

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 6:00 p.m.
Location: Blackstone Library Auditorium

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Norman Dahl, Liz Ferguson, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Heather Nolin, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson

Trustees (Absent): Don Gentile, Ed Prete, Jeff Vailette, Susan Wharfe

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline

Staff: Karen Jensen, Library Director, Katy McNicol, Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager

Guests: Alyson Matthews, Yale SOM Fellow

Public: none

Beth Law called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Additions to the Agenda – Beth Law announced that the Board would enter Executive Session at the close of the regular business items set forth on the agenda. She requested a motion to amend the agenda so that the Search Committee Report would follow Executive Session. Mary-Rita Killelea so moved. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried.

De Laurentis Bequest – Beth Law reported on the final disbursement of funds from the Linda De Laurentis estate. She reminded the Board that in October 2021 they received notice that longtime patron and supporter Linda De Laurentis had bequeathed 25% of her estate to the James Blackstone Memorial Library for general purposes. At that time the library received a partial disbursement of the bequest in the amount of \$226,000. Beth stated that on Monday April 4, 2022 the library was notified that the library will be receiving a final disbursement of funds in the amount of \$285,137, bringing the total bequest amount to \$511,137. On behalf of the Branford community the Board expressed their gratitude for such a generous gift and Beth took a moment to share some highlights from her life. Linda De Laurentis was born in New Haven and resided in Branford for many years. She graduated magna cum laude from Smith College and was a Fulbright Research Scholar and Teaching Fellow at two French Universities. After completing graduate studies in French at Yale University, Linda pursued a 40-year career in higher education at institutions in the area. She was active in professional associations and after retirement worked with literacy volunteers and tutored in English as a Second Language. She is remembered as an avid reader and skilled writer with an incredible zest for life. Linda De Laurentis died in 2020 and her remarkable devotion to the Blackstone Library is exemplified in her obituary which invited contributions to the library.

Approval of Minutes— Beth Law presented the minutes of the March 2, 2022 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Pat Sanders made a motion to approve the minutes. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director's Report – Karen Jensen circulated a written report prior to the meeting. She stated that it is exciting to once again have an artist of the month from the Blackstone Artists Circle Gallery Talk presenting in the rotunda. She noted that on April 5 Trustee Cheryl Kaiden introduced artist Patty Meglio who shared her 20 years of experience painting en plein air in New England.

Friends of the Library – Al Bertoline reported that the Friends have resolved their space issue and are now renting an additional unit at River Run. They are currently busy painting and adding a bathroom. Al noted that the Spring Book Sale will be held at the library on May 15-16.

Treasurer's Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3,572,000. The change in value is a modest increase of \$28,000 from the March 2, 2022 value of \$3,544,000, reflecting continued volatility in the markets. Kathy Oxsalida reviewed the February variance statement and explained the changes that occurred to the Adjusted Net Variance by adding the significant expenses of the Friends year-end gifts, \$26,647, to the Non-Operating Activity. She noted that moving the amount from the operating expenses results in a more consistent treatment of the unbudgeted income and expenses and a more accurate percentage.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that Karen Jensen presented the budget request at the Town's Board of Finance meeting on March 21. The Board of Finance recommended no changes or adjustments. On April 4 Karen presented the budget request to the Town's Education Committee. There were no questions from the Education Committee or from RTM members or the public who were present at the meeting. Janice thanked Ed Prete for his continuing support throughout the budget process.

Development Committee – Katy McNicol noted that April 6 is Library Giving Day and reported that the Spring Appeal letters will be going out next week. She provided a current list of sponsors and auction items for the April 30-May 1 Mini Golf event and thanked the Trustees for their support. Katy noted that to date 17 out of 18 holes are sponsored and 7 scorecard ads have been secured. In addition, 55 after hours tickets and 30 daytime tickets have been sold and flyers have gone out to all elementary school students.

125th Anniversary Committee – Michelle Blank presented the schedule of events for the June 25 125th Blackstone Birthday Bash: 10:30-11:30, Family Storytime with Bill Harley; 12:00-12:30, Time Capsule Ceremony, Strategic Plan Announcement, Brief Remarks; 12:30-3:00, Complimentary Picnic Lunch and Lawn Games, Commemorative Blanket, Music by the band Covergirl, and Introduction of Special Edition 125th Anniversary Blackstone Brew- Timothy's Ale.

Strategic Planning Committee – Michele Blank commended Karen Jensen and the Blackstone staff on their exceptional ongoing work in synthesizing information gathered from the Branford community and aligning it with long range library programs. The staff is on schedule to have a strategic plan framing document ready to be introduced at the June Birthday Bash. Matt Roth reported that the new Blackstone Brew, TIMOTHY'S ALE, will begin brewing in June and will be available for purchase at several local liquor stores.

SHPO Grant Application Resolution – Karen Jensen informed the Trustees that the Blackstone Library, as the recipient of a \$100,000 grant from the Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) for the repair of the roof over the auditorium, is required to provide the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) with a preservation restriction of limited duration on the property that is the beneficiary of the funding (the Blackstone Library). Under the terms of the preservation restriction the library agrees not to perform any work on the property other than routine maintenance without the permission of the SHPO; to ensure that the public has reasonable opportunities to view the property; and not to change the use of the property without the prior consent of the SHPO, all for a period of 15 years. Adam Spilka made a

motion to approve the preservation restriction document. Michele Blank seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Branford Historical Society Loaned Items – Karen Jensen informed the Trustees that she received a letter from Jane Bouley and the Branford Historical Society requesting that items on loan from the Blackstone to the Society since 1987, many of which are on display at the Harrison House, be converted into a permanent gift by the Blackstone Library Trustees. A list of these items and some photos were included with the letter. The letter referenced communication from the board president at that time authorizing the loan of the items. Karen also stated that at the May 17, 2012 board meeting a motion was made to make a permanent gift of all items to the Society and that this motion was tabled and not brought up again. All of these documents were circulated prior to the meeting. After discussion the board decided that more information and further clarification was needed in order to reach a decision.

Memorial Donation with Restrictions – Karen Jensen informed the Trustees that the library was approached by a donor who wished to make a gift in memory of her late husband. The donor also wished to restrict the gift to certain uses, including books on specific subjects, lectures and programs on particular topics and the installation of a memorial garden on the library grounds. Karen noted that there was library policy for books and programs but not for the installation of a garden. After discussion the board decided to refer the question to the Building and Grounds Committee for additional information and clarification.

Public Comment – none

Director Search Administrative Committee – Adam Spilka reported that the committee had received a number of qualified resumes, and indicated that the committee would be interviewing selected candidates via zoom in the upcoming weeks.

Executive Session -- Beth Law asked for a motion that the board enter Executive Session. Jack Thompson so moved. Heather Nolin seconded the motion. The motion carried. The board entered Executive Session at 7:08 p.m.

The board exited Executive Session at 7:44 p.m.

Adam Spilka thanked the Board for their active participation in the discussions about the search, and stated that the committee looked forward to working with them on next steps.

Adjournment –Cheryl Kaiden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Next regular meeting—May 4, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

Note: minutes are provisional until approved by the Board of Trustees.