

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street

Public May Attend via Zoom Teleconference:

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michele Blank, Chad Edgar, Liz Ferguson, Nancy Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Pat Sanders, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe

Trustees (Absent): Don Gentile, Ed Prete, Matt Roth, Jeff Vailette,

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

Staff: Katy McNicol, Library Director, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager, Tina Strell, Development Director,

Yale SOM Fellow:

Public: none

Beth Law called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. She asked for a motion to enter Executive Session to review and discuss the Library Director Annual Review. Maryann Amore so moved. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried. The Board entered Executive Session at 6:01 pm. The Board exited Executive Session at 6:22.

Beth welcomed those waiting in the hall to join the meeting. She thanked Katy McNicol for a great first year as Library Director and noted that she and Pat will schedule a time with Katy within the next few weeks to review the evaluation.

Additions to the Agenda – Beth stated that the Agenda needed to be adjusted to move items in the Governance Committee report, the approval of two new members of the Board, to the first item of business. Pat Sanders so moved. Jack Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried. Sue Wharfe presented Andrew Melnick to the Board and asked for a motion to appoint Andrew to fill the remaining term of Adam Spilka ending June 2025. Pat Sanders so moved. Chad Edgars seconded the motion. The motion carried. Sue presented Lynette Gannon to the Board and asked for a motion to appoint Lynette as a new Board member to a term ending June 2026. Nancy Goldstein so moved. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried. Pat Sanders welcomed new members Andrew Melnick and Lynette Gannon to the Board and asked them to say a few words of introduction. Lynette addressed the Board. She highlighted her professional career in publishing both magazines and newspapers and her volunteer work with nonprofits, particularly as chair of several auctions. Lynette and her husband have lived in Branford for 5 years. Andrew addressed the Board. He highlighted his professional career as an attorney focusing on a corporate investigative practice and his pro bono work on several matters. Andrew and his wife have lived in Branford for 3 years.

Approval of Minutes—Liz Ferguson moved to approve the minutes. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director's Report – Katy McNicol took a moment to thank the Board for their support throughout her first year as Library Director. She noted the grief experienced by all at the loss of president Adam Spilka and expressed her gratitude for all the work the library continued to do with trustee help and

assistance. Katy acknowledged the work of Barbara Barrett and the Friends in raising funds and library awareness, thanked the Blackstone staff for their hard work while always treating each other and the community with respect and applauded Tina Strell for a very successful fundraising year. Katy expressed a special thanks to Kathy Oxsalida for her continuing support with budget and building matters and congratulated her on her 20th year of dedicated service to the Blackstone.

The new Children's Librarian Nicolette is participating in storytimes with Mary and familiarizing herself with the collection. Nicolette will join Mary, Jenna and the Friends on the green in the Blackstone's booth during the Branford Festival on June 17. The library partnered with the Branford Food Pantry to hold a food drive. The community responded enthusiastically and the drive has been extended to June 30. The library has given out over 700 seed packets and is now promoting seed saving resources to encourage patrons to return their seeds later this year.

Friends of the Library –Barbara Barrett reported that the Spring Sale raised over \$3,700 and that the Friends are getting ready for their book sale on the green on September 14-17. In this regard they are working hard to raise \$10,000 to cover the cost of the tent. To date 40% of this amount has been raised and they are looking for businesses to volunteer. Rent negotiations are underway for warehouse space at River Run and the Annual Meeting will be held on June 20.

To date the Friends have given gifts totaling \$70,000 to the Blackstone this year and \$200,000 over the past 3 years.

Treasurer's Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that the current value of the investment account is \$3.711mm. The change in value reflects an increase of \$92k from the May 3 value of \$3.619mm. Kathy Oxsalida presented the variance report. She stated that the variance remains positive on the expense side reflecting unfilled positions, deposits on auditorium use and unexpected additional contributions. The Development & Fundraising line remains negative due to the lack of a fall fundraiser.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee held a video call on June 5. The RTM approved the 2023-2024 budget at their meeting on May 9th for \$1,700,340 and the sinking fund request for \$30,000. The committee approved the reinvestment of the maturing \$300,000 US Treasury Bill into another 6-month Treasury Bill maturing 11/30/2023, with a net amount of \$301,804.21 at a yield of 5.45% with a maturity value of \$310,000 and settlement on 6/1/2023. The committee also approved a contract with CT Communications for the upgrade of the library's phone system at a cost of \$10,606. This will replace the existing phones and allow for a library-wide paging system as well as other features. The contract comes with one-year warranty/maintenance plan. The cost of the future maintenance plan is \$1,060.60 per year. This will be paid for out of the Town's Capital Sinking Fund for building contingency.

Building and Grounds – Liz Ferguson updated the Board on the balcony enclosure project to create 2 meeting rooms from the existing balcony space. The project will require library coordination with both town and state agencies and the committee is putting together a group of experienced volunteers to assist in this endeavor. The next step will involve applying for a state funding grant and getting the Finance Committee on board.

Development Committee – Tina Strell reported that the Mini-Golf event raised \$19,032, the Greater Give raised \$3,100, with additional \$200 matching funds, and the Spring Appeal to date has raised \$5,300. She also noted that \$820 has been raised through prepaid tickets for the annual Shred-a-thon on June 10.

Governance Committee – Before the Governance report Beth Law took a moment to express her gratitude to the 3 trustees who are leaving the Board. She thanked Matt Roth for filling the position of Development Committee chair for the past few years. During his tenure Matt worked with Katy and Tina to establish Mini-Golf and Shred-a-thon as annual fundraising events and, in collaboration with Stony Creek Brewery, created Timothy’s Ale, a hometown beer to commemorate Blackstone’s 125th Anniversary. Beth thanked Maryann Amore, a long time Branford resident and member of the RTM, for sharing her knowledge of the Branford community, town politics and various local organizations to build and strengthen library relationships. Maryann also spearheaded the annual shredding event and provided learning opportunities built on that event. Maryann served as a thoughtful vice-president always ready to provide helpful advice. Finally, Beth thanked Don Gentile for creativity and wit in bringing Timothy Blackstone to share his stories with the community at the 125th Anniversary Birthday Bash and for being a true advocate for the library.

Sue asked for a motion to appoint Trustees Michelle Blank, Cheryl Kaiden, and Jack Thompson to serve a second term from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2026. Pat Sanders so moved. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Sue then asked for a motion to appoint the following slate of officers to serve from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024:

Pat Sanders – President
Michelle Blank – Vice President
Cheryl Kaiden – Secretary
Janice Kochanowski – Treasurer
Jack Thompson – Assistant Treasurer

Mary-Rita Killelea so moved. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Pat Sanders announced that Don Gentile has agreed to act as an Ambassador for the Blackstone Library. The Ambassador Program was approved in 2014 for the purpose of finding people to serve as a resource for the library and begin to establish a pool of potential trustees. Pat then moved to appoint Don Gentile as Ambassador for the Blackstone Library. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Beth Law, as outgoing President, took an opportunity to thank her executive team for their continuing support and patience during very busy times and expressed gratitude for those willing to serve on the incoming executive team. On behalf of the Board, Jack Thompson thanked Beth for stepping in this year to serve as president at a difficult time.

Public Comment – none

Adjournment –Maryann Amore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on July 12, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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