

# MINUTES

## BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

### Board Retreat

**February 29, 2024**

The Board of Library Commissioners held a retreat at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, located at 244 San Pedro Street, 5th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012, starting at 10:21 a.m. on the above-written date.

**1. Roll Call:**

<b>Present:</b>	President	<b>Valerie Lynne Shaw</b>
	Vice President	<b>Linda Blank</b>
	Commissioner	<b>Kelly Besser</b>
	Commissioner	<b>Hiram Sims</b> (10:30 a.m.)

**Absent:** None.

**Also present:** City Librarian John F. Szabo, Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman; Deputy City Attorney Josh M. Templet; and Administrative staff.

**2. Opening Remarks:** Mr. Hirokazu Kosaka, Master Artist in Residence at the Japanese American Cultural Center, provided welcoming remarks and history of Little Tokyo.

**3. Public Comments:** None

**4. Staff Presentations:**

- a. **Overview of City Government:** City Librarian John F. Szabo provided an overview of the City's government structure. Board President Shaw asked about the City Charter. Deputy City Attorney Templet replied that the City Charter states that the Library is a quasi-proprietary department, which gives the department some independence. Mr. Szabo stated that the City Charter gives the Board authority to approve the budget, the personnel resolution, contracts as well as other matters.
- b. **Overview of the Library Department:** Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman spoke about staff responsibilities for each operational area, and additionally reported that the Library is transitioning to a new payroll system that is being implemented by the city.

Vice President Blank asked about the number of vacancies. Ms. Broman replied that there are about 30 entry level librarian vacancies and as part of the hiring plan process, the promotion opportunities have been filled and now they are in the process of interviewing librarians.

Board President Shaw stated that she would like to attend one of the Area Managers meetings.

Commissioner Sims inquired about the old Washington Irving Branch, which has been vacant for a long time. President Shaw stated that she would like to do something with that location.

- c. **Overview of Library Contracting Process:** Madeleine Rackley, Business Office Manager provided an overview of the Business Office and Contract Unit staff Claudia Aguilar, Erica Thompsen, and Yuri Phaneuf spoke about the process for contract approval.

*Lunch Recess 12:05 p.m. - 1:07 p.m.*

- d. **Major Library Initiatives:** City Librarian John F. Szabo provided information on the following five major initiatives:
- i. New Americans Initiative: Citizenship services, immigration services at libraries, Street Vendor Program, and other efforts.
  - ii. Full STEAM Ahead: Programming to introduce children and teens to Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math. Partners include NASA and JPL, LA Maker Faire. The Octavia Lab introduces students to new technologies. These programs have a gender equity component.
  - iii. Digital Equity: Tech2Go, cybernaut services, Tech Tryout carts, free computer and Wi-Fi access at libraries.
  - iv. Library Experience Office: The Source is a one-stop shop that offers services to the homeless community and others. The Library Experience Office also oversees security, social workers and contracts for mental health and social services to assist patrons and to train staff.

Board President Shaw asked which libraries had the most issues that require more security or services, and asked if the Exposition Park-Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Regional Branch Library was one of them.

Assistant City Librarian Broman replied that Central Library, Frances Howard Goldwyn-Hollywood Regional, Will & Ariel Durant, and North Hollywood Amelia Earhart Regional were the libraries with the most issues. She stated that the Exposition Park-Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Regional Branch Library had issues because it is adjacent to a park and a parking lot. She noted that the Library has installed additional lighting and security cameras, has an assigned security guard, and has contracted SistahFriends to provide services to patrons in need. Staff is also working with the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Council Office for that district to find additional solutions.

- v. Lifelong Learning: Adult Literacy, Financial Literacy, Health Matters, Career Online High School, Family Literacy and English Language Learners, Expedition LA, the citizenship and street vendor program, and more. Mr. Szabo stated that library staff offer these services, additional external funding from LFLA has assisted these efforts, including the LA Plays, Student Success Library Cards, STAR Volunteer Reading Program, Adult Literacy Coordinators.

President Shaw stated that it is wonderful that the Foundation helps fund innovative programs. Mr. Szabo stated that the Library pays for the majority of its innovative and creative programming from its budget, and the Foundation allows it to innovate and it lends itself to obtain philanthropic support and to help develop partnerships such as the one with the Dodgers Foundation.

- e. **Trends in Libraries**: City Librarian John F. Szabo spoke about Freedom to Read, Book bans nationally; digital equity and digital content with additional formats, licensing; and facilities planning and use of space for more in-person activities.

President Shaw asked fellow Board members to attend neighborhood council meetings.

4. **Adjournment**: The retreat was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Valerie Lynne Shaw  
President

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Raquel M. Borden  
Board Executive Assistant