

# NEBRASKA LIBRARY COMMISSION

Lincoln, NE

January 13, 2023

## MINUTES

The Nebraska Library Commission met on January 13, 2023. The meeting notice was posted on the Commission website and the Nebraska.gov public meeting calendar.

Commission members present: Tiffany Carter, Diane Downer, Vernon J., Beth Kabes, and Arun Pondicherry. Staff present: Rod Wagner, Jennifer Wrampe; via GoToMeeting: Christa Porter. Arun Pondicherry called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. This meeting complies with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and Governor's Executive Order Limited Waiver for Public Meetings.

**Approval of Agenda:** A motion was made by Vernon J. and seconded by Diane Downer to approve the agenda. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – aye; Diane Downer – aye; Vernon J. – aye; Beth Kabes - aye; Arun Pondicherry – aye. Motion approved.

**Approval of Minutes:** (November 4, 2022) a motion was made by Arun Pondicherry and seconded by Tiffany Carter to approve the minutes. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – aye; Diane Downer – aye; Vernon J. – aye; Beth Kabes – abstain; Arun Pondicherry – aye. Motion approved.

### Chair's Report and Commissioner's Comments

**Arun Pondicherry** – reported Lincoln City Libraries will offer income tax assistance February 1 – April 13. Lincoln City Libraries invites residents to participate in the Annual Winter Reading January 1 – January 31. Grandparent's appreciation day is January 21. Arun also said that he attended Governor Pillen's inaugural ball.

**Beth Kabes** – reported Tammy Thiem, Three Rivers Library System Director, is on the list of recommendations for appointment to the State Advisory Council on Libraries.

**Diane Downer** – Gering Public Library is continuing a refresh of their building. The Gering Library Foundation is continuing its search for a new building. Scottsbluff Public Library is recruiting for a new director.

**Vernon J.** – no report

**Tiffany Carter** – no report

### Director's Report

*Personnel* – Rod Wagner reported that Andrew Sherman has been appointed to fill the Information Technology Support Analyst position. Andrew will begin on January 17. Andrew comes to the Library Commission from the Omaha Public Library and has previously served as director of the Sidney public library, and IT coordinator for the Sump Memorial Library in Papillion. Andrew will work with libraries to improve their broadband services.

*Broadband Improvements and Funding for Libraries* – Christa Porter reported on the federal E-Rate program that provides discounts to schools and libraries for internet services and related equipment. The Form 471 Application Filing window for Funding Year 2023 will open on Wednesday, January 18 at noon EST and close on Tuesday, March 28. The deadline to submit the Form 470 is Tuesday, February 28.

Porter reported on the Public Library Accreditation process that has been on hiatus for the last two years due to the pandemic. The process has been re-started for 2023. Currently, there are 183 accredited libraries. Of these, 36 libraries are up for re-accreditation this year. Out of those 36 libraries, 27 have been re-accredited, 7 have been given extensions, 2 libraries have been accredited for the first time, and 2 were not re-accredited.

Porter reported the Nebraska Library Commission grant applications for 2023 closed on November 18. Review teams have made their award decisions:

- Continuing Education/Training – 8 applications funded for \$5,000
- Youth – 34 libraries awarded \$31,466
- Internships – 20 libraries awarded \$20,000
- Library Improvement – 25 libraries awarded \$60,000

Big Talk From Small Libraries online conference will be held February 24, 2023.

*Digital Equity Planning Grant* – Wagner reported the grant began in October 2022. Nebraska received a federal grant for planning for a state application for broadband improvements. The Library Commission is a partnership agency for the grant. Holly Woldt, Library Technology Support Specialist, is involved with this grant and a portion of Holly's salary is paid from grant funds.

*Technology & Access Services* – Wagner commented that Devra Dragos was not available at this time to provide a report. Wagner reported that there has been a reorganization of the NebraskaAccess databases and the website. The subscription databases through EBSCO have been organized so that there are choices for access by the schools for elementary/middle school grades and high school grades.

*Nebraska Center for the Book* – Wagner reported Governor Pillen held a proclamation ceremony on January 10. Governor Pillen signed and presented a proclamation for this year's One Book One Nebraska selection – *The Mystery of Hunting's End* by Mignon Eberhart. The Nebraska Center for the Book received a \$2,000 grant from Humanities Nebraska to support the OBON program. A portion of these funds is used to purchase copies for the Library Commission's book

club collection and copies for lending from the regional library system offices. The book is also recorded for Talking Book and Braille Service borrowers.

Wagner reported on the Letters About Literature competition. The contest invites students in grades 4-12 to write a letter to an author that has inspired them. The categories are grades 4-6, 7-8 and 9-12. Judges for each category select the winners and an honorable mention. The contest winners and those receiving honorable mention are invited, along with their parents, to a ceremony at the Capitol where they are presented a certificate signed by the Governor. A luncheon follows the ceremony at the Bennett Martin Public Library and Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors.

*Brownstone Book Fund* – Wagner reported that for the past 20 years Diane Brownstone has selected a state to work with for selection of 100 libraries to receive 100 children’s books. Brownstone contacted the Library Commission and invited the Commission to select libraries to receive books. Books are selected from a list of titles provided by Diane Brownstone. Additional titles can be recommended by the Library Commission, and especially those that may have a Nebraska connection. The Brownstone Foundation covers all costs. The state’s “neediest” libraries are intended for the program. The libraries were selected by the four regional library system directors. Libraries were informed about their selection and invited to participate. Brodart is the company that assists the Brownstone Book Fund with ordering and processing books for delivery to libraries.

*Electronic Magnifiers Project for Public Libraries* – Wagner reported a Kearney news station presented a story on the electronic magnifier project. Ninety percent % of Nebraska public libraries in Nebraska accepted the equipment.

## **Financial Report**

*December Financial Report* – Wagner reported that at half-way through the state fiscal year, major objects in the operating budget are a bit under or close to budgeted amounts. Some operating expenses are one-time payments and usually paid early in the fiscal year. As for federal funding, LSTA expenditures are within budgeted amounts. A major budget item, state aid payments to public libraries, will be distributed in the spring. Regional library systems receive quarterly payments based on their annual budget allocations.

*American Rescue Plan Act Budget and Expenditures* – Wagner reported that 99.9% of funds have been expended. Wagner credited Christa Porter, Sam Shaw, and Sally Snyder for their work administering the ARPA grant funds. Reports will be submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services within the next few months.

*LSTA Funding FY 2023* – Wagner reported Congress enacted legislation in December appropriating funds for federal agencies and programs for the remainder of the federal fiscal year (ending September 30). Funding was increased for the LSTA Grants to States program this year to the level need to provide a base amount of \$1 million to each state. The remainder is allocated based on state population. Nebraska’s grant is \$183,000 over last year’s allocation. These funds are available for expenditure through September 20, 2024.

*State Advisory Council on Libraries Appointments* - Rod Wagner presented recommendations for appointments (first term) to the State Advisory Council on Libraries for three-year terms beginning in January 2023 and continuing until December 31, 2025.

*New Appointment Recommendations – Three-Year Term*

- Emily Nimsakont, Library Board Member (Ashland) and NLA Past-President (pending response)
- Jennifer Norton, Director, Lexington Public Library
- Michael Sauers, Technology Manager, Do Space (Omaha)
- Celine Swan, Director, Grand Island Public Library
- Tammi Thiem, Director, Three Rivers Library System
- Mandy Peterson, Media Specialist, Shelby-Rising City Public Schools

A motion was made by Beth Kabes and seconded by Arun Pondicherry to approve the State Advisory Council on Libraries appointments. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – abstain; Diane Downer – aye; Vernon J. – aye; Beth Kabes – aye; Arun Pondicherry – aye. Motion approved.

*Out of State Travel Request* – Wagner requested approval to attend an event in Washington D.C. to bring representatives of states to meet with congressional representatives. This is a joint event of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies and American Library Association. The event will be held March 7-9.

A motion was made by Arun Pondicherry and seconded by Vernon J. to approve the travel request. Motion carried on roll call vote: Tiffany Carter – aye; Diane Downer – aye; Vernon J. – aye; Beth Kabes - aye; Arun Pondicherry – aye. Motion approved.

**New Business**

*Next Meeting Dates* –March 3, May 12, July 14.

**Adjournment**

Arun Pondicherry adjourned the meeting.

Jennifer Wrampe