

Short Timeline of DFPL Board Response to Date re: Hamilton Fish III

This document was created for our full board to provide a high level overview of Board and Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) committee initiatives. It does not encompass every effort or detail but serves as a point of reference.

Starting December 2, 2022	Members of the public raised questions to staff about Hamilton Fish III actions before World War II. Board and staff alerted to <i>Ultra</i> podcast by patrons.
December 17	Background and Statement sent to Board by Board President; shared with staff by Director.
December 29-January 10, 2023	Statement for the public posted on DFPL Website.
January 11	PCNR interviewed Board President and Director.
January 21	<p>First Board meeting since podcast. Opening statement:</p> <p><i>"The structure of our meeting today reflects the fact that we want to talk about some particular history of one of the Library's founders, Hamilton Fish III. Most of you have read our statement about it. Through a recent podcast produced by Rachel Maddow, actions have come to light taken by Fish in the years just before World War II - most disturbingly the distribution of German propaganda and anti-Jewish literature through his congressional office - that were seriously wrong. We are not here this morning to analyze Congressman Fish's actions or to make an assessment of his long and complex career. We are here to say that what he did was wrong. We also want to recommit our library to the pursuit of equity, fairness, and justice for all, and we want to talk as a Board about how to do that."</i></p> <p>The Board designated the RESJ Committee to work on a long term response.</p> <p>Members of the public spoke both for and against changing the name of the Library.</p>
January 23	Long term response began with research on <i>Ultra</i> allegations. Collection developed of all books referenced on <i>Ultra</i> podcast as well as other materials as discovered.
January 27	Director spoke on the phone with Kelsey Desiderio of MSNBC, who had reached out to Director via email.

January 31 - March 10	RESJ Committee began and continued to meet. Board member Erik Brown designated as chair. RESJ Committee role described on Website with revised statement. Consultant Rajene Hardeman also is a participant. Letters and phone calls received from the public on both sides of issue; Board President and Director speak with many community members.
March 11	Board meeting. Extensive report from RESJ committee chair Erik Brown; including collection additions and programming recommendations discussion. Resource List development described.
March 20	Resource List posted on Library Website and also available via PDF. Book and dissertation display table set up in Library for patrons (and staff) to explore.
March 21	<i>The Highlands Current</i> met with Board President and Director.
March 23, April 3	RESJ reviewed models of renaming institutions including museums, libraries, universities, southern cities, and public schools. Chair Erik Brown developed resource list on antisemitism and isolationism .
April 18	Book discussion on <i>Jews Don't Count</i> held at DFPL; led by staff member Ryan Biracree.
April 19	A staff listening session was held with Erik Brown, Kyle Good, Director, and Rajene Hardeman.
April 20, May 1, May 8	RESJ met to finalize the next step in our Long Term Response, begun in January, including the recommendation of a Name Review Committee and review of possible restorative justice actions.
May 11	Executive Committee met; recommended continued Long Term Response framework and process to Board.
May 13	Library Board of Directors met; voted to move ahead with a Name Review as the next step in our Long Term Response.
May 15	RESJ Committee met to review Timeline and Long Term Response/Name Review Document. Both will be shared with staff and Board.
June 2 and June 5	RESJ Committee finalized Long Term Response/Name

	Review Document, application form, and press release.
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