INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 23, 2021

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The Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Board met in person at the Library Services Center, 2450 North Meridian Street and electronically via Zoom on Wednesday, June 23, 2021 at 6:35 p.m., pursuant to notice given in accordance with the rules of the Board.

At this time, Judge Salinas apologized to the other Board members, Library staff and the public for his handling of the public comment section of the May 24, 2021 Board Meeting. He shared his apologies for any unintentional perceptions his actions may have caused.

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, Judge Salinas and Ms. Tribble.

Members absent: Rev. Robinson.

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

a.   **Discussion of Staff Climate Study**

At this time, Dr. Murtadha shared a document entitled "A Proposal: An Indianapolis Public Library Climate Improvement Process" with the Board.

A compilation of some of the ideas that she feels are very important in terms of the Climate Improvement Process are part of the document. Dr. Murtadha advised that she would not read all the pieces of the Climate Improvement Process but it specifically speaks to how our public service institutions are being called on to be responsible and accountable to staff, to the patrons and to those who are in our larger community to address issues of equity. We need to understand that visionary leadership looks at what is existing and what the possibilities are going forward. Leaders look at how to create a vision for change, especially transformative change. In order to create a climate of racial equity, how do we look at cultural differences and how do we foster inclusion? The Library must

assess the entire infrastructure, including leadership, decision making processes, and raise questions about our mission, but also look at this as a depth of meaning opportunity and not a one-time shot.

She then referenced the third paragraph of the document, noting that it is intentional, it is strategic, it is collaborative, it is transparent and it's a coordinated effort. It is so important that we think through how we make a commitment to racial equity that's just not a statement. There should be plans moving forward and that it's taken up from one position where we are and ready to move forward.

There is a commitment in the Library's Strategic Plan from the Equity Council, the leadership from the Board and the CEO. She asked where is the "teeth" in this? The teeth means that you are also trying to effect change. It means action steps and those action steps are ones that work for you.

She asked her class at IUPUI to compile the dimensions of a Climate Improvement Process. They talked about several aspects. We want to look at goal focus because in a healthy place there is a healthy climate. That's what a Climate Study pays attention to. The health, the feel of the organization when you're a part of it. Goals are defined as appropriate, achievable and well-accepted by diverse organizational members. She speaks to that not only in the terms of our staff but the patrons and the community as well. There is an issue of morale. Feelings of well-being and satisfaction are expressed. People express being happy at being in this healthy organization. They are pleased with being in it. There is also a component about the demographic make-up of the administrators. Promotions at the Library are a commitment to racial equity that is part of the ongoing conversations that must be had.

Dr. Murtadha advised that she didn't wish to read all the different dimensions of the Proposal but one of the most important ones has to deal with Number 4 -- Optimal Power Equalization. The balance among organizational members that ensures that no one party can coerce and corrupt other members. Healthy organizations demonstrate a relatively low degree of informal influence-seeking behavior by their members. People should be able to express and speak to the issues that are most important in regard to minorities having a voice but also being able to speak to the importance of cohesiveness.

Problem-Solving Adequacy (Number 9 in the Proposal) addresses the maintenance of strategies for sensing problems. Paying attention to the techniques that deal with an organizational crisis in a rational fashion. A healthy organization has problems, all organizations do, but it has established ways of dealing with things are transparent and ethical. What does it mean to come from a space of ethics? An ethic of caring, ethic of speaking to engagement with the community, the ethic of justice and most importantly, the ethic of critique. That means that you raise questions and in that critique, you consider how racial or ethnic assumptions, biases, prejudgments, attitudes come into play in hiring situations, and seek out opportunities to disrupt them. These are not just words that come out of this. This is in the literature that is dealing with leadership. It's in the literature for organizational change. It's in the literature for climate.

The next portion of the Proposal she discussed was the "Premises" of the Climate Study.

She wanted to make certain that we approach this in terms of both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data helps to develop deeper understanding. It helps to develop what is normally not on a survey document. Questions need to be asked. We talked about what racial equity looks like at our Library, both in the past and as we go forward. What does a socially just, racially equitable organization look like? What does it feel like? Part of that is so important because we know that the Library staff is really important in helping to make these decisions. She commended the Library staff for thinking through how we might actually effect change. There are many great people on this Library staff and many of them are committed to making changes.

How do we address the issues of capacity building to effect change and to bring it about in a way that offers opportunity for more people with diverse and different opinions and ideas to come to the table and feel like they can speak.

Community stakeholders is another important part. This is a public serving institution and how do we make certain that community partners can speak? We should be cognizant of things that can be shared at a public meeting.

We understand that there are different "feels" of an organization's climate. There are climates where they feel open – people can come and speak and be a part of this and not be admonished for it. That is an energetic organization. Staff members are highly satisfied in their personal and social needs.

There can be a controlled climate which is an environment that is impersonal and and task-oriented.

Also, there can be a paternal climate which is when the formal leader tries consistently to constrain leadership from emerging from the group.

What Dr. Murtadha is proposing as part of this ongoing process is that we need to recognize that some things are urgent. We cannot wait for long periods of time she said to the Library Board. We need to have some urgent steps because we're hearing, not only from our larger public, but we're also getting letters and comments that state there are a lot of problematic things happening. So, how do we launch and do a planning that can really be effective for change? Not only what we're hearing but how do we analyze it? She wants to be free to speak to Jackie Nytes, the CEO, and also the other Board members about how we need to effect change. We don't want to be a "yes" Board. We need to recognize that there are serious issues that have been raised and that we intend to make a difference. We need a mixed method approach – qualitative and quantitative. Focus groups, interviews and case studies and some tasks need to be launched as soon as possible. She wants it to be a consensus approach. We pull from some of the Equity Council, we pull from community partners and we bring together a team that allows for the analysis of data that is collected. People need to be able to speak with confidentiality. That is a key part of this. Being able to think about this strategically is very important for legal purposes, for confidentiality purposes but also for voice. That's critical. She mentioned that she always pays attention to

intersectionality. Namely, she is a black person and she is also a woman and she also comes from a deaf community. That intersectionality is very important so there is not just one voice coming from each person. We want to speak to diversity. Consider how staff who are black, or other minorities, are positioned to white staff in terms of promotion and opportunities for salary. How do we make sure there is equity in terms of these things? We need to say there are things that need to be addressed right away. We need to decide who can speak and who is silenced. Whose knowledge is privileged and whose knowledge is not seen as privileged. We need to review how administration is working with all staff to challenge stereotypes, prejudice, privilege and generate climate solutions.

She asked for everyone to think about case study approaches. Each library branch in our system is different. A branch that is located in Martindale-Brightwood does not have the same issues and concerns as a branch that's being built near Fort Ben. Each one is different. How do we develop case studies around each site taking into account the complexity of each one? That takes some time. We also need to work on the interviews, focus groups, the qualitative data – these things are all a part of it. We will continuously analyze with the groups and individuals selected. She feels there is a need for a discussion on this and she is encouraging us to have the courageous conversation and to speak in a way that says we want to honor this work. She doesn't want to call this process a journey. We've been on journeys long enough. She wants this to be a turning point that really does say that equity and racial equity and there is work that must be done and it has to be done now and long term.

Mr. Biederman commented on Dr. Murtadha's Proposal. There was a note that talked about quantitative instruments that had been requested by other states and national library organizations. Do we have any of those? Was it the intent that some of those would serve as information we would look at in this endeavor or are we going to be developing our own?

Dr. Murtadha replied that with regard to quantitative instruments, usually there are those that are reliable and valid. Often there are ones specified for a set number of individuals, so that you can have a limited number of variables. In so doing, we will probably have to use some of those. We need to determine if we wish to use those instruments in the Indianapolis context. That's going to be very important. Some of this information is coming in now.

Ms. Tribble asked about the timeline since there has been talk about some immediate action being needed. July has been mentioned as a start date.

Dr. Murtadha responded that it is a timeline that does not stop. This is an ongoing process. She anticipates starting in mid-July with planning, timelining and meeting with the team. She confirmed that this is not going to be a survey. It will be an ongoing process. Because of the ever-changing demographics, we need to be constantly doing this serious work.

Ms. Tribble wondered about the action steps that will come out of what we find. We need to give people some sense of when there will be relief as a result of some action that's going to be based on the data. She likes the idea of a continuous improvement process. It's not like a balance sheet or an income statement but where we do we start seeing relief. She keeps hearing from people that are in

distress. How do we identify for them how that will occur?

Dr. Murtadha noted that people begin to feel relief when their voices are heard. Some of the messages she has gotten state that they have not been heard. When someone is listening to my voice and saying, "Okay, this is what you're saying." Then we turn around and we're saying to the Board this is what we've got already. What are we going to do different? That comes back to the Board, the CEO and we have to take action steps. We have to decide to influence change. That change has to happen in response to the data. Another part to it is now that we have heard it, what are we going to do about it? That's a decision making process that not only are we responsible for but our managers within the Library are responsible for. Action steps are critical.

Mr. Bigsbee inquired how we get immediate relief as it pertains to getting a questionnaire out to staff so we have a starting point? His concern is how would the focus groups, each staff member, or patron be involved in the case study? His belief is that if we start internally and focus on some of those issues, it would have a broader context later when we address things down the road. How can we get maximum participation and have people wanting to participate in the study?

Dr. Murtadha commented that is exactly what we need to do. We can do this with the focus groups but also with interviews. We plan to do this right away. She will plan to share the instruments and the questions to be used with the appropriate individuals. People of color need to be confident that they can speak.

Ms. Payne shared that there might be an issue with the lack of a trust for people to even feel free and confident to speak. Right now, there is no trust level so how do we create the trust level?

Dr. Murtadha confirmed that this is very important. What's so important about trust is that it can easily be broken and can't be repaired quickly. We will have trusted leaders from our community and other organizations participate.

Mr. Bigsbee suggested that we have an external source gather the information so people have that outlet and then it comes back to the Board and then we can decide had to tailor the focus groups, the case studies and the responses we receive from the staff. He stated that he has had conversations with staff and some are afraid to say something. This could be a building block to move forward with everything else. So, staff can see that the Board did not have any influence over this; it was sent out by a third party.

Dr. Murtadha confirmed that she sees this as a part of the process. She advised that she feels that there are individuals who have worked hard within the Library and some of them should be paid attention to in terms of helping to think through this entire process. External folks – absolutely. External sources – absolutely. But when it comes to paying attention to both trust issues and individuals being influenced, she is finding that a lot of times that folks are influenced very quickly. It's important for someone on this Board to be closely involved in this work and so that's why she submitted her name. We need this Board to show leadership. We need it desperately. We need to say we want to effect change. We need to triangulate all the data and do it as a consensus model.

Mr. Bigsbee, as Chair of the Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee, moved to approve, in principle, the Proposal presented at tonight's Meeting and move it to the full Board. The motion was seconded by Ms. Payne.

Dr. Murtadha announced that she was willing to work with a small group and come o the Diversity, Policy and Human Resources Committee and do this at no cost for the first phase of this process. She is willing to do it because she feels that this public institution should move forward with the first phase of the project, which begins in mid-July. There is urgency and she doesn't want this first phase to drag out.

Mr. Biederman expressed his concern about the confidentiality aspect of things. Dr. Murtadha will have two roles, she will see a lot of the data on an individual level and she is a Board member. He doesn't know at what point some of the receipt of that information would become a public record in her capacity as a Board member and in her capacity of having a confidentiality agreement in place for the work though IUPUI. That's something he wanted to flag early on in this process because the last thing we want is to create this excellent mechanism but then people don't feel comfortable coming forward because they're afraid that everything will become a public record.

Dr. Murtadha replied that is one of the things she mentioned right from the beginning that confidentiality will be very important. Discussion will be had with legal counsel and everyone will know that the data will be confidential. There is also a transparency issue. It's very important to recognize that no one wants any further delusion that we're not doing the kind things can make a difference. That will be an important part. We need integrity and transparency. She recognizes conflict of commitment and conflict of interest. Personnel at IUPUI are always required to sign both types of statements.

Ms. Nytes thanked Dr. Murtadha for providing this larger picture for us and she pledged all the Library's resources to help make it successful. She also mentioned that she has spoken to several individuals in the community and is happy to share those thoughts with the Committee at the appropriate time.

After an inquiry from Ms. Tribble, Dr. Murtadha confirmed that the first leg of the work is the planning and the timeline and bringing together the stakeholders.

After full discussion and careful consideration, the motion to send the Proposal to the full Board was approved on the following roll call vote:

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

4.   **Other Business**

None.

5.   **Adjournment**

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

The Chairman then declared the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

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Raymond Biederman, Secretary to the Board

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