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Tulsa Library's new CEO leans on 18 years in system to continue improvements

■ She's been busy meeting with staff, making changes

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Posted: Friday, January 20, 2017 12:01 am | Updated: 2:02 am, Fri Jan 20, 2017.



Kimberly Johnson, the new CEO of Tulsa City-County Library, joined the library system in 1998 as the first coordinator of the African-American Resource Center. TULSA WORLD FILE

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By Ginnie Graham News Columnist | 0 comments

For Kimberly Johnson's first meeting as the Tulsa City-County Library chief executive officer, she spoke of her staff, efforts in the adult literacy program and continued work to improve customer service as it evolves.

Johnson, an 18-year employee with the Tulsa library system, [was named CEO in November](#) after Gary Shaffer announced he was leaving for a job at the University of Southern California. She is the first African-American to become the library's top administrator.

The Tulsa City-County Library oversight commission approved her employee agreement, which provides an annual salary of \$155,000 with a car allowance of \$450 a month. Johnson's benefits — including medical, retirement, vacation and sick days — are at the same level of other employees.

Johnson joined the Tulsa library system in 1998 as the first coordinator of the African-American Resource Center. In 2005, she was promoted to manager of the South Broken Arrow Library branch and then became the



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Hardesty Regional Library manager five years later. In 2012, Johnson was promoted to regional director, overseeing 11 of the

system's 24 locations.

A year later, Johnson rose to become deputy director/chief innovation officer. In 2015, she was named chief operating officer.

Johnson told the commission she has spent the past three weeks meeting with staff at various branch libraries.

"I've been going to staff to talk about the vision for the library moving forward and having them set the vision," she said. "I'm proud to lead this fantastic team and to continue to serve the city and county. Who knew 18 years out I would be sitting here? I look forward to many fantastic years here with the residents of the city and county."

A presentation of the adult literacy program showed that 158 adults who want to improve their reading have been paired with 112 volunteers. About 40 adults are on the waiting list.

"When we talk about literacy, it's usually about young children," Johnson said. "It's very seldom we talk about the adults who want to improve their reading or learn English. We have a waiting list of adults who want that."

This month, the Zarrow Library is undergoing a service model change that has already been implemented at 11 other sites, including the new downtown Central Library. Instead of staff working only behind desks, a portion will be providing help to customers in zones throughout the buildings. Tall shelves are reduced from 90 inches to 66 inches for better access and visibility of items.

"We want to serve customers where they are," Johnson said.

In addition to Johnson's contract, three other top administrators received performance-based raises.

Chief Financial and Capital Projects Officer Gail Morris went annually to \$132,774, which is a 4 percent bump. Chief People and Commission Support Officer Shauna McConnell received a 2 percent increase to about \$132,000 yearly. Monique Sendze, chief technology and innovation officer, received an increase for performance and a job promotion to chief operating officer. Her salary will be \$150,852.

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What are we hoping for from Trump?

President-elect Donald Trump, accompanied by wife Melania Trump, waves to the crowd as he boards Air Force One, Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2017, in Washington, D.C. (AP Photo/Andrew H. Guthrie)

BY ELLIENOR WISEWILE

With the U.S. presidential inauguration less than a week away, Tulsa's business community is divided about a Trump presidency. The Tulsa World asked several leaders — and one state legislator — about their expectations about their respective companies' future in a potential administration.

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School official explains payout

A \$200,000 payment to sever ties with superintendent was most prevalent option, SA school board president says

By Suzanne Smith

SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT — Being a school superintendent is hard. And it's even harder when you're being asked to leave. That's what Tulsa School Board President John A. Smith says about a school board member who left the Tulsa World on Tuesday.

John Smith, the board president, said the school board's decision to hire a superintendent would have been made long before the current superintendent was hired.

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Opinion sought on closed hearings

Panel giving allegations against 2 House members wants to meet in private

By Suzanne Smith

HOUSE COMMITTEES — Being a House member is hard. And it's even harder when you're being asked to leave. That's what Tulsa School Board President John A. Smith says about a school board member who left the Tulsa World on Tuesday.

John Smith, the board president, said the school board's decision to hire a superintendent would have been made long before the current superintendent was hired.

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