

**INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
JULY 26, 2021**

The Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Board met in person at the Library Services Center, 2450 North Meridian Street, and electronically via Zoom on Monday, July 26, 2021 at 6:35 p.m., pursuant to notice given in accordance with the rules of the Board.

1. Call To Order

Judge Salinas called the meeting to order. Mr. Biederman acted as Secretary.

2. Roll Call

Members present in person and electronically: Mr. Biederman, Mr. Bigsbee, Dr. Murtadha, Ms. Payne, Rev. Robinson, Judge Salinas and Ms. Tribble.

Members absent: None.

3. Public Comment and Communications

a. Public Comment

The Public was invited to the Board Meeting.

Judge Salinas shared that at every Library Board meeting we open with a time for public comment. We welcome feedback from the public about our Indianapolis Libraries, and this is a time when the public may address the Library Board. If there are several of you representing the same group, please select a spokesperson. Please do not repeat the same comments someone else has offered. Please note also that this public comment time is not the appropriate forum for commenting on matters related to alleged employee misconduct. Any such matters should be brought promptly to the attention of the Library CEO or the Human Resources Department where matters can be properly addressed in compliance with established Library policies and procedures. **A FIVE-MINUTE LIMIT WILL BE ALLOWED FOR EACH SPEAKER. EACH SPEAKER SHOULD GIVE THEIR NAME AND THEIR ADDRESS.**

At this time, Mahasin Ameen, a former employee who worked with the Library for 14 years, addressed the Board. Most recently, she worked with the Google Chromebook computers and Wi-Fi hot spots at the Martindale-Brightwood branch. She noted that it took several months before she was paid for the work she did over

a six-month period on this project. She then shared an experience with a white supervisor who questioned her qualifications and then congratulated a white employee for passing a drug test. She concluded by noting that a lot needs to be done.

Mollie Beaumont, a Public Services Librarian at IndyPL, spoke to the Board. She referenced a letter that the Library's CEO Jackie Nytes sent that said "When I talk about the Library and the work we are doing, I am speaking not only for myself but for all of us because it takes every single one of us working together to combat the racist behaviors and attitudes." Ms. Beaumont said it was not acceptable to speak for marginalized communities. She mentioned that the Library is hiring a new Diversity and Inclusion Officer and noted that the job description was modified to include certain degree and certification requirements which she felt would limit applicants. She expressed her feelings about previous training sessions regarding racial issues, noting that she felt the "Navigating Difference" training that staff attended was toxic and that training offered through IPS seemed healthier.

Derek Ford, a teacher and patron who lives near Central Library, mentioned that he is angered by the non-response of leadership with regard to accountability and noted that while diversity and equity training sessions are not bad, they will not solve all of these issues. He said that the response has shown that you can be fired for challenging authority figures and that we need to address the root structural problems so that the Library is a place the community is proud of.

Sharon Cruz, an Indianapolis resident and Library patron, provided the following statement:

My name is Sharon Cruz and I am a grateful patron of the Indianapolis Public Library system, and I am here in support of the workers' calls for CEO Jackie Nytes and Board President Judge Jose Salinas to resign from their positions.

I grew up exploring new worlds thanks to the window that the Southport Library granted me back in the late 90s: the summer reading program. I read voraciously. Not just YA fiction, like RL Stine's Fear Street and Nancy Drew mysteries, and classics like Little Women and Pride & Prejudice, but more contemporary authors like Mary Higgins Clark. I worked my way through those fiction stacks like a girl with a mission. And for all my reading, I never once was able to find any books that might help me connect with my identity as a hyphenated American. I never once saw any brown girls starring in my stories, or clues to how to connect with my own heritage. I literally had to move away to a larger city to learn the vocabulary to describe my own experiences. To be clear, this is no one's fault. My parents are immigrants and just wanted me to succeed, so they were fine with me simply assimilating and avoiding talking about race. But now that we know better--now that we know that casual racism, even as a joke, is harmful, that systemic racism and implicit bias exist in us all, and that not talking about a problem doesn't make it go away--now that we know better, we must do better.

This organization must be prepared to guide young minds through the challenges of the twenty-first century, and this leadership is clearly not even equipped to handle the vestiges of the twentieth century.

The library workers have clearly attempted to bring their concerns to the attention of leadership and were literally silenced. At what point should we as taxpayers put our collective foot down on behalf of those we rely on to keep our libraries running?

I believe that Judge Salinas and CEO Nytes are good people who have had the best of intentions, but their opportunity to address this appropriately as leaders has passed. If we are so afraid of what a former employee will say on the record that we would literally prevent her from being heard, we have severely mishandled this issue.

The response of leadership to this outcry has been callous and embarrassing to our community. Our city must be better than this, and this means ensuring that we're all educated on the difficult things to talk about, like how racism has shaped our society. When leaders cannot even recognize their own biases, they cannot lead this organization through the difficult conversations about these topics. Judge Salinas and CEO Jackie Nytes must step down.

Stephen Lane, a Special Collections Librarian at IndyPL, spoke at this time. He talked about the history of the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library, including times in the 1930s and 1940s when white librarians banned and limited Black children from branches they considered white branches. He also shared the story of Lillian Haydon Childress Hall, the first professionally trained African American librarian in Indiana and the first African American to graduate from the Indiana State Library school. He noted that there is no wing named after Hall in our system and that we need to create a system where every worker is valued.

Michael Torres, IndyPL staff member and President of the Library's Union, AFSCME Local 3395, read the following statement to the Board:

We deserve a workplace where staff can come to work and be their authentic selves so we can service the community fully and honestly. These issues of racism and bias that were brought to our attention are causing an unhealthy and toxic work environment. When staff are spending time on just getting through the work day because of these experiences it prevents us from providing our community the service they deserve. We are struggling.

Seven people have come forward with their racist experiences of bias, homophobia, xenophobia and sexism. Five articles and two op-ed pieces have been written, and a national Library periodical has contacted me and others about the same issues. In addition, the union is about to launch an anonymous incident reporting form and an exit interview survey where staff could report their experiences in order to document their experiences for those who are apprehensive to speak out or come forward for fear of retaliation or in case they want to return. This is not ending.

Just this weekend a leaked email appeared to be written by our CEO is asking for Black Leaders to write letters of support. It was unleashed and spread on social media. After reading the CEO call these testimonies of racism and bias, which took tremendous courage to speak about, "personal disagreements" and "not accurate" we realized that our leader still does not fully understand what is

happening in spite of the long lists of things she has done or put in place to address these issues. What is your quota of testimonies you need before you believe us?

I have spoken to members of our Latino community and they were disappointed in our board president's behavior. An elected judge should not be silencing anyone bringing testimony forward as a Trustee or as a judge. We do have free speech in America last time we checked.

Therefore, due to urgency of recent events the union sent an invitation to all members to discuss what we thought should happen next. Because we feel the CEO appears to be in denial in her part of what is happening to our library we collectively agreed she should step aside. Our thriving library system needs to begin healing and we do not believe it can happen with the current CEO Jackie Nytes and current board president Jose Salinas in charge. Once this occurs we will work with community and staff to create the kind of leadership we believe would best suit this community so we can go back to being the beacon of service we know have been and can be again.

*Respectfully,
AFSCME Local 3395-Indy Library Workers*

Connie Thompson, a patron from the West Perry Branch, talked about a leaked email where Nytes asked Black community leaders to sign a letter of support of herself, the Board, and the Library. The speaker said that the people who lead the Library should look like and represent Bree Flannelly and other patrons.

Doris Jones, an IndyPL patron, spoke to the Board. She shared a story about visiting the Irvington branch with her daughter. As the only Black family inside the branch at the time, she felt her daughter was targeted by employees for making noise while white children were ignored. She noted that many patrons come to the Library when they don't have a computer or printer at home and might be looking for a job, and should be treated with respect.

b. Dear CEO Letters and Responses

Judge Salinas then asked for any comments received from patrons via the Library's website to be read at tonight's meeting.

Comments were read as follows:

Kathryn Palmer – *I just wanted to say that the lending library installation that used to be on the circle was something that was so amazing. My daughter and I always looked forward to the treasures we would find and be excited when we saw the books we contributed had been borrowed. That program was so neat and gave my daughter a feeling of connection to the library by having an association within the community. Thank you.*

Lori Leumont – *I'm writing to ask the Board to explain what they're going to do about the CEO's continuing racism. Writing an email recruiting Black people to speak up for her is so completely not ok. I've been a long-time patron and Library supporter but I can't support these actions or the way they've treated Black staff*

and patrons, I'm asking that Jackie Nytes resign as CEO so the Library can hire a Black woman to run the Library properly.

It was announced that a letter had been received from patron Todd Grooten but was too long to be read during this Public Comment section. It has been shared with the Board and will be attached to the Minutes of this meeting as "Attachment A" and will be available for the public to read as part of the Board packet on the Library's website.

After the public comment section concluded, Dr. Murtadha assured the audience that the Board and the Library are working toward change. She said careful work must be done, and that we are going to have a Climate Improvement Process. She thanked each speaker for sharing, noting that it takes courage to speak up and share your truth.

- c. **Correspondence** for the Board's general information was distributed.

4. Approval Of Minutes: Executive Session, Regular and Special Meetings

a. Special Meeting, June 23, 2021

The minutes from the Special Meeting held June 23, 2021 had been distributed to the Board.

The minutes were approved on the motion of Mr. Bigsbee, seconded by Ms. Tribble, and the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

b. Regular Meeting, June 28, 2021

The minutes from the Regular Meeting held June 28, 2021 had been distributed to the Board.

The minutes were approved on the motion of Mr. Bigsbee, seconded by Mr. Biederman, and the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

COMMITTEE REPORTS

5. Finance Committee (Patricia A. Payne, Chair; Raymond Biederman, Hope C. Tribble)

a. **Report of the Treasurer – June 2021**

Ije Dike-Young, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the Report of the Treasurer that had been distributed to the Board.

She advised that as of June 2021, the Library's year-to-date revenue is approximately \$25.1 million and our year-to-date expenses are \$20.1 million.

Ms. Payne made the motion, which was seconded by Dr. Murtadha, that the Report of the Treasurer be filed for audit.

The Report of the Treasurer was approved for filing for audit on the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

b. **Briefing Report – 2022 Proposed Budget**

Ms. Dike-Young reviewed the proposed 2022 Budget. She advised that the total proposed 2022 Budget is \$71.7 million compared to the 2021 Budget of \$69.8 million. The projected Budget and estimated revenues for the Operating Fund are still in draft form. She advised that there might be some changes made before the upcoming Public Hearing which is scheduled for August 10, 2021. The largest part of the Budget continues to be salaries and benefits. The planned overall increase in the preliminary Budget for salaries and benefits is approximately 5.7%, including an assumed salary increase for 2022 of 2%.

Ms. Dike-Young advised that she will seek Board approval of the 2022 Budget at the August 23, 2021 Board Meeting.

Dr. Murtadha commented that the wellness budget should take into account mental health as well as the physical health of Library employees.

Mr. Bigsbee inquired how many employees will be impacted by raising the Library's minimum salary to \$15 per hour.

Ms. Dike-Young responded that she will research that information and get back to Mr. Bigsbee.

c. **Resolution 26 – 2021 (Liability Insurance for Policy Period 2021 – 2022)**

Ms. Dike-Young shared information concerning the Library's liability insurance. She mentioned that the Library prefers to renew its coverage with its primary current insurance carrier, namely, Travelers Insurance Group, for the 2021 – 2022 renewal period as they have been determined to provide the most cost-effective coverage.

After full discussion and careful consideration of Resolution 26 – 2021, the resolution was adopted on the motion of Ms. Payne, and seconded by Ms. Tribble, to approve Resolution 26 – 2021, the Liability Insurance for Policy Period 2021 – 2022.

Resolution 26 – 2021 was approved on the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

The resolution is appended to, and made a part of, these minutes.

d. **Resolution 27 – 2021** (Establishing Self-Insurance Fund)

Ms. Dike-Young noted that the Self-Insurance Fund was being established because the Library funds its group health costs through a self-insurance process that is administered by Anthem. Currently, these costs are paid from the Operating Fund. Library management is proposing establishing a self-insurance fund to account for the premiums and costs. The long-term goal of this Fund is to increase the Fund Balance which will act as a reserve to stabilize premium costs for employees.

After full discussion and careful consideration of Resolution 27 – 2021, the resolution was adopted on the motion of Ms. Payne, and seconded by Ms. Tribble, to approve Resolution 27 – 2021, Establishing Self-Insurance Fund.

Resolution 27 – 2021 was approved on the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

The resolution is appended to, and made a part of, these minutes.

e. **Resolution 28 – 2021** (Transfers Between Accounts and Classifications)

Ms. Dike-Young explained that the transfer in the Operating Fund was necessary because the Library needed to cover the replacement of the information desk at the Irvington Branch. The transfer in the Rainy Day Fund is to cover architecture and engineering for the Glendale and Fort Ben Projects until we receive the 2021 Bonds.

After full discussion and careful consideration of Resolution 28 – 2021, the resolution was adopted on the motion of Dr. Murtadha, and seconded by Ms.

Payne, to approve Resolution 28 – 2021, Transfers Between Accounts and Classifications.

Resolution 28 – 2021 was approved on the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

The resolution is appended to, and made a part of, these minutes.

6. Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee (Hope C. Tribble, Chair; Curtis W. Bigsbee, Patricia A. Payne)

a. Establishment of a Committee to Lead the Climate Improvement Process – Discussion and Action

There was a discussion about the Climate Improvement Process.

Ms. Tribble commented that she continues to ask what is happening with the HR processes and framework if so many employees are seeking solutions to their concerns outside of the system that is meant to address concerns and grievances. She then outlined the priorities of the Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee and said the issues of trust and accountability will be addressed at the next meeting. The Committee is looking into a way to collect employee concerns via a climate study administered by a third party.

Dr. Murtadha suggested that having an independent organization conduct the survey would be counter to the goals. She proposed a committee that includes workers, Board members and patrons who care about the Library. Dr. Murtadha noted that she is not a member of the Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee and asked why the Climate Study was put under the Committee.

Mr. Bigsbee stated that the Board should be able to find a way to mesh the approaches together to cover all of our bases.

7. Facilities Committee (Curtis W. Bigsbee, Chair; Dr. Khaula Murtadha, Rev. T. D. Robinson)

a. Resolution 29 – 2021 (Approval to Establish a Conditional Guaranteed Maximum Price for Sitework, Site Utilities, Building Concrete and Structural Steel with The Skillman Corporation Serving as the Construction Manager as Constructor for the Fort Ben Branch Replacement Project)

Sharon Smith, Facilities Director, advised that the bids that came back for the Fort Ben Branch Library were significantly over the established budget for the Project. She noted that the Facilities Committee needs time to reconvene and discuss next steps. She hopes the Committee will then share additional information at an upcoming Board Meeting.

Resolution 29 – 2021 was tabled at this time.

8. Library Foundation Update

Rev. Robinson reviewed the information contained in the July 2021 Update.

News

We are happy to announce a virtual event with Dr. Tyrone McKinley Freeman, author of *Madame C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving: Black Women's Philanthropy during Jim Crow*. Dr. Freeman is an author, associate professor of philanthropic studies and director of undergraduate programs at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. This event will be a training opportunity for our staff, board and volunteers. We are pleased to partner with the Library's Center for Black Literature & Culture, Communications, and Programming departments to open the event to the public. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 6 p.m. for the virtual event.

The Library Foundation congratulates the West Perry staff on the grand opening of the branch held on July 17, 2021.

Circulate: Night at the Library has been postponed to Saturday, March 12, 2022. We surveyed our donors and sponsors and found there was some hesitancy with the large in-person, indoor event. We also found there was not a lot of interest in a virtual event. Based on that feedback, we decided it is in everyone's best interest to have the event in the Spring when we can draw a robust crowd. We appreciate your contributions to offset Library staff ticket costs. Those staff discounts will carry forward to next year.

Donors

The Foundation thanks 134 donors who made gifts last month. The following are our top corporate and foundation contributors:

Downtown Optimist Foundation
 Griffith Family Foundation, Inc.
 Hoover Family Foundation
 Indianapolis Colts
 Nicholas H. Noyes, Jr. Memorial Foundation, Inc.
 Pacers Foundation

Program Support

This month, the Library Foundation is proud to provide more than \$180,000 for Library programs and initiatives. Examples of major initiatives supported include:

Center for Black Literature & Culture
 Digital Encyclopedia of Indianapolis
 East 38th Street Youth Art Series
 Book Club in a Bag

9. Report of the Chief Executive Officer

a. **Confirming Resolutions:**

1) **Resolution Regarding Finances, Personnel and Travel (30 – 2021)**

Ms. Nytes advised there were no travel claims this month. She reviewed

some of the Personnel actions including the hiring of Connie Scott, the new Area Resource Manager at Central Library.

At this time, Ms. Nytes provided information as to why the Diversity and Inclusion Officer job description was modified. The changes reflect that the Library would like to see certification from the candidates and the changes set out the Library's current needs, more specifically human resources issues and concerns. She mentioned that the Library has a Diversity Fellow position open and the Library is looking for someone with an interest in recruitment and retention of diverse employees.

Ms. Payne commented that she learned that when the job title and description of "Building Ambassador" changed to "Library Security Assistant" an employee had stepped down. She shared that it may be difficult for potential employees to establish trust when job descriptions are changed.

Mr. Bigsbee made the motion, which was seconded by Rev. Robinson, to approve Resolution 30 – 2021, the Resolution Regarding Finances, Personnel and Travel.

Resolution 30 – 2021 was approved on the following roll call vote:

Mr. Biederman – Aye	Rev. Robinson – Aye
Mr. Bigsbee – Aye	Judge Salinas – Aye
Dr. Murtadha – Aye	Ms. Tribble – Aye
Ms. Payne – Aye	

The resolution is appended to, and made a part of, these minutes.

b. **2021 – 2023 IndyPL Strategic Plan Community and Operational Objectives and Initiatives**

Garrett Mason, Strategic Planning and Assessment Officer, addressed the Board.

Mr. Mason discussed the 2021 – 2023 Strategic Plan Community and Operational Objectives and Initiatives that had been distributed to the Board which included information on Racial Equity, Partnerships, Technology, and Digital Inclusion, Education, Reading and Writing, Health and Wellness, and Financial Literacy, Foundation, Financial Stewardship, Internal Processes, and Organizational Framework. He noted that these objectives explain the ways the Library will work internally to fulfill the Strategic Plan.

c. **Update on Digital Encyclopedia of Indianapolis**

Ms. Nytes reviewed the Update on the Digital Encyclopedia of Indianapolis ("DEOI") that been provided to the Board.

She advised that the DEOI is an innovative web-based knowledge platform which is being developed by the POLIS Center at IUPUI in collaboration with the City's major cultural and heritage institutions. It will be owned and maintained by the Indianapolis Public Library as a civic resource. The public

launch date will be Thursday, September 30, 2021. The Library will host a celebration at Central Library.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

10. None.

NEW BUSINESS

11. None.

AGENDA BUILDING

12. **Future Agenda Items** – This time was made available for discussion of items not on the Agenda which were of interest to Library Board members and the opportunity was given to suggest items that should be included on future Library Board Meeting Agendas.

Items suggested for upcoming Board Agendas are as follows:

August, 2021 -

INFORMATION

13. **Materials**

- a. **Finance Committee Notes** – July 12, 2021 were distributed to the Board for their information.

14. **Board Meeting Schedule for 2021 (Notice and Place of Meeting) and Upcoming Events/Information**

- b. **Board Meetings for 2021**– *Current calendar will be updated, as necessary, and additional information highlighted.*
- b. **Library Programs/Free Upcoming Events** may be found at attend.indypl.org.

15. **Notice of Special Meetings**

None.

16. **Notice of Next Regular Meeting**

Monday, August 23, 2021, at the Library Services Center, 2450 North Meridian Street, at 6:30 p.m.

17. Other Business

None.

18. Adjournment

The Secretary announced that there was no further business to come before the Board.

The Chairman then declared the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Raymond Biederman, Secretary to the Board



Attachment A

Todd Grooten – *I have worked in libraries since 1992 and have had my MLS since 2003. I think one of my responsibilities as an information professional is to keep abreast with what is happening with my own public library; I make it a point to watch the recordings of the monthly library board of trustees meetings through the library's YouTube channel and also through the programming archive maintained by the City of Indianapolis. I am thankful that these are available to view online as it isn't always possible to attend in person.*

I've been concerned with the direction of the library some time now. I think the problems began with the election of the current board president at the January 27, 2020 board meeting. Both Judge Salinas and Dr. Jett submitted their names as candidates for board president. Dr. Jett described to the board how she was an active and engaged trustee by sharing all of her efforts since joining the board. When Judge Salinas was asked if he had any remarks he offered little to nothing of substance that would indicate he would be a viable board president. Having listened to both trustees any rational person would agree that Dr. Jett was more qualified to lead the board. I am thankful that trustee Dr. Murtadha pointed out that Judge Salinas had been on the board less than a year and Dr. Jett had been on the board for 3 years. She also raised some important questions - what does it mean to be qualified to be on the board and what it means to be qualified to be board president; there is a big discrepancy between support for the board and experience to serve.

Having watched the board meetings for the last several years I would like to express my appreciation for Dr. Jett; as a publicly appointed servant she was responsible for upholding the public's trust by taking her role seriously. She routinely asked questions, asked for clarification or asked for additional information on board agenda items; she was not on the board to rubber stamp every proposal put forward, which seems to describe the role of many of the other board members, who only seem to speak when offering a 'yes' vote. Dr. Jett was informed in April 2020 she would not be re-appointed and would be replaced by current board member Hope Tribble.

An article in the Indianapolis Recorder dated 6/23/2021 details Dr. Jett's experiences, including reporting issues regarding racism and sexism to the Indianapolis City-County Council; many of which went largely ignored. The article quotes CEO Nytes as saying she has no say over who gets appointed to the library board. It should also be noted that CEO Nytes served 3 terms on the Council.

Council president Vop Osili is quoted as saying "Dr. Jett, whose term as a Library Trustee expired earlier this year, raised important concerns about operations at the Public Library. To address these issues, Hope Tribble, who provided significant leadership to the City of Indianapolis' racial equity initiatives during her tenure as Director of the Office of Audit and Performance, was appointed to the Library Board of Trustees," Osili said in a statement. "Ms. Tribble's extensive experience in local government, policy making, and fiscal matters, will ensure these critical issues are addressed. I am grateful to Dr. Jett for giving voice to these concerns and for her years of service to the library."

One must wonder why Ms. Tribble was in a better position than Dr. Jett to address these issues considering Dr. Jett's tenure on the board. How is Ms. Tribble in a better position to address issues she knows nothing about? It seems to be glaringly obvious that Dr. Jett was not reappointed to the board because she did her due diligence as a board member instead of being a 'yes man' for CEO Nytes.

Problems continued with the May 2021 board meeting when former staff member Bree Flannelly attempted to address the board during the public comments section of the meeting. She indicated

at the beginning of her comments that she was not present to name names or speak to any specific personnel matter; despite that Board president Salinas insisted on muting her. Judge Salinas was quoted in an Indianapolis Recorder article dated 6/2/2021 as saying "I was trying to protect everyone's right to privacy." Given that Ms. Flannelly indicated she was not speaking on those specific items this seems hard to swallow. The same Indianapolis Recorder article describes an e-mail CEO Nytes sent to the board 'warning' them that Ms. Flannelly was going to be speaking. One must wonder if the two are related. Judge Salinas stated "I'm not making any excuses"; if what he offered wasn't an excuse I'd like to know what would qualify as one. Instead of excuses he should have offered Ms. Flannelly an apology. Ms. Flannelly indicated she had tried to talk to former DEI Officer Jessica Moore with no results. Trustee Dr. Payne suggested that a climate audit be undertaken and trustee Dr. Murtadha agreed.

The June 2021 board meeting included several community members speaking during the public comments section of the board meeting; Renita Maul spoke on behalf of Judge Salinas - while I don't think there is anything wrong with this the timing seems a little too convenient to overlook. Amy MacNeil from the Glendale branch spoke about how people with white privilege can rally to amplify the voices of BIPOC staff members. East Washington branch staff member Mollie Beaumont spoke on diversifying library collections. Leon Bates spoke to the hostile work environments many BIPOC staff members reported dealing with. Jim Mulholland spoke on behalf of BIPOC staff members, many that work at smaller branches which are often overlooked, overworked and understaffed; larger branches are given more attention and resources; larger branches are often located in more affluent areas of Marion County. The correlation between race and socioeconomic status is important here because it gives a perception that affluent citizens are more deserving of library services when in reality the poor and working class citizens need these services too, perhaps even more so than their affluent counterparts. The last speaker was former staff member Margarette Webb, who was formerly employed at the Martindale-Brightwood branch. Ms. Webb indicated that staff members were quitting because they have no support; she was no exception, expressing that she quit because the job was severely impacting her mental health.

Once again I am thankful that trustee Dr. Murtadha spoke up, asking about a board response to the multitude of public comments being offered. She indicated she didn't feel comfortable going ahead with no response, saying "We need to take seriously the pain we are hearing." This is important to note. So many people have come forward in recent months to describe their own personal experiences with racism, sexism and homophobia while working at the Indianapolis Public Library. CEO Nytes has never once acknowledged their pain; instead the only comments she chooses to make either trivialize or outright discredit the lived experiences of these staff members. This was magnified during the July 8th, 2021 Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee meeting. During the meeting the body language of CEO Nytes would indicate she had little to no interest in what was being discussed as she appeared to be engaged in other tasks while board members spoke; she was never looking directly at the camera (as the meeting was on Zoom). The only time she spoke during this meeting is when she was asked if she had any comments on the proposed structure and direction of the climate study being undertaken by trustee Dr. Murtadha; she complained about not being directly involved and expressed her opinion that her lack of involvement was atypical of these types of endeavors in her experience.

Trustee Dr. Murtadha indicated that in fact this was not atypical of climate studies (which Dr. Murtadha has been involved with on numerous occasions during her professional career; CEO Nytes chose to respond by questioning trustee Dr. Murtadha's experiences and taking a subtle jab at her integrity (at the 38:55 minute mark in the meeting).

I think what we have witnessed over the past several weeks is telling of the current climate at the Indianapolis Public Library; we have heard from several current and former BIPOC staff members who have shared their experiences with racism, sexism and homophobia while working at the Library. CEO Nytes has never taken their pain seriously and continues to either discredit their lived experiences or offer excuses about the culture of the library system; board leadership has been silenced when not acting as a rubber stamp for proposals offered by the Library Executive Council; less experienced board members get 'rewarded' by moving into leadership roles when falling into line with Library Executive Council; how can BIPIC staff members feel represented and supported when the majority of the Library Executive Council are CIS white individuals? In order to effect true change we must see a massive overhaul of both the library board and the library executive council, both of which who have shown they are incapable of addressing the concerns of the BIPOC staff members seriously. If the individuals in question truly cared about the library system they currently serve they would step down and allow new leadership to move into their roles so the real work and healing can begin.

I appreciate your time and attention.