

# MINUTES

## BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

**April 8, 2021**

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners was held via teleconference at 11:02 a.m. on the above-written date.

**1. Roll Call:**

<b>Present:</b>	President	<b>Bích Ngọc Cao</b>
	Vice-President	<b>Kathryn Eidmann</b>
	Commissioner	<b>Dale Franzen</b>
	Commissioner	<b>Josefa Salinas</b>

**Absent:** None

**Also present via teleconference:** City Librarian John F. Szabo, Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman, Deputy City Attorney Basia Jankowski; Library staff and members of the public.

**2. Opening Remarks:** Commissioner Franzen opened the meeting with a poem by Rumi.

**3. Approval of the Minutes:** Minutes of the Regular Meeting - March 25, 2021

It was moved by Vice President Eidmann and seconded by Commissioner Franzen to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on March 25, 2021. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Cao, Eidmann, Franzen & Salinas). Noes: 0. Absent: 0.

**4. Public Comments on Matters  
Within the Board's Jurisdiction:**

The Board heard one comment during the General Public Comments.

**5. City Librarian's Comments  
and Announcements:** City Librarian John F. Szabo reported the following:

- **National Library Week:** Libraries across the nation are celebrating National Library Week as well as National Library Workers Day on Tuesday acknowledging the work library staff does and the impact they make.
- **New Poet Laureate Lynne Thompson** will be participating in the April 22 Board Meeting. She kicked off her term by launching National Poetry Month on April 1st. Lynne is also writing monthly blog posts and has started a bi-weekly podcast of 10-minute episodes. The City of Los Angeles Poet Laureate Program is managed as a partnership between the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Los Angeles Public Library.

- **Language Access Working Group Expands:** Library staff have been involved with this group which is now expanding and relaunching as a Citywide working group in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs on an initiative lead by Board of Public Works Commissioner Jessica Caloza to assess, identify and prioritize key language access challenges and propose solutions and strategies and develop recommendations for an inclusive citywide policy for language services.
- **Community Wi-Fi with the Street Fleet:** This new library service provides free Wi-Fi access in the Central-Southern and Western regions. This is an important service for community members who have relied on visiting their local library branches for free access to the Internet; the library now can bring free Internet directly to local areas where it is needed the most.
- **Story Hackers for KLCS:** The Library is partnering with KLCS to produce a series called Story Hackers. The series will focus on books, storytelling, related topics, activities and library resources with a goal of encouraging children to read. Story Hackers will be broadcast both on TV and simultaneously live streamed. KLCS is owned by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and is one of eight television stations in the U.S. operated by a local school system.
- **LA Made Program - Compton Cowboys:** Last month, LA Made hosted an online discussion with Walter Thompson-Hernandez and Randy Savvy, Leader of the Compton Cowboys to discuss Thompson-Hernandez' new book, *The Compton Cowboys: A New Generation of Cowboys in America's Urban Heartland*, an eclectic group of horseback riders who aim to improve their community by highlighting the history of African-Americans in the Old West, ranching, and farming lifestyle.
- **Earth Hour/Earth Day:** On March 27, LAPL was proud to join the Mayor's Office, other city departments and 192 countries and territories in going dark for one hour at 8:30 p.m. in celebration of "Earth Hour" to signify support for global climate action to reduce energy consumption and organize together for change. After Earth Hour, Central Library was lit up green until sunrise, joining other supporters from around the world.
- **Librarian Candice Wing-Yee Mack Profiled in American Libraries Story:** Candice Wing-Yee Mack, Managing Librarian for Teen Services, was profiled in the American Libraries story "Emerging Leaders: Where Are They Now?" The seven librarians profiled were selected from the American Library Association's annual Emerging Leaders Program participants from years 2012-2018. Candice reflected on lessons learned and experience gained since she participated in the program in 2012.
- **City of STEM Science Festival:** Last month the Library participated in the virtual City of STEM Science Festival and contributed with a Maker Talk of Shawn Stamm's Virtual Tour of the Chatsworth Maker Space. The prerecorded event featured Chatsworth Branch Library projects that viewers could create from the comfort of their homes.

- **Reopening of Libraries:** Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman reported that the Library will be reopening beginning May 3 with limited in-person services at 38 locations, including Central Library. She said services would include a combination of Library-to-Go, browsing of collections and use of computers. She stated that the goal is to offer a welcoming and safe space for everyone; staff will be available to welcome patrons as they walk into the library, help them navigate the library and select services, provide them with masks and hand sanitizer if needed, and ensure that patrons are aware of the safety protocols before entering the building, including the requirement of wearing a face mask at all times while in the library. Signs will be available throughout the building to ensure physical distancing and restrooms and high touch areas will be cleaned hourly.

Ms. Broman stated that virtual programming will continue to be provided with the addition of some outdoor programming during the summer. The Library will be doing an extensive media and email campaign, and as changes are made to the health orders, additional locations and services will be added throughout the spring and summer.

Ms. Broman thanked staff for providing their input on how to make these services available safely.

### **Discussion**

Commissioner Franzen mentioned that the governor had announced a full opening in June and asked how that would affect the Library. Ms. Broman replied that the Library will continue to monitor the health orders.

Commissioner Franzen said that many places, organizations, and theaters are looking at a vaccine passport and whether the Library would be looking at anything like that.

Ms. Broman replied that right now the City of Los Angeles has not talked about it, and the Library will continue to follow the guidance from the city. She said the Library was fortunate to have its staff classified as educational workers and they have been eligible for vaccines since early March.

Vice President Eidmann inquired about the process for selecting the locations that would be open and how it balances across the library system.

Ms. Broman stated that the Library wants to make sure that a variety of services are spread out evenly across the city. The determinations were made by looking at data from prior to the pandemic, information from schools, and areas where the needs are greater for particular services

Vice President Eidment asked about computer and Wi-Fi access for patrons.

Ms. Broman replied that the Library's Wi-Fi has been on since mid-way through the pandemic, but the Library is working on a program to extend the Wi-Fi further out from the building in some locations as well as expanding the number of circulating wireless hotspots.

**6. City Librarian's Reports:****Discussion Item(s)**

- a. **Approve award of contracts to ten (10) pre-qualified Immigration Integration and Immigration Assistance Services Consultants to provide as-needed and as-requested immigration integration and immigration assistance consultant services to the Los Angeles Public Library**

\_\_\_\_\_ City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended the Board approve the award of contracts to ten (10) of the twelve (12) proposals received from agencies that responded to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to provide immigration integration and immigration assistance services. The contracts would be on as-needed and as-requested basis.

It was moved by Commissioner Franzen and seconded by Vice President Eidmann to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Cao, Eidmann, Franzen & Salinas). Noes: 0. Absent: 0.

**LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2021-11 (C11)**

WHEREAS, On June 25, 2020, the Board of Library Commissioners (Board) approved the release of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to establish a pre-qualified list of qualified consultants to provide on-call and as-needed immigration integration and immigration assistance services for the Library (Library Resolution No. 2020-22); and

WHEREAS, On August 26, 2020, the Library received twelve (12) proposals in response to the RFQ and an evaluation committee found all twelve (12) proposals to be responsive to the RFQ requirements; however, two (2) proposals, African Communities Public Health Coalition and Young Men's Christian Association of Metropolitan Los Angeles, are awaiting their renewal of Executive Office of Immigration Review accreditation by the United States Department of Justice, and therefore, ten (10) contracts are recommended for approval at this time; and

WHEREAS, On April 8, 2021, the Board found, in accordance with Charter Section 1022, that it is more economical and feasible for independent contractors to perform the services than using City staff; and

WHEREAS, Each contract will be awarded for a term of three (3) years for a total amount not to exceed \$500,000 per contract year. No amount of work will be guaranteed and the work shall be awarded on an as-needed basis; and

WHEREAS, On April 8, 2021, Library staff recommended the award and execution of contracts with the following ten (10) Contractors to provide as-needed and as-requested immigration integration and immigration assistance services to the Library:

No. 2021-11 (C-11) Cont.

1. Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAAJ) Los Angeles
2. Central American Resource Center – CARECEN – of California
3. Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.
4. Centro C.H.A. Inc., a California Corporation
5. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
6. Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles
7. International Rescue Committee in Los Angeles
8. Painted Brain, a California Corporation
9. PARS Equality Center (PEC)
10. Thai Community Development Center

WHEREAS, The ten (10) proposed contracts include a process that Library staff will utilize to select the Contractor for specific immigration integration and immigration assistance work during the contract term; and,

WHEREAS, Sufficient funds are available in the Contractual Services Account 3040 of the Library's operating budget to compensate the Contractor for the services; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board adopts the Board Report's Recommendations and Findings and awards ten (10) contracts to provide as-needed and as-requested immigration integration and immigration assistance services for the Library; and,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Librarian and City Attorney be authorized to make technical changes if needed to the contracts; and,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board President is authorized to execute the contracts upon completion of the Mayor's Office review in accordance with Executive Directive No. 3.

**b. Approve dedication of the Vermont Square Branch Library in recognition of former Library Commissioner, City of Los Angeles Councilmember, Los Angeles Unified School District Board Member, and long-time Los Angeles resident Rita Walters** \_\_\_\_\_

City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended approval to dedicate the Vermont Square Branch Library in honor of Rita D. Walters. He stated that Angelenos enthusiastically supported the dedication and the input received was very supportive. He read several of the comments received in support, including from Councilmember Curren Price, Jr. from Council District 9, whose district includes the Vermont Square Branch Library. Also, a recommendation of support was received from the Voices Neighborhood Council, where he had the pleasure to speak about the dedication and listened to the members and attendees speak in support.

Mr. Szabo stated that Mrs. Rita Walters, who passed away in February 2020 at the age of 89, was an incredibly wonderful and powerful African American woman, a champion of civil rights and whose dedication to public service never wavered. She served the city in so many ways. He noted that Mayor Garcetti, on her passing,

called Mrs. Walters “a model public servant,” and she was described by the *LA Times* as “a trailblazing African American leader, who was a fierce advocate of equity.”

Mr. Szabo stated that in her 15 years as a Library Commissioner, Mrs. Rita Walters had made many contributions to the Library, which were enumerated in the initial recommendation. He introduced Mrs. Rita Walters’ children Susan, Phillip and David Walters.

Susan Walters, Rita Walters’s daughter, spoke about how important the city was to her mother and how the Library warmed her heart because it brought together all of her interests. She recalled her mother being thrilled when she had the opportunity to oversee the implementation of the Bond program for new libraries and would travel around the entire city, which her son David also enjoyed. She said reconnecting to all the different communities gave her a sense of fulfillment from her work with the libraries.

Ms. Walters added that her mother would have not wanted any recognition or a library dedicated to her, but the family appreciates the gesture and as some of the comments mentioned that the value of dedicating the branch in her name would be to inspire others. She concluded her comments with a stanza from the poem, “The Hill We Climb” which Amanda Gorman recited at the presidential inauguration because Mrs Walters would have been so thrilled to have seen it.

*“We the successors of a country and a time  
where a skinny Black girl  
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother  
can dream of becoming president  
only to find herself reciting for one.”*

Board President Cao thanked the Walters family for joining the meeting and inquired about the timing for the ceremony. Mr. Szabo said it would be held sometime over the summer at the Vermont Square Branch to formally dedicate the library and celebrate Rita Walters and her legacy.

Vice President Eidmann said it had been an honor to have served along Commissioner Walters on the Board and she thanked everyone who took the time to submit their comments and send letters, which were very inspiring.

Thereafter, it was moved by Commissioner Salinas and seconded by Commissioner Franzen to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Cao, Eidmann, Franzen & Salinas). Noes: 0. Absent: 0.

#### LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2021-12

WHEREAS, Former Library Commissioner Rita Walters was an influential champion of civil rights whose dedication to public service never wavered.

WHEREAS, Upon her passing February 19, 2020 at the age of 89, Mayor Eric Garcetti called Ms. Walters “A model public servant”; and the Angeles Times

described her as a “trail-blazing African American leader” who was a “fierce advocate of equity.”

WHEREAS, Rita Walters was elected to the LAUSD Board in 1979 as the only African American member of the Board, where she served until 1991; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Walters was appointed to the Board of Library Commissioners on February 15, 2002, and served nearly five terms under three mayors. She presided on the commission during the greatest period of expansion and innovation in the library’s 145-year history, an unprecedented era, which included the largest library construction program in the nation; and

WHEREAS, The Vermont Square Branch Library is located in the 9<sup>th</sup> Council District. The same Council District Rita Walters served faithfully beginning in 1991 when she became the first African American woman elected to the Los Angeles City Council, a position she held until 2001. In 2013, at the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vermont Square Library Branch, the library was honored to welcome Rita Walters as a featured guest speaker; and

WHEREAS, On December 10, 2021 the Board of Library Commissioners initiated, in accordance with Board policy 1:312, the process to consider dedicating the Vermont Square Branch Library in recognition of Ms. Walters; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Library Commissioners received a total of 62 comments in support of the dedication of the Vermont Square Branch Library in recognition of Rita Walters. Of note, letters were received from several current Los Angeles City Council Members including: City Council President Nury Martinez (Council District 6), Marqueece Harris-Dawson (Council District 8), Mark Ridley-Thomas (Council District 10), Mitch O’Farrell (Council District 13), and Curren Price, Jr. (Council District 9) whose district includes the Vermont Square Branch. Current Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn also submitted a letter of support, as did former City Librarians Susan Kent and Fontayne Holmes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Library Commissioners dedicate the Vermont Square Branch Library in recognition of former Library Commissioner, City of Los Angeles Councilmember, Los Angeles Unified School District Board Member and long-time Los Angeles resident Rita Walters.

**7. Staff Presentation: New Americans Initiative (Taken out order)**

Madeleine Ildefonso, Managing Librarian, Office of Civics and Community Services, provided an overview of the New Americans Initiative. The initiative was launched in 2013 and grew out of the “Path to Citizenship” program that started in 2012. Path to Citizenship was a partnership between the Library and USCIS to help legal permanent residents become naturalized citizens, with a focus on access to materials and classes. The program was very successful, recognized nationally, and replicated by other library systems. In evaluating the program and talking to community members it

was established that there was a broader need for assistance and the program rebranded as the New Americans Initiative.

Ms. Ildefonso reported that pre-closure, the Library was coordinating services with seven nonprofits to provide immigration services assistance through the Library by scheduling appointments online, by phone, or in person, and to New Americans Centers at seven library locations. Every library has New Americans Welcome Station featuring citizenship study materials and Know Your Rights cards in 18 languages.

During the Library's physical closure, assistance is being provided through contracted partners via phone or Zoom. The Request For Quotation (RFQ) issued in 2020 received more responses than in 2017 and the Library looks forward to providing more language access. The 2020 RFQ allows partners to provide supportive services such as workforce development and the scope of services was expanded to include requests from the community. She said Immigration services are just the starting point for the Library's work with the immigrant community.

Since its inception in 2012, the Library has provided 8,575 service and citizenship programs and has assisted more than 72,554 applicants with their citizenship process.

### **Discussion**

Board President Cao stated that she considers this initiative one of the flagship programs of the library and appreciates the work staff has done in expanding it. She said it is great to know that people have been able to use the services during the pandemic.

## **8. Commissioners' Comments and Announcements**

### **• New Library Commissioner Arianne Edmonds**

Board President Cao thanked Ms. Arianne Edmonds for joining today's meeting and looks forward to having her officially join the Board Meeting once confirmed.

### **• Next Board Meeting Notice**

The next Regular Meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, April 22, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. via Teleconference.

## **9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.**

ATTEST:

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Bích Ngọc Cao  
President

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Raquel M. Borden  
Board Executive Assistant