



San Francisco Public Library

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

Minutes of the Special Meeting of July 9, 2020

(As approved at the regular meeting of August 20, 2020.)

The San Francisco Public Library Commission held a special meeting on July 9, 2020 virtually and telephonically pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order N-29-20 and the Sixteenth Supplement to Mayoral Proclamation Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency dated February 25, 2020. The purpose of the orders is to provide the safest environment for all persons consistent with San Francisco Department of Public Health Order of the Health Officer No. C19-07e and current public health recommendations, while allowing the public to observe and address the Commission.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Huang, Lee, Mall, Ono, Wardell-Ghirarduzzi and Wolf

Default Library Commission Secretary: Michael Lambert, City Librarian

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Xima Avalos, a children's librarian at the Mission Bay Branch said she was speaking not as an SFPL staff member but as a woman of color who grew up in a national city, a majority of black and brown town that was on the losing side of California's digital divide and was currently being ravaged by Covid-19. She said as the City and County of San Francisco was called upon to defund the police, she's asking the Library Commission to push the city to use these funds instead to increase internet connectivity and access to the city's disenfranchised communities and to support the library in the expansion of non-web based services such as telephone reference and books by mail.

Peter Warfield, Executive Director of Library Users Association, libraryusers2004@yahoo.com, said he'd appreciate if he could have been given a 30-second warning. He said the library's management had lost its way on a whole range of things that libraries were supposed to do and even ethically were required to do. He said as an example, the SFPL slogan, Free and Equal Access, the folks who were not on a computer and who did not have telephone notifications had gotten zero information from the library about what's going on in the library, about what's opened and what's not opened, etc. He said the phone call to participate in this meeting, although other agencies had set-up free local landlines or 800 numbers, it's a 408 area code which from his landline in San Francisco would cost 59 cents/minute plus tax to connect with the Library Commission meeting. He said with respect to the impact to the lack of paper notices, literally, people could have died, as a result of not knowing for example, that the library closed and the book

drops were closed. He said as an example, a conscientious library patron could return books, not knowing what's going on, figuring the book drops were opened, to find out they were not, then had to go home, take a crowded bus where they could be infected by the virus and ultimately die from it and it was all because they didn't know what the email people did know. He said the Digital Equity Strategic Plan of 2019-24 from the city showed that more than 100,000 people did not have basic access to the internet from home.

Harini, read a statement from Marc Robert Wong and Emilie Robert Wong:

We are speaking on behalf of TeenTechSF, a student-led nonprofit empowering the next generation of tech innovators and civic entrepreneurs. We are committed to equal access to tech for all teens.

TeenTechSF meets monthly at The Mix, SFPL's teen digital resource center and maker space.

The Mix is near and dear to our hearts because we were founding members of the SFPL Board of Advising Youth and intimately involved with the initiation and design of The Mix. We are so proud of the impact The Mix has had on the teen community bringing many students to the library as a vibrant hub for interaction, learning, and access to digital resources and skills.

Students will never think of the library as a boring, old-fashioned place. The Mix is one way the library will continue to grow and thrive connecting with future generations.

Like TeenTechSF, the Mix also provides equal access to digital resources and opportunities to a diverse population of at-risk and underserved groups that otherwise might not engage in digital activities.

The Mix is a critical space for students who may not otherwise have access to the resources available at SFPL to use tech tools and digital resources to sharpen their skills and turn their big ideas into reality.

During COVID-19, TeenTechSF has joined forces with two other student-led organizations, Curiosity Robotics and Masks for All to fabricate face shields using TinkerCAD and 3D printing and hand-sewn cloth face masks for distribution to hospital staff, first responders, essential workers, students, and the most vulnerable members of the community.

It would be amazing to have access to The Mix's 3D printers when not in use to teach students the basics of 3D printing and Computer Aided Design while they fabricate much needed PPE. We have access to a sewing machine that we would be able to use at The Mix to hold tutorials on how to sew cloth masks.

When it's safe for staff and students, we would like to use The Mix as our base of operations for carefully scheduled, small-scale workshops for students who are already in the same COVID-19 pod so that we can expand the number of volunteers available to make masks and face shields with materials supplied by the PayPal Gives grant.

COVID is surging in California, and we all need to do what we can to stop the spread. At TeenTechSF we say, "It's your ideas, not your age that matter." We are young, but we are ready to do what we can and would love to expand our partnership with The Mix and fight COVID-19 together!

Rayha emphasized how important The Mix was to TeenTechSF and to gain access to these materials to continue to educate and empower the future generation. She said it would be amazing to have access to The Mix's 3D printer when not in use to teach the students the basics of 3D printing and computer aided design while they fabricate the much-needed PPE. She said they would love to have access to a sewing machine that they would be able to use at The Mix to hold tutorials on how to sew cloth masks. She said as Covid was surging, they would love to expand their partnership with The Mix. She mentioned that TeenTechSF was a student non-profit empowering the next generation of tech entrepreneurs.

Luis Zuniga, a 3610 staff member of the public library said he met with one of their wonderful patrons who worked for Excelsior Works. He said the patron pointed out how the community had been impacted by the lack of access that the underserved community had suffered with respect to the lack of service from the public library. Right now, even if SFPL was in the process of opening up for curbside pick-up, there appeared to be no contingencies to serve this community which might not have remote access connectivity. He said he mentioned to the patron that the union was not part of the discussions to reopen the library. He said these patrons depended on the library and he hoped that SFPL as pillars of the community, could bring the services back to them with enough speed which they deserved.

Edward Hasbrouck, a longtime San Francisco resident and author said he spoke at the December 2019 meeting about the harm being done to authors by the practices endorsed by the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), making and distribution of digital copies without permission and in violation of authors' copyrights by the Internet Archive under the misleading label of Controlled Digital Lending. He said Mr. Lambert and Ms. Cocking were kind enough to meet with him. He said after that meeting, they said they would need to consult with the Internet Archive to get answers to questions and issues that he had raised, but nothing further had happened. He said he understood and appreciated that most of this meeting was about the plans for when and if it became possible when the library would reopen, but it's also important to know that during this pandemic, the Internet Archive had exploited the pandemic as a pretext for greatly expanding their attack on authors' rights and livelihoods and had continued to use the endorsement of the SFPL to lend greater legitimacy to its activities. He said he hoped the Library Commission would begin a robust thorough debate discussion whether to continue to endorse the attack on writers in San Francisco and around the world who were being impacted by these practices that SFPL had endorsed and which were actually being expanded.

Charlene, a 3602 at the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) said the information that she's able to gather was that the management of the affairs of the library seemed to be prioritizing the disaster service work over serving our community as a library. She said following with the comments about Excelsior, it was a great example of SFPL not serving the community as a library. Her second comment was about the union not being invited to the table around the DSW work or the opening of the library. She said there had been a lot of hardship on library workers who were not able to do the DSW type work and there had been a lot of issues in terms of the library, labor and the community.

An anonymous caller said he's very concerned with the divide SFPL was promoting against its own policies in the memo that Michael Lambert issued early this year to provide for equal access of information to those without internet and by way of paper notices which SFPL was failing to provide. Also, he was very concerned about the lack of consultation with the employees of the library about the reopening. He said the library had an obligation to provide an accountability with any item that was returned; there must be a receipt to prove that an item was returned so there could be no misunderstanding or possible legal action if an item got lost or stolen. He said these were legal issues that needed to be addressed before reopening even for curbside service. He was concerned with the digital divide that the library was promoting which was bound or could result in a legal action by the court, to treat all patrons with the same free and equal access. He said he's protesting that the line being used for the Library Commission meeting should have been a toll-free phone line and

not a toll line. He said it's a disgrace and revealed more of SFPL's illegal practice of discriminating against low income seniors and the disabled who didn't have access to toll free phone lines. He said he hoped issues would be addressed seriously and not have to go to another level of action with the government to see that SFPL was doing its job.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 SFPL REOPENING PLAN

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, presented an overview of SFPL's plan to resume limited library services via its contact free service model that's called SFPL To Go, which would allow to meet the critical needs in the community for access to physical collections and resume circulation of physical items through holds pick-up at select SFPL locations. His presentation covered: the library's reopening plan developed by the Public Services chiefs that would align with the five progress indicators developed by the Department of Public Health; the overview of the Phased Restoration of Library Services; the optimal public service locations and making plans to ensure staff work spaces conformed with the city's guidance for workplace safety and social distancing during the COVID emergency; prioritizing equity, geographic distribution and facility layout; the aspiration to reopen half of the library system or 14 of the 28 library locations in the initial Phase 2 of SFPL To Go; an overview of hours and days at the SFPL To Go locations; contact-free service details; the floorplan for pick-up service at the Main Library at the Larkin Street entrance; the flow of materials behind-the-scenes to prepare them for pick-up at the front door of the Excelsior Branch Library; safety guidelines developed by library staff for staff and patrons; staff workgroup relying heavily on scientific research and data in developing the safe materials handling guidelines; the learnings from the Realm Study; the convening of frontline staff to work together with library administration to help review SFPL's reopening plans.

Explanatory documents: [City Librarian Memo July 6, 2020 – Phased Reopening for Library Services](#); [Phased Reopening Plan](#); [Main Library – Site Specific Health & Safety Plan](#); [Excelsior Branch Library – Site Specific Health & Safety Plan](#); [City Offices Safety Protocol](#); [SFPL To Go Presentation](#)

Public Comment

Ayaan Gates-Williams, Library Technical Assistant at the Merced Branch shared the following statement on behalf of the labor team re-entry workgroup of the San Francisco Public Library:

On Monday July 6, 2020, City Librarian Michael Lambert made public a document with our names attached to it that we did not review. The document, intended for presentation at the Library Commission meeting this week, describes what may be the best intentions of SFPL To Go. However, we cannot in good conscience vouch for their implementation or even say that we see a path forward to achieve them at this point. In fact, the presentation epitomizes how this entire venture was a fait accompli before we were invited to participate.

For this reason, the members of our workgroup including Ayaan Gates-Williams, Bix Warden, Doriene Kilzer-Hill, Nadia Volny, Nzugu Kitenge, Ofelia Moran, and Ruben Juarez do not consent to the use of our names in management's presentation. We ask that you remove our names from any documents submitted to the Library Commission and/or shared with library staff and the public in regard to SFPL To Go.

We initially formed this workgroup to represent the voices of hundreds of our colleagues who have not had an avenue to express their concerns or make recommendations for keeping our workplace safe as we reopen during a pandemic. The most important issues for our colleagues are staffing and health and safety. We hoped to work collaboratively toward consensus with library management, but we have not yet had a chance to make those voices heard.

The Labor Team's Re-entry Workgroup is ready and eager to resume work with the

management team once our requests are met to address the change in working conditions brought on by the pandemic. Our workers are relying on us to bring them back to worksafely and the workgroup has much to offer with respect to the actual work that will be performed at each location.

Judy Beck, a library retiree who's active in the union in the retiree chapter said that she hoped the Library Commission would take note that this iteration of library management, either it was thinking it's above the law or it's ignorant of the law, meaning it's either criminal or unfit. She said whichever was true, this management was poorly serving the library system in these disastrous times when skill and awareness were much needed as possible. She said management had its administrative strength and the workers had their detailed knowledge and for management to forego that knowledge and falsely claim that it had obtained it through "collaboration" was to recklessly, needlessly put library users and employees at risk. She said since day one of shelter in place, library workers had asked for seat at the table so their eyes, ears and voices could contribute to the wise decisions in this abnormal, deadly situation, not only were they put off over and over, but their union representative, also a major stakeholder and knowledge source was denied her legal participation. She said the reopening committee was denied a walkthrough of the Main to determine and guide the health and safety conditions there and to spot possible problems. She asked why management was playing this awful power game when lives were at stake. She said instead of working collaboratively in good faith, these inept and uncaring managers were skirting the concerns and valuable health of the thoughtful members of the reopening committee.

An anonymous caller said that as a dedicated patron and lover of the library, the last two comments from library employees and a former employee were grave concerns to him. He said he mentioned in an earlier comment that patrons must be provided with a proof of their returned items and if it's not done, the library was putting itself into a much worse legal territory.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Lee commended the reopening committee for a comprehensive, thoughtful, and well-researched presentation. Commissioner Lee asked the following questions:

- 1) If the virus reproduction rate would go up and DSW staff would not be able to come back, would that impact the roll-out of the reopening?

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, said the city was still very much in a shelter in place and operating under public health emergency orders, and the city's highest priorities included the emergency response, sheltering and feeding vulnerable populations and preparing for the medical surge. He said absolutely, the city's need for Disaster Service Workers (DSW) could impact ultimately how much the library was able to scale its reopening. He said they had excellent discussions with the city's Department of Human Resources and they're working collaboratively with them to try to strike the right balance of allowing to recall the personnel that were needed for SFPL To Go sites and continue supporting the city's needs for Disaster Service Workers.

- 2) If there's a staff shortage, did it mean that some branches would not be opened?

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, said the reopening plan's phased approach was fluid and contingent upon a lot of variables that were outside of the control of library management. He said they had a plan for standing up half of the library system. He said one of the additional constraints in opening SFPL To Go locations was the finite amount of security and custodial capacities that SFPL had and they were aspiring to open up as many locations as they could in this initial Phase 2 and then they could reevaluate what additional capacity they might have at their disposal and continue to bring additional branch libraries online, staffing capacity permitting. He clarified that right now, the focus was standing up the Main Library and Excelsior as they continued to seek approval for additional branch library locations. He said the exact number and locations were still to be determined depending on how much staffing capacity they could recall from Disaster Service Worker

activations. He said the plan that they developed was aspirational and contingent upon their ability to staff up these locations.

- 3) A couple of comments from the public about people not having phone line or internet access, would a notice be sent to them about the availability of curbside pick-up?

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships (CPP), said they recently sent out a notice to patrons who didn't have email listed in their accounts or on the print receiving patrons, a letter was sent to them translated into four languages that explained where SFPL was now and how SFPL was working towards reopening. She said once SFPL had the SFPL To Go service in place, they would again message those patrons with information on how to access materials and once people started using phone service or different services to request things, they would go back to receiving their notice by mail indicating that their holds were available for them to pick-up.

- 4) How would staff be protected from people who do not comply with facial covering?

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, said that before and during the pandemic, the health and safety of library workers was the top priority and the SFPL To Go service model had accounted for the health and safety of library staff. He said the library patrons would not be able to enter the building; it would essentially be a front door grab and go, take out service akin to what's seen on retail. He thanked the generosity of the Friends and Foundation of the SFPL because SFPL was able to acquire sneeze guards (sturdy glass barriers) that could be stationed on the tables where staff would be placing the bags of items for pick-up. He said patrons would be queued up outside the building, library security would be present to help ensure the physical distancing and enforce the public's requirement to have facial covering.

Commissioner Ono said she wanted to thank all the staff at SFPL for everything they'd been doing during this closure and this crisis and those involved in developing all the plans and the preparation for SFPL To Go and reopening. She said staff made her proud to be part of the Library Commission and the SFPL. She said the plans were very thorough, well-thought out, easy to understand, met the needs of all the patrons' comments that were submitted and she's glad to hear that they had been approved. She said she's glad to see there were plans to make sure that there were reopenings in all of the supervisorial districts. She said she heard that there would be a meet and confer and she hoped that it would go well. Commissioner Ono asked the following questions:

- 1) The notices that were sent out in four languages and what those four languages were and also how the Russian population in some of the branches would get those notices?

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships (CPP), said SFPL was required by the city's Language Access Ordinance to send out the notices in Chinese, Spanish, Filipino and English, the city's required translation languages for language isolation. She said she'd make sure that notices would also get translated in Russian.

- 2) Why was the bookmobile not part of any of the initial phases of reopening?

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, said because of the limited square footage on the bookmobiles, they didn't feel it would be safe to have patrons inside the bookmobile at the same time as the library staff. He said that bookmobiles might have some utility in going to neighborhoods without physical access to a library and setting up some tabling outside of the bookmobiles to distribute library materials. He said the bookmobiles were still being used as mobile outreach vehicles that they were, to try to get physical books in the hands of the residents.

Commissioner Ono said she appreciated all of the care that's being taken for both staff and the patrons to make sure that everyone was safe and protected during this reopening.

Commissioner Huang had no questions and thanked the library staff, leadership and management for plans for curbside pick-up; that it's finally approved. He said that these were incredibly difficult times but in these moments, it's specially important for everyone to zoom out and try to maintain the same perspective. He said it's important to remember that the Library Commission, library staff, and library leadership were all on the same team, and the notion that anyone of these parties was "out to get another party" was deeply concerning to him. He said he didn't think it's true and anybody should not think it's true. He said one of his personal privileges and joys of serving on the Library Commission was that he's surrounded by people who were interested in serving the public. He said that when they'd think about these plans and the actions of certain people and the decisions that they had made, he encouraged everyone to weigh in their perspective and know that everybody had a hard job right now and everybody had to balance many, many factors. He cited as an example the public comments that were published for this meeting. One side of the public was clamoring for curbside pick-up and to reopen the library as soon as possible. On the other hand, some other parties wanted to slow down the process. He said everybody had a hard job to do and trusted in management's abilities that they were trying to balance as best as they could and make the best decisions as they could. He said he didn't think anybody was out there to cause any direct harm to anyone. He said it's a very complex situation and all parties involved had been doing their best.

Commissioner Wolf acknowledged and thanked the team for thinking about the socio-economic impact and issues about the communities around the city and what they needed and who needed to be served as a priority. She agreed with Commissioner Huang that it's been an incredibly complicated and delicate balancing act to meet these very strict requirements for staff's safety while also responding to the incredible desire and need of the community for having their library back. She said that all best plans of action often needed to be reexamined once they're put into place. She wanted to be sure that there's a very robust procedure in place or processes to constantly re-evaluate how things were going in a regular way to make sure that the teams in different branches could pivot and could readdress procedures and processes that would meet the needs of these communities; because there would necessarily be adjustments that were needed to be made to continue to balance in keeping the staff safe and providing essential services to the community.

Commissioner Mall said she concurred with her fellow commissioners and basically agreed with everything everyone had said. She said right now, what's most important for the public was that anyone who's involved in the communications, like City Librarian Michael Lambert and CPP Chief Michelle Jeffers, should understand that the public had felt so whipsawed about instructions. She said it's really clear that people were confused and had a million questions which were causing more anxiety and more confusion, and they just wanted to be able to leave the library with something in their hands. She said people were raw from all the governmental proclamations. Commissioner Mall had a couple of questions:

- 1) How many people got a hard copy letter in those four languages about what's happening?

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships (CPP), answered approximately 10,000 people who didn't have email addresses associated with their library accounts and received only print notices.

- 2) How long the lag time would be between the time people made a request and from the time they could pick-up a book?

Michael Lambert, City Librarian, said it all depended on a few factors, i.e., whether the book was on the shelf; whether the book was already checked out and had scores of people waiting to get their hands on it; it could be as mundane as the item was in the book drop and had to sit for 72 hours before it could be scanned in and the request could be reactivated. He said on average in the best-case scenario, accounting for five-day a week service in the branches, and seven-day a week

service in the Main, it could take a few days. He said one thing he learned about the library staff was that they were continuously improving and streamlining, looking for efficiencies and processes and they're extremely good at their jobs. He said he had no doubt that after launching this service, staff would pick up speed and how they operate and streamline workflows. He asked for the public's patience as this service would be a new frontier for the library. He said for some additional perspective, the library would probably spend a week just checking in stuff and activities needed to be phased such that returns were processed and hold requests were fulfilled for the thousands of items that had been sitting on the shelves since March, waiting to be picked up.

Commissioner Mall said the City Librarian's task was herculean and sounded completely daunting. She said she's sure that the City Librarian and the staff were up to the job.

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships (CPP), clarified the 10,000 patrons were those who didn't have email addresses or other notification method and had used the library in the last three years. She said in addition to the print notices, the library sent out 300,000 emails to those patrons that had email addresses.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JUNE 18, 2020 COMMISSION MEETING

Public Comment

Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association @ libraryusers2004@yahoo.com, said he's sorry to say that his comment was completely overlooked on the previous item. He said the telephone method of alerting that someone wanted to be considered for making public comment was a mess because there's noise, there's no visual cue, and when *3 was pressed, some kind of an announcement could be heard, it's very hard to understand or impossible when other people were talking. He said if there was any consideration for the public and its right to public comment, a moment would be given and you would say, "Is there any more public comment, there's nobody else on the list," and then somebody in that pause could press *3. He said, instead, you zipped along and managed to exclude him who you knew was very interested in this issue. With respect to the minutes, the first Item 1 General Public Comment, he said that for these people, the ones without internet access, they had absolutely no service with one exception. He said leaving that out made no sense. On Item 3, he said he asked for a 30-second warning and not a 30-minute warning. He said he requested that speakers be announced and page numbers be provided. On the City Librarian's Report, he said SFPL needed to focus on those without internet access so they wouldn't be left behind not fall behind. With respect to the opening on the public comment that he made on the reopening plan, he thought he said there was a serious problem with the overlooking of librarians and the public being participants, and whole range of items like non-circulating reference materials, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, history room materials, etc.

An anonymous caller said he agreed with everything that Mr. Warfield had said. He said unfortunately, the library staff had shown enormous contempt and disregard for the thousands of them who didn't have internet access and they needed the library to come to terms with that fact. He said library staff were paid and employed to serve all San Franciscans regardless of income or ethnic status or any other status. He said he didn't think the staff had addressed a crucial question with regard to the plan to reopen the library. He said If a patron returned an item, the patron was legally entitled to prove that they returned the item, like a piece of paper or a receipt. He said he had many items out that he'd like to return and he'd like to know when he could do it and when he could get proofs that he returned them and those questions needed to be addressed sooner or later, and sooner would be much preferred. He wished the library staff good luck and he said he appreciated their efforts to fix a very broken system.

Motion: By Commissioner Wolf, seconded by Commissioner Mall to approve the [Minutes of June 18, 2020 Commission Meeting](#).

Action: AYES: 6-0: (Huang, Lee, Mall, Ono, Wolf and Wardell-Ghirarduzzi)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 ADJOURNMENT

Public Comment

Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association, libraryusers2004@yahoo.com, said he said it before and he would say it again. This time, he said he had a little bit to add to the comment that he thought the Library Commission meeting should not end with continued disenfranchised method every commissioner and all the people that the commissioners represented, without insisting that there would be an item on the agenda which would be called new business and that would be before adjournment. And the explanation for that item was, this item was to allow commissioners to introduce new agenda items for consideration.

Luis Zuniga, a 3610 at the Public Library, said he understood the situation was very complicated and fluid. He said that library staff were innovative, resilient and imaginative but they also needed the support of management and the union's representation. He said in some ways, they would get lambasted by some patrons, but they would still remain committed. He said it's a vocation for most of them, and they're proud to be working at the public library, a tradition that had been in place in America since Ben Franklin. He said the library staff would do their duty but they needed management's support and for management to include staff in the discussion so they might reopen with speed, efficiency and safety.

Motion: By Commissioner Mall, seconded by Commissioner Ono to adjourn the special meeting of July 9, 2020.

Action: AYES 6-0: (Huang, Lee, Mall, Ono, Wolf and Wardell-Ghirarduzzi)

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Almer Castillo
Executive Assistant

Explanatory documents: Copies of listed explanatory documents are available as follows: (1) from the commission secretary/custodian of records, 6th floor, Main Library; (2) in the rear of Koret Auditorium immediately prior to, and during, the meeting; and (3), to the extent possible, on the Public Library's website <http://sfpl.org>. Additional materials not listed as explanatory documents on this agenda, if any, that are distributed to library commissioners prior to or during the meeting in connection with any agenda item will be available to the public for inspection and copying in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.1 and Sunshine Ordinance Sections 67.9, 67.28(b), and 67.28(d).