

## **NOBLE Executive Board Meeting via zoom**

**September 14, 2022**

Present: Ron Gagnon, Amy Lannon, Brian Courtemanche, Allison Babin, Linda C.W. Gardener, Tara Mansfield, Catherine McDonald, and Myron Schirer-Suter.

### **1. Call to Order/Welcome**

The Meeting was called to order by Amy at 2:03pm.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

Ron noted that there was an error in the Executive Director's Report section 4 and in the minutes and that Paula was working on the FY23 contracts, not FY24.

Brian made the motion to approve the minutes with the changes, seconded by Allison. All in favor.

### **3. Approval of Proposed Revisions to the FY23 Budget with Revised Salary Schedule**

*Motion:* Move to approve proposed revisions to the FY23 Budget with revised salary schedule applying the 3% cost of living reserve and upgrading the Office Administrator position.

Discussion:

Ron reported that there is no firm number for relocation at this time, which will impact the FY23 and FY24 budgets. Ron noted that Paula has been working on a big project to migrate from the desktop-based Account Edge system to Quickbooks and discovered that there is a substantial amount in unrestricted funds, which was verified with Bob Guimond. This money is in addition to contingency and capital funds. Some of those unrestricted funds have been used to stabilize next year's budget in the proposed documents.

Ron reported that salaries, cost of living adjustments, and the proposed Office Administrator position will also impact both budgets. Ron noted that the cost of living has stayed around 3% each year and that NOBLE has budgeted in this reserve. Last year inflation was 4.3%, but NOBLE was able to catch up from the reserve left unused during the pandemic. Ron noted that by keeping up with the cost of living, NOBLE has not needed to do salary schedule adjustments and that network salaries are compared each year, and NOBLE is in the middle of the pack. This year, NOBLE has come to a crossroads because the CPIU for the Boston area from July-to-July results were 7%, and NOBLE has only budgeted 3%. Ron presented three versions of the budget for consideration: the first budget applies the 3% and does not apply the Administrative Assistant position upgrade, the second budget applies the 3% with the Administrative Assistant position upgrade, and the third includes the 7% raise and Administrative Assistant position upgrade. Ron recommended the second version of the budget, which applies the 3% reserve to the current year's salary to revise the salary schedule and then budgeting a 5% reserve next year.

Amy thanked Ron for creating multiple versions of the budget. Amy noted that we can take Ron's recommendation as a whole of upgrading the Administrative Assistant position and includes the 3% COLA for FY23 and then the 5% for FY24 to catch up, rather than doing it all at once.

Ron noted that the way things are going this year, the 5% may not catch NOBLE up but we won't know that until next summer.

Catherine reported that Wakefield had recently revaluated the same position that the Office Administrator position upgrade is important in the event you need to replace that person. Catherine noted that the Office Administrator is the first point of contact, understands Quickbooks, and deals with vendors. She noted that Paula is incredible and deserves every penny of it.

Brian noted that Paula has been a mainstay throughout the pandemic and that he 100% agrees with Catherine.

Linda agreed and said it is an acknowledgement that the position has become more complex over the years.

Allison heartily agreed with the others about Paula and the position itself.

Brian noted that the Executive Board trusts Ron and that he has been spot on each year, look at every angle, works really hard, and is fair and economical. When Ron recommends a budget, it means a lot.

Myron noted that working with Paula has made his job as Treasurer very easy. Amy noted Paula is also really polite with reminders.

*Action: Catherine made the motion, seconded by Linda. All in favor.*

#### **4. Vote to Recommend FY24 Budget to Members Meeting**

*Motion:* Move to recommend the FY24 NOBLE Budget and assessments, identified as Budget A, to Members Meeting as presented.

Discussion:

Ron noted that the FY24 budget applies \$77,910 from the unrestricted funds. The occupancy costs are unknown on several levels including rent, maintenance, utilities, and cleaning costs. Ron noted that are sitting on a substantial amount of money with the three categories, with \$800k in capital, \$750k in contingency, and \$700k or so in the unrestricted funds. Libraries would be looking at a 7.7% increase if the unrestricted funds were not used. Ron noted that NOBLE has used surpluses to support other years' budgets, and that the surpluses have built up over the years.

Ron reported that the rest of the budget is status quo in terms of office administration, computer support changes like moving the MOBIUS which is currently offset by the Payroll Protection funds. Ron noted that moving to a lower cost office will help cover some of the \$65,000 when the Payroll Protection runs out. Other networks use MBLC infrastructure funding for hosting, so that is also an option.

Ron reported that there a couple of new initiatives are included this year including the E-Card registration and the linked data service. The linked data service provides library holdings results as part of Google searches. Both services will open up libraries to new users and make it easier to get a card and find materials.

Amy noted that Ron is recommending FY24 Budget A, which includes a 5% reserve for salaries for cost of living increases. Amy noted the assessment would be the same for libraries for FY24. The reserves will supplement through this time of transition with hosting and physical space.

*Action: Linda made the motion, seconded by Allison. All in favor.*

#### **5. Vote to Recommend FY24 Overdrive Budget and Assessment**

*Motion:* Move to recommend to Members Meeting the FY24 Overdrive budget and assessments with a total of \$250,000.

Discussion:

Ron presented three FY24 Overdrive budgets: status quo \$233,200, a 7% increase to \$250,000, and an 18% increase to \$275,000 shared assessment. The formula includes 50% based on previous year's use and 50% of what libraries paid last year. Ron noted that Overdrive is a growing service and keeping up with holds, expiring titles, and increasing prices are ongoing challenges.

Amy noted that Executive Board's recommendation would go to Members and the options were for a level budget, 7%, or 18% increase, or any number we would like. Amy noted that usage is increasing, but 18%

seems like a lot and hearing from other NOBLE libraries is important before making a decision. Amy noted that her instinct is to go in the middle.

Linda agreed and stated an increase is important to keep up with things and noted that NOBLE's strength is that we are made up of different libraries with different capacities for absorbing large increases in our budget. Libraries with more capacity can purchase titles through Overdrive Advantage.

Ron noted that they looked at other networks and that they are polar opposites. Minuteman has an Overdrive budget of \$1 million, MVLC was under \$100k. There are different philosophies behind the funding.

Amy noted that she appreciates Elizabeth's Overdrive curation and that \$250,000 is reasonable.

*Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Catherine. All in favor.*

## **6. Vote to Recommend Proposed FY24 PC Support Budget and Assessment**

*Motion:* Move to recommend to Members Meeting the proposed FY24 PC Support rates with an average 5.25% increase.

Discussion:

Ron reported that the PC Support budget has been level for the last four years and he is recommending an increase of 5.25% increase for FY24. Ron noted that with libraries relocating, there are fewer devices in the program but the expenses are level. NOBLE is dipping into a built-in cushion that would allow a PC Support technician to take time off and have someone else fill in, but still has a projected \$7,500 deficit.

Ron reported that NOBLE took in \$104,000 last year for the PC Support Program, and this year it is projected to be \$96,000. They expect the number of devices to increase once libraries are settled into their new permanent locations.

Ron noted that there are always projects going on, including upgrading ancient library routers and firewall replacement. Apogee is working on transferring the settings from the old to the new, but the two systems are not compatible so the configurations need to be keyed in by hand. George and Tom go to libraries where Apogee is working and test things as much as possible and go back when there are issues. Ron noted that the transition to Windows 11 is also coming up.

Ron noted that the subsidy from the general NOBLE assessment of \$27,500 also goes into the program. It is largely self-funded, but not completely self-funded. The PC Support team consists of one full-time employee and one two-day per week part-time employee and they receive mileage reimbursement for traveling to libraries. They also work on the devices at NOBLE.

Amy noted that the increases match the other increases and makes sense. It is important to make sure they are making competitive rates. Amy confirmed that there was no change in the PC Support costs for libraries since FY19.

*Action: Allison made the motion, seconded by Amy. All in favor.*

## **7. Discussion of Potential Relocation Sites and Schedule**

*Motion:* Move that NOBLE further conversation with 5 Cherry Hill Drive to be the new headquarters of NOBLE.

Discussion:

Ron reported that NOBLE had started the process at looking for office spaces and noted that ABIOMED is not particularly interested in being a landlord and is actively developing around the current office space. Ron had

worked with Collier to find properties, but they had not found a good fit. Ron verified that ABIOMED will allow NOBLE to move out early.

Ron reported that he asked the real estate agent about 5 Cherry Hill which has a sign out front, but the agent was unable to get pricing and details. Ron reported that he tried to contact them himself and they got back to him quickly and gave him a quote without commission fees. There is space coming available at the end of October on the front left corner of the third floor. Ron noted that having a location that is easier to find would also be beneficial, as the current space is hidden in the back of a building.

Ron proposed filling out the credit application and begin negotiating, and then bringing it back to the Board in a month or so.

Myron confirmed that NOBLE would not be responsible for the cost of remodeling. Ron noted that NOBLE currently manages their office space, so if the HVAC breaks they need to arrange for repair. The new location is more inclusive and NOBLE would pay rent, heat, and possibly an office cleaner. The bathrooms would be the responsibility of the landlord.

Myron inquired about the generator and whether it would be moved. Ron said they would not move it and would likely try to sell it.

Brian noted it is nearby and seems like a good fit.

*Action: Brian made the motion, seconded by Myron. All in favor.*

## **8. Approval of Languages for eCard and eRenew Service**

*Motion:* Move to approve the following nine languages for application forms in the grant-supported Quipu eCard and eRenew project: Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese (Simplified), Haitian, Russian, Vietnamese, Arabic, Albanian and English.

Discussion:

Ron reported that he put out the list of languages to directors, and Jenny from Gloucester had suggested Arabic which was included in the list. The question about which dialect of Chinese was answered by Elizabeth who clarified that written language is separate from spoken language and simplified Chinese would be appropriate for the registration form. Ron also reported that the pricing was for eight languages in addition to English, which was also a question from the last meeting.

*Action: Myron made the motion, seconded by Linda. All in favor.*

## **9. New Business**

Linda noted that Melrose opened in their temporary location yesterday and it was going well. There were a few glitches but were functional for patrons within a few hours. They brought comfortable chairs and paperback shelving that had helped the patrons feel at home. The renovated building should be ready by March of 2024.

## **10. Adjournment**

Brian made the motion to adjourn at 3:17pm.