

**James Blackstone Memorial Library**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, February 2, 2022**

The meeting was conducted as a “hybrid”; participants were able to attend in person at the library in the auditorium or remotely via Zoom teleconference.

**Trustees (Present):** Michelle Blank, Norman Dahl, Don Gentile, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Heather Nolin, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson, Susan Wharfe

**Trustees (Absent):** Maryann Amore, Liz Ferguson, Ed Prete, Jeff Valette

**Friends of the Library:** Al Bertoline

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

**Guests:** none

**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. Pat Sanders moved to add an Executive Session at the end of the February 2, 2022 agenda. Michelle blank seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Approval of Minutes**— Beth Law presented the minutes of the January 5, 2022 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Mary-Rita Killelea 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 announced that the fall appeal raised over \$57,000 in contributions, exceeding the annual budget of \$55,000, and thanked Katy McNicol, the Trustees and staff for all their efforts and support. She noted that N95 masks are available at the library and that to date over 6,000 have been distributed. The staff is currently planning the spring program and the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary time capsule project has been launched. Karen thanked the Friends for providing the funds for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative mugs given to all staff and Trustees.
- **Friends of the Library** – Al Bertoline reported that the Friends welcomed two new board members, Leslie Becker and Carrie Lankin, at their January meeting. He also announced that the Town has agreed to reserve the Town Green on an annual basis the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in September for the Friends Book Sale.
- **Treasurer’s Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that today’s approximate value of the investment account is \$3,638,000. The change in value is a decrease of \$54,000 from the January 5, 2022 value

of \$3,692,000, reflecting continued volatility in the markets. Kathy Oxsalida reviewed the December variance statement, pointing out that, after adjustments, we vary only \$3,000 from budget projections through the end of December. She noted that this information was central to producing the new proposed operating budget.

- **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met in January to review the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget request prepared by Karen and Kathy. Janice first presented some information from fiscal year 2021-2022. She noted that despite continuing challenges from the pandemic the Blackstone continued to provide a full range of services, including more robust online programming, opening the auditorium for full use, and installation of a self-checkout kiosk that offered contact-free checkout. Janice then presented some highlights of the proposed budget, including the use of a withdrawal rate consistent with last year's rate (designed to maintain a sustainable endowment), and an increase of 2.25% in the request from the Town. She also noted that the proposed additions to the Town's sinking fund are consistent with those presented last year. Janice stated that after their review, the Finance Committee had voted to recommend that the Board adopt the budget. Janice noted that the next step will be a meeting on February 11 with Jim Finch, Jamie Cosgrove, Karen, Kathy, Adam and Janice to review the budget. Adam Spilka moved that the Board adopt the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget. Jack Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Building and Grounds Committee** – Karen Jensen reported that the Building and Grounds Committee met last week and approved the placement of aluminum identification tags on the 58 trees on the grounds of the Blackstone Library. The tags are 3 inches by 5 inches in size and contain a QR code that links to a library website for more information about that particular species of tree. She noted that a donation by library patron Susan Ritter will pay production and installation costs, which should total less than \$1,000.

**Development Committee** – Matt Roth reported that the Stony Creek Brewery will make the beer for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and that the committee is investigating outlets where this beer can be purchased. Katy McNicol stated the Fall Appeal had exceeded our annual goal and is now closed. She noted some upcoming development events, including Library Giving Day and the Spring Appeal. Mary-Rita Killelea provided an update on the Mini Golf event scheduled for April 30-May 1. To date there are 5 hole sponsors and Katy continues to receive the names and contact information for sponsors from Board members. Mary-Rita emphasized the effectiveness of in person contact with a potential sponsor through email or phone call and noted that solicitation for contributions to the Silent Auction on May 1 have commenced. Katy circulated a list of prior donors to the silent auction and asked members to indicate which donors they would be willing to contact.

**125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee** – Michele Blank reported that the banners will be going up in the very near future, that a label had been chosen for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary beer and that a press release announcing the time capsule project has been issued. The Board discussed display options for the time capsule and viewed the label for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary beer, which will contain a QR code linked to the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary landing page. Michele updated the status of

planning for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Birthday Bash at the library in June. Live music will be provided by Cover Girl, a 4-piece band that plays rock and pop music. Brendan Galvin, who is on the staff of the library is a member. There will be a storyteller for children in the morning and lawn games for families throughout the day. Tours of the library and the grounds will also be available. A ceremony is being planned which will include remarks from community members and library and town officials, sealing of the time capsule and announcement of the new Strategic Plan. There was discussion of picking a date that will not conflict with other events happening in Town.

**Strategic Planning Committee** – Michele Blank reported that she met with Karen Jensen and Katy McNicol to discuss drafting the Strategic Framework. The planning team will meet weekly with a goal of completing the framework by June.

**Public Comment** – none

**Executive Session** - Beth Law asked for a motion that the board enter Executive Session. Mary-Rita made a motion that the board move into Executive Session. Norman Dahl seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The board entered Executive Session at 6:52.

The board exited Executive Session at 7:15. At this time, Karen Jensen publicly announced her retirement as library director. Beth Law congratulated her on her upcoming retirement and thanked her for her 9 years of service to the Blackstone Library and the Branford community. A search committee for a new director will be formed; Adam Spilka agreed to serve as its chair, for which Beth thanked him.

**Adjournment** –Pat Sanders made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Matt Roth seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:24

Next regular meeting—March 2, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea

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