

# City of Eldridge

## Joint Library Board & City Council Meeting Minutes

The City of Eldridge, Iowa, City Council and the Scott County Library Board met in an open session at the Eldridge Branch of the Scott County Library at 6:00 pm on August 28, 2023.

Eldridge Council Members Present: Dan Collins, Adrian Blackwell, Bruce Cheek, Brian Dockery, Bernie Peeters & Mayor Frank King. Also present was Administrator Nevada Lemke.

Scott County Library Board Members Present: Nicole Wuestenberg, Shelli Engelbrecht, Angie Ehlers, Chuck Brockmann, Kevin Cahill, Trisha Kane (Director), Kristal Koberg-Schaefer, Daniel True, Linda Tuftee, and Ken Beck – Scott County Supervisor

Kristal Koberg-Schaefer presided over the meeting and called the meeting to order.

Kristal stated that the library taxing policy is a state law and is a tax based on per capita value, not assessed value. That is the revenue source for the library. She stated that salaries and benefits are a huge expense, but the employees are the reason the library is accredited. She read a letter of support for the library from Linda and Bill Tubbs.

Councilman Dockery stated the City wants to work together with the library board, possibly consider deeding the building and entering a co-sharing agreement for the parking lot, and maybe work together to acquire the adjoining property for a future City site.

Mayor King stated that at the last City Council meeting, all of the Council expressed support for the library, and there were no ideas presented that would displace the library.

Councilman Peeters stated that the lease is discussed every FY as part of the Council's due diligence in fiscal responsibility; and he would love to hear community input.

Councilman Blackwell stated he agrees with Peeters and wants to hear from community members, and that the library is a public service and amenity, not meant to be a revenue source.

Kristal asked what the City's plan was for renewing the lease, increasing the rent, or deeding the property?

Councilman Dockery stated that the lease would be renewed, possibly a modest increase, and that he already provided his thoughts on deeding the property. The City has no funds or plans in the near future for new facilities, and that would likely have to go to referendum vote to proceed.

Kevin Cahill stated the tax base is the revenue, and increasing rent would impact services to residents, increase taxes, decrease library hours, or cut supplies and books from the budget.

A public participant asked why the library can't get the same deal as the YMCA. Councilman Dockery stated the comparison is apples to oranges. The YMCA deal is a development agreement between the City, the YMCA, and the school district for a 20-year term, and at the end of the term, the City still owns 50% of the building.

Councilman Peeters expressed support of the library and wants Eldridge citizens to know they will carry a large portion of the financial burden, and that they should know what the City is paying, as well as what we are not getting back out of the library. The citizens need the whole picture so they can provide input to the Council for a vote.

### Public Comment

Maggie Collagen – Friends of the Eldridge Library; Scott Case – Eldridge Resident; Joan Henigan – Eldridge Resident and former library employee; Ellenor and Elena – Eldridge residents; Terry Jurascek – Eldridge Resident; Beth Campbell – Eldridge Resident and Educator; Anna Jones – Eldridge Resident; Deb Jurascek – Eldridge Resident; NSHS Sophomore

Student; Anna – Eldridge Resident; Steve Mohr – Eldridge Resident and Councilman Candidate; Nancy – Long Grove City Council Member; Maura VanAusdel; Sarah Thunen – Long Grove Resident; Josh Ashcroft – Library Employee; Cora – Long Grove Resident; Morgan – new Eldridge Resident; Amber Carlson – Long Grove Resident; Alex Cahill – Eldridge Resident

Public statements showed support of the library in Eldridge stating they are community hubs; reasons people come to live and visit Eldridge; is a place to learn, play, and have fun with friends; and stated a library is a right of American Citizens, to have free information.

Many shared memories of times spent at the library, and obstacles that they had overcome due to the materials and resources the library provided for them. A student shared an accomplishment at a State Competition that she accredited to the library. They commented on the Book Mobile and its ability to reach kids that don't have other access to the library.

Some voiced appreciation for the City Council's service and their consideration of the fiscal viability of the library.

### **End of Public Comment**

Councilman Dockery stated that the library is important to Grand Haven and its residents. The council needs to get together with the library and discuss the options. He stated the library would stay in Eldridge.

Councilman Cheek addressed a previous comment he made in Council and confirmed his continued support of the library.

Councilman Dockery stated that there have not been any formal discussions with the library as of yet, but those will come, and the public comments will be considered in those discussions. He stated the library will stay here, in this building.

Daniel True stated some library financials provided by the Director, Trisha Kane. He stated the facts need to be considered, and a proposal drafted by the city; then we can go forward with a good and feasible plan.

Mayor King stated that no one has talked about getting rid of the library. WE are elected to do the best we can in making decisions for the community. There have been other things going on in the city, and City Hall was short staffed, so this discussion was on the back burner with 1 ½ years left on the lease. The city is ready to move forward with these discussions and is in a good place to do so. He would like to invite further public input in future meetings.

Kristal asked the Council to have this issue resolved in the next 6 months. Mayor responded that he thinks it's a good idea to continue having meetings to move the discussion forward and that it will be a priority for the city.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31pm