

Friends of the Paonia Library Board

Meeting Minutes July 13, 2023

I. Call Meeting to Order

Major called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm.

Present: Laura Major, Lesandre Holiday, Dave Weber, Janice Thorup, Pamela Stephens, Judy Livingston

II. Treasurer's Report

The Friends have \$25K, and operating expenses are only \$1,057, mostly insurance. CD interest rates are 5%. Weber proposes a 6 month CD for \$20K. Holiday seconds the motion. The Board approves. Weber will explore the rates and timetables and follow up with the best CD.

III. Cherry Days Book Sale

Thorup says we averaged \$1.41 / book.

IV. The Future of the Library

Major will speak to the Rotary Club next week and thinks the community should know what has been suggested and may be suggested in the future for the Paonia library.

The District Board voted to not close any library "at the moment".

Major said the District would not assure the community that Crawford library would be open more than just one day a week.

At the last Friends' meeting, Gunn gave notice that the District will be asking the communities to assume responsibility for the libraries. But somebody from the Crawford Friends asked if they would be given a first option to buy their library back. Does this mean we have to buy ours too or it will be transferred? Both Crawford and Paonia were completely grant, DOLA, and donation funded. The District paid nothing and acquired the properties for free. We shouldn't have to buy them back!

Weber found the contract between the Town of Paonia and the Friends Foundation. The Town donated the land, water tap, and sewer to the Foundation. The contract states that the property must be used as a library for 30 years (until 2036). Barring this, the Town will take back the property. Weber explained that such deed restrictions usually move with the title.

A condition of the DOLA funding was that the property be transferred to and remain in possession of the District for at least ten years, which has since expired. While the District has no contract with the Town of Paonia, it cannot cease library functions until 2036. If this deed restriction was not passed along in the title transfer, then it may be invalid. This may well be the case. Was a title company used? Was there title insurance? As such, Weber is not too concerned but suggests we find an attorney to help us sort through any title mess and get it back.

The District has performed few repairs on this building. By its own schedule, the District wasn't planning to work on the roof until 2029.

The District gets \$50k / year from County for "capital repair and maintenance". Since 2009 this amounts to \$600k! How much has the Paonia library received? How does the District decide how the funds are disbursed? Are there stipulations from the County? The District doesn't break down the numbers by library.

Thorup suggests a task force or a fact sheet to curb the rumor mill. Major suggests we invite Teresa Shishim to our next meeting and start having early evening or late afternoon meetings.

Stephens said her impression of the District Board meeting was that they are not as far along as Gunn, even though they assigned her the task. Thorup thinks we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Major and Weber agree that the proposed and actual budgets are out of kilter. The District has a proposed deficit of \$141K this year because of staff, yet they can't find people to hire. The District is not actually running in the red. It has only one year's worth of reserves. Weber points out the Town of Paonia tries to keep a two year reserve.

Weber mentions that a class C commercial building fetches \$12k / month. If the Foundation were to assume the title and charge \$2k month to cover all repairs, this would amount to \$24k annually, and almost as much as what the District is paying to maintain the building now. This means, come 2036 the District might simply opt to close the library.

Moving forward in an information and fundraising campaign, the Friends should consider a survey of the community and ask: what will bring you in if not computers, wifi, books, and media? A tool library, outdoor equipment exchange, seed library?

Do we want the title back? Ultimately yes, without cost. It's worth waiting to fundraise and see what exponentially-evolving technology holds for libraries. Libraries may become obsolete, and it's a reason to delay transferring the title.

Major motions that not take the title back at this time. Livingston seconds. Passed unanimously.

Weber will email the financials and list of deferred maintenance to everybody that he received from Gunn.

Major asks everybody to email their questions for the District. Holiday suggests Major ask Rotary for their questions too. Weber will ask Shishim if she can meet with the Friends and provide some answers. Thorup says we should be sure to get the answers in writing from the District or Gunn.

We need to support Crawford. They are farther along in the process and the frontline warrior. Will they have to pay for their library? They may start agitating for Gunn's removal.

V. Adjourn at 1:19.

Respectfully submitted,
Lesandre Holiday, Secretary