

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 6:00 p.m.**  
**Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street**

**Trustees (Present):** Liz Alcorn, Michelle Blank, Paul Gavejian, Nancy Goldstein, Larry Greenberg, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Andy Melnick (Zoom), Shahida Soomro, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe, Lisa Zwack

**Trustees (Absent):** Chad Edgar

**Friends of the Library:**

**Staff:** Katy McNicol, Library Director, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager, Rhea Williams, Director of Development

**Yale SOM Fellow:** Brianna Hoelting

**Guest:** Meghan Tao

**Public:** none

Janice Kochanowski called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

**President's Remarks** – Janice Kochanowski announced that new Trustee Wendy Wheeler was working out an arrangement with her employer and would be attending the March meeting and all meetings thereafter. She welcomed Meghan Tao who will be the new Yale SOM Fellow beginning summer 2025. Meghan introduced herself to the Board. She grew up in Boston and attended Washington University, studying economics and biology. She worked in Chicago for several years and is currently a first-year business school student at Yale. Megan is happy to be a part of the Blackstone and is looking forward to next year.

**Additions to the Agenda** – none

**Approval of Minutes**—Janice moved to approve the minutes. Cheryl Kaiden seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Director's Report** – Katy McNicol reported that the podcast is out and she has enjoyed hearing that people are enjoying it and learning new things about the library. The next episode will focus on youth services staff about what they do at the library and with families in the community. Reference and Cataloging librarian Christina Kondziela is leaving the library and her job will be posted shortly. The staff continues to make small tweaks to the new website and they are receiving very positive responses. Katy highlighted for the Board the positive emails that she regularly receives from patrons and circulates among the staff, reminding them that the majority of patrons are thrilled with the services they are providing. Some of these emails, along with a thank you email from the Branford Counseling Center for Secret Santa gift cards, were circulated with materials prior to the meeting. The annual Connecticut Library Association Conference, where library staff from throughout the state come together for 2 days

to network and learn various aspects of the library world, will be held the last week in April. Program Coordinator Jordan Nolan and along with Kacie Meixell, who interned at the Blackstone, submitted a proposal that was accepted and they will be presenting their program at the conference this year.

**Friends of the Library** – Barbara Barrett emailed Katy a Friends update to read at the meeting. Katy reported that the Friends are working on finding an alternative site for their Book Sale and have reviewed 16 possibilities, all but one of which is private. They will develop a short list for further exploration. The Friends are actively soliciting for new board candidates and a survey has been sent to all members. The Warehouse Book Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 3.

**Treasurer's Report** – Larry Greenberg reported that the main endowment account was \$4,367,305, up 1.5% and the Creative-in-Residence account was \$558,635, up 2%. Kathy Oxsalida presented the variance report and noted that it was a healthy portrait reflecting a successful Fall Appeal and bequests received by the library. Income is up and the library is still under budget.

#### **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**— Larry reported that the committee met on January 30 and their main action was a final review of the 2025-2026 budget. The committee voted affirmatively to recommend sending the budget to the Board for final approval. The committee signed off on Form 990 and witnessed Katy's signature. The committee also discussed and approved the restringing of the library piano at a cost of \$5,500 and renewal of the landscaping contract at the same rate as last year. Larry presented highlights of the budget for discussion. The Board discussed the budget. Janice moved to approve the Blackstone 2025-2026 budget. Paul Gavejian seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Buildings and Grounds Committee** – Michelle Blank opened her report by reminding the Board of the mission of the Buildings and Grounds Committee: to provide all the support needed to keep the beautiful Blackstone Library buildings and grounds in good condition. The committee will focus on two main tasks this year, supporting ongoing maintenance and the balcony renovation project. With respect to ongoing maintenance, in addition to items in the normal course there are two bigger projects that the committee is addressing: water infiltration, both bottom up and top down, and abatement issues. Katy, Kathy and Janice met with the Town to summarize and discuss these bigger issues, so we can work together to ensure the longevity of the iconic building. With respect to the balcony renovation project the committee is preparing a request for qualifications and proposals for architects to create detailed construction plans. The balcony project will be funded with library and State funds and will not require any funds from the Town.

**Development Committee** – Nancy Goldstein reported that, in coordination with Katy, the committee set next year's development budget, which was incorporated into the overall library budget. The committee also discussed several future fundraising possibilities and will be looking into them. Rhea Williams reported that the Fall Appeal raised \$54,216. She is now moving forward with the Mini Golf event scheduled for April 26-27 and responding to sponsor emails. The library has received a hole sponsorship from the Branford Community Foundation, a title sponsorship from Amy Rosen, and is waiting on further communication from the Community Foundation. Coastal Wine and Spirits will once again sponsor the spirits tasting portion of the event. The shredding event will be held on June 3.

**Governance Committee** – Sue Wharfe reported that Wendy Wheeler will join the Board as a new Trustee at the March meeting and that the committee has approved a candidate to fill an upcoming vacancy in June. The committee continues to research the possibility of adding an amendment to the bylaws to provide for voting by email.

**Adjournment** –Janice made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:36 pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on March 5, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea  
Secretary

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