 8:21 PM.

Paul motioned to graciously give permission for the City of Peru's statue of Marie Stuart Edwards, the girl with her bicycle, to be placed on our grounds while the city retains ownership and provides for her care and upkeep with community partners. Maggart seconded. The votes were as follows: Brindle, aye; Swihart, aye; Reed, aye; Paul, aye; Murphy, aye; Duckwall, aye; and Maggart, aye. The motion passed unanimously, 7 to 0.

Murphy and Duckwall both thanked everyone for the discussion and communication during the evening, with Murphy saying she wished they could have had this from the beginning and Duckwall saying she had felt excluded before.

There being no further business on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned by President Paul at 8:25 PM.

MINUTES PREPARED BY: Lisa Rummel, Peru Public Library staff member

SECRETARY APPROVAL:

(Signature & Date)

Peru Public Library
