

Newport Public Library
Board of Trustees
Special Meeting
January 29, 2014 at 4:30 pm
Rotary Board Room
Minutes

1. Call to order:

Robin Skuncik Jones, President of the Newport Public Library Board of Trustees, called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm in the Rotary Room of the Newport Public Library.

Attendance:

Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, David Reed and Sheila Sulentic

Excused:

Jennifer Booth, Girard Galvin and Jessica Walsh

2. Closed Session:

Robin Skuncik Jones made a motion, pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws, Section 42-46-5(a)(2), that this Board of Trustees convene into executive session to discuss litigation and threatened litigation, including the following: (1) Newport Public Library, ULP-6125 (Rhode Island State Labor Relations Board); (2) Newport Public Library, ULP-6126 (Rhode Island State Labor Relations Board) and; (3) Newport Public Library, Case No. EE-3733(Rhode Island State Labor Relations Board).

The motion was seconded and a vote was taken.

Roll Call: Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, David Reed and Sheila Sulentic voted to approve the motion. There were no votes against. The vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

Reconvene in open session:

Robin Skuncik Jones made a motion to seal the executive session minutes.

The motion was seconded and a vote was taken.

Roll Call: Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, David Reed and Sheila Sulentic voted to approve the motion. There were no votes against. The vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

3. Open Session - Personnel Matter – Disciplinary Hearing

Robin Skuncik Jones read a statement concerning the next agenda item. The matter concerns the grievance/dismissal hearing of library employee Paula Dugan. Ms. Dugan requested a hearing before the Board of Trustees, in accordance with Library policy. Ms. Skuncik Jones noted that the Board intended to have this portion of the meeting held in executive session so that the individual's job performance and any other related issues would remain private. However, when the Library Director notified the individual of her right to have all or part of the meeting held in

open session, the individual requested that the hearing be held in open session. The Board respected her wishes and began the dismissal hearing in open session.

The procedures for this hearing were read. Library Director Regina Slezak would be given the opportunity to make a statement to the Board explaining her recommendation of dismissal. Next, Ms. Dugan will be given the opportunity to make her statement to the Board in response to the Library Director's recommendation, either on her own behalf or through legal counsel.

The Library Director will be allowed to make a rebuttal statement as will Ms. Dugan. After both parties have had the opportunity to be heard, the Board will deliberate and make a decision on whether or not to uphold the Director's recommendation of dismissal and will follow up any decision made with a written decision.

Statement by Library Director Regina Slezak:

Regina Slezak read her statement. The statement outlined the reasons for dismissal that included insubordination and continued use of Library resources for personal business. Other instances discussed included personal use of library property, fiscal mismanagement and lack of supervisory skills. The case was documented by memos and emails as well as performance evaluations. Ms. Slezak also discussed Ms. Dugan's prior probation.

Statement by Paula Dugan:

Paula Dugan read her statement. She outlined her achievements while managing the Children's Department of the library but denied receiving any warnings or probationary measures. Ms. Dugan stated that she is being singled out due to her interest in joining a union.

Ms. Dugan presented two letters of support along with two emails and one letter from staff members. She also brought a staff witness who spoke on her behalf. Izabella Casselman works 3 hours per week in the Children's Department. She stated that Library Director Slezak had helped her resolve issues involving Ms. Dugan. She stated that the Children's Department has grown under Ms. Dugan's management and tenure and asserted that Ms. Dugan was being singled out for her union activity.

A short recess was taken before the rebuttal process.

Attorney Stacy Collier, representing library administration, gave the rebuttal statement on behalf of Regina Slezak. She stated that neither the number and quality of programs, being asked to speak at the NELA Conference, nor the alleged union organization activity factored into Ms. Slezak's dismissal recommendation. The reasons for the recommended dismissal were insubordination related to the NELA conference and continued use of Library resources for personal business after being warned in the past. She also stated that the union issue is "a red herring" as the process for recommending dismissal began in October 2013 before the Library had knowledge of any union organizing activity and that the timing of the actual recommendation was delayed because the library was trying to be fair and give her the due process required by policy.

Regina Slezak added that Ms. Dugan's staff deserves some credit for any success in the Children's Department.

Attorney Chris Cobleigh, representing Ms. Dugan, gave the rebuttal statement on behalf of Paula Dugan. He cited the library's Working Conditions policy, stating "serious cause" being a reason for dismissal. He stated that Ms. Dugan complied with the Library Director's instructions concerning the conference and may have done personal work on her off desk time. He stated that she was not formally disciplined or warned that these causes may result in the loss of her job so there was no proof of "serious cause".

Paula Dugan stated in rebuttal that she was unaware of the policy that states authorization by the Library Director is needed to attend outside activities. She also asked to respond to all the allegations in the complaint letter dated November 22, 2013 as she had only concentrated on responding to the most recent charges.

After both parties had completed their statements, the Library Director, Stacy Collier, Paula Dugan and Chris Cobleigh left the Rotary Board Room.

Robin Skuncik Jones made a motion, pursuant to Section 42-46-5(a)(1) of the Rhode Island General Laws, for the Board of Trustees to convene into executive session for a personnel matter (disciplinary hearing deliberation), which may involve discussions of the job performance and/or character of an individual. Ms. Skuncik Jones stated that the individual had been notified in writing prior to the hearing that this Board intended to convene into executive session for this personnel matter, and that it may involve discussions of the individual's job performance or character. Initially, the individual requested to have this discussion take place in open session. However, the individual, through her legal counsel, permitted the Board to conclude the discussions related to this personnel matter in executive session.

The motion was seconded and a vote was taken.

Roll Call: Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, David Reed and Sheila Sulentic voted to approve the motion. There were no votes against. The vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

Reconvene in open session.

Robin Skuncik Jones made a motion to seal the executive session minutes.

The motion was seconded and a vote was taken.

Roll Call: Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, David Reed and Sheila Sulentic voted to approve the motion. There were no votes against. The vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

Robin Skuncik Jones immediately informed those in attendance that a vote was taken in executive session to uphold the recommendation of the Library Director to dismiss Paula Dugan from the employ of the Newport Public Library for the reasons set forth in the Director's

November 22, 2013 letter and those reasons stated at today's hearing; to direct the Library's legal counsel to draft a written decision consistent with the Board's decision, and; to authorize the Board's President to sign and issue that decision on behalf of this Board.

Ms. Skuncik Jones reported that Kathy Boyd, Lynn Ceglie, Michael Dawson, Angel Gonzalez, David Gordon, Pamela Humphreys, Robin Skuncik Jones, Linda Martin, Susan McCoy, and David Reed voted to approve the motion. Sheila Sulentic abstained from voting. There were ten votes for, zero votes against and one abstaining vote. The motion carried.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The hearing adjourned at 7:00 pm.