

January 5, 2023

Dear President Osili, Vice President Adamson, Municipal Corporation Chair Gray, Councillor Brown, Councillor Carlino, Councillor Oliver, Councillor Evans, Councillor Graves, Councillor Jackson, Councillor Jones, Councillor Larrison, Councillor Mascari, Councillor McCormick, Councillor Potts, Councillor Ray and Councillor Robinson:

As members of the Indianapolis Public Library Board of Trustees (Trustees), we are grateful for your longtime support for the Indianapolis Public Library (Library). Like you, we regard the Library as an educational and cultural institution of utmost importance to the Indianapolis community. In addition, with a staff of approximately 600 dedicated employees serving at 25 sites across Indianapolis and an annual budget of \$75 million, the Library is among the most prized of our city's municipal corporations. It is also one of our city's most accessible institutions. Obtaining a Library card is free and requires only proof of residence in Marion County. Applications are now available in 12 languages, and the Library no longer imposes overdue fines on any of its patrons. In 2021, the Library accommodated more than 1.5 million walk-in visits from Indianapolis residents, and nearly 7 million visits to our website. Few organizations in central Indiana have the reach and number of direct touchpoints with Indianapolis residents as the Library.

We received your feedback regarding the search for a new CEO to lead the Library, and understand your focus is in the best interest of the Council's constituents, and the stakeholders we as the Trustees are called to serve. We recognize that the results of the recent CEO search process created confusion and continued discord in our community and among our staff. We as Trustees must come together and do better for *all* those who care for and utilize our Library. We are and have been committed to improving our leadership as Trustees and creating more collaborative, transparent relationships with all Library stakeholders.

**The Majority of the Trustees Plan to Appoint a Well Qualified Community Leader.**

As you may know, a majority of Trustees are expected to approve a plan to appoint a qualified and neutral interim administrative caretaker for the Library drawn from outside the Library's ranks. This individual will be recognized as a leader in the community, and will not be a

candidate for the permanent CEO position. That appointment is expected to be announced in short order. A new search for a permanent CEO will begin this year, and all previous candidates will be eligible for consideration in the new search process.

We remain as committed as ever to acting in accordance with the Library's mission, and service of the health of the entire organization. We are also dedicated to continuing to collaborate with the leadership of our Library union and staff association as we execute this new plan and renewed search.

### **The Interim CEO Position Was Never Intended to Be a De Facto CEO Position.**

Many of you, like the general public, have raised questions about the candidacy of the Library's former Interim CEO Nichelle Hayes. Outlined below you will find our responses to questions we have heard from members of the Council and the public regarding this matter.

Preliminarily, Indiana law exempts from disclosure details on unselected candidates, and generally permits public agencies (including the Library) to engage in the interview and deliberation portions of the hiring process in a manner outside the direct public domain. Trustee leadership intends to adhere to applicable legal principles while providing reasonable information about the CEO search process and specifically Ms. Hayes' candidacy to the public.

By way of background, the Trustees selected Ms. Hayes to replace the initial Interim CEO, who resigned to take another position after seven months in the role. Ms. Hayes was one of three internal candidates to apply for the interim position at that time and was unanimously appointed by the Trustees. It should be noted that the Trustees discussed the nature of the Interim CEO position with each of the three candidates, deliberated on the same, and agreed that the appointee would serve in a caretaker capacity during the CEO search process. The Trustees made no promises or guarantees that the person assuming the interim position would advance or be promoted to the permanent role. In fact, at the time Ms. Hayes agreed to serve as Interim CEO, she stated that she was undecided about whether she would participate in the CEO search process.

It is also important to note that the level of experience and skills required to serve as Interim CEO are quite different from those the Trustees sought in a permanent CEO. While many have assumed that having the capacity to act as Interim CEO is a de facto illustration of having the necessary skills and experience to act as a permanent CEO, this is not the case. The Trustees were willing to accept an Interim CEO with far less managerial, leadership, and fiscal oversight skill and experience than that expected of a permanent CEO at an institution as large as the Library.

### **The CEO Search Process was Open, Transparent, and Involved Many Stakeholders.**

With regard to the process, the CEO search was developed in consultation with Bradbury Miller Associates (BMA). BMA works solely with information professionals such as librarians holding a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree and has been involved in searches for more than 160 library systems, including several in Indiana. BMA provided each candidate with a link that took them directly to the position announcement. The link also provided candidates with a list of priority areas, developed and ranked in stakeholder surveys, that would inform the evaluation of each applicant's candidacy. These priority areas were:

- Communication
- Strategic Planning
- Leadership
- Management
- Budget Management
- Community
- Intellectual Freedom
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Experience
- Emotional Intelligence
- Board Experience

Further, BMA was available to answer candidates' questions throughout the search and interview process either directly or by way of seeking additional information from the Library, as needed.

By design, a majority of the Trustees were not involved in the selection of the three<sup>1</sup> final candidates for the permanent CEO position. This task was delegated to a search committee that included only three Trustees along with a cross-section of the community – including the Council's Municipal Corporations Committee Chairperson – and Library staff. In addition, the Library's past practice and precedent have been to allow internal candidates to interview when they apply for internal positions, provided they meet the minimum qualifications. That practice did not change for this CEO search process.

Accordingly, the fact that Ms. Hayes was one of the three final candidates should not be construed as an indication that a majority of the Trustees believed Ms. Hayes, or any of the other final candidates, to be a viable option to be selected as the permanent CEO. Rather, a majority of the Trustees learned the names of the final candidates at the exact same time as the general public.

In choosing which candidate would be offered the permanent CEO position, the Trustees carefully considered the following input:

- Results of surveys of Library staff and the public about the qualities they wanted in the new CEO
- Feedback from candidates' references
- Anonymous evaluations of each candidate from members of the Library's Executive Committee and senior leadership team following interactions with each candidate
- Responses from attendees following the candidates' public presentations on November 30, 2022

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<sup>1</sup> There were three candidates advanced to the final round. Because of a breach in the confidentiality of the CEO search process, one of the candidates withdrew their candidacy. This left the Trustees with two candidates presented for interview by the Trustees.

In addition, as a group and individually, Trustees received, reviewed, and considered a great deal of feedback advocating both for and against individual candidates through the Library's online contact form.

Based on all of the above information and deliberation, the Trustees selected a permanent CEO. Understandably and pursuant to relevant legal requirements, the Board must maintain the confidentiality of input and information received. Thus, we are significantly constrained from sharing specific details of the basis for the decision.

**The CEO Search was Not a Ranked Choice; We Were Tasked with Identifying a Qualified Candidate.**

Members of the Council and the community have suggested that the search process yielded two "finalists" for the CEO position and that when the first "finalist" to receive the job offer turned it down, the offer should have been extended to the second "finalist." That view of the search process does not align with standard practices of the employment search industry, nor is it in line with what occurred in this process. The search for a new CEO—at the Library or elsewhere—is not a competition in which one individual places first and another places second. Rather, it is a process through which the leadership of an institution decides which candidate is qualified to fill the role. In fact, many public institutions, even some in this city, have failed in leadership searches and restarted processes multiple times because they did not determine any of the candidates to be viable.

Put another way, Ms. Hayes was not a "runner-up" in the CEO search process. Suggestions that she be installed as CEO simply because another candidate declined the Library's offer mischaracterizes the results of the CEO search process. Suggestions that restarting the search process is not in line with the Library's past practices are similarly off-base. The Library has on several other occasions reopened searches when a chosen candidate declined an offer, regardless of the existence of other internal or external candidates. The search to fill the institution's most important role at a critical time in the Library's history should be no different.

It is very clear to us that the Indianapolis community cares deeply about our Library. As individuals entrusted with the care and leadership of the Library, we respect and value the passion our employees, our patrons, our political leaders, and our communities at large have for this institution. We are deeply committed to the mission and health of the Library and are listening to the voices and perspectives of all Library staff and patrons, not merely the loudest. We humbly ask for your respect and consideration of our abiding commitment to this institution and the diligent work we have invested in making the difficult decisions required to secure a bright future for our Library.

In service,

Hope C. Tribble

*President, Board of Trustees, Indianapolis Public Library*

Curtis W. Bigsbee

*Vice President, Board of Trustees, Indianapolis Public Library*

Raymond J. Biederman

*Secretary, Board of Trustees, Indianapolis Public Library*

Jose D. Salinas

*Past President, Board of Trustees, Indianapolis Public Library*