

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street

Public May Attend via Zoom Teleconference:

Trustees (Present): Michelle Blank, Paul Gavejian, Larry Greenberg, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, David Levine, Andy Melnick, Jack Thompson, Jennifer Tucker, Sue Wharfe, Lisa Zwack

Trustees (Absent): Liz Alcorn, Chad Edgar, Nancy Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

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

Yale SOM Fellow: Megan Tao (zoom)

Public: none

Janice Kochanowski called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Janice moved that the Board enter Executive Session. Paul Gavejian seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The Board entered Executive Session at 6:01. The Board exited Executive Session at 6:15.

President's Remarks – Janice thanked Trustees Nancy Goldstein for serving one term on the Board and Mary-Rita Killelea, who is rotating off the Board, for her years of service to the Blackstone. She also extended a special thank you to Kathy Oxsalida who is retiring and thanked her for her 22 years of service as Business Manager. Kathy noted that when she first moved to Branford she often walked by the Blackstone Library and mused on how nice it would be to work in such a beautiful building. As the years passed by and her children got older these daydreams came true. Kathy has worked for 4 directors over 22 years and continues to be amazed by the dedication and commitment of all the Directors, staff and Board members across the years.

Additions to the Agenda – none

Approval of Minutes— Larry Greenberg moved to approve the minutes. Michelle Blank seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director's Report – Katy McNicol reported that Stephen Brady has been hired as the new Facilities Manager and Cynthia Bannon has been hired as the new Business Manager. Both new employees will start on Monday 6/9. The Blackstone app was launched in May and the Connecticut e-bill, that addressed unfair ebook publisher contract terms, passed the state legislature and is headed to the Governor for signing. The law will go into effect when another state or states with 7 million people adopt similar laws. The legislature also passed a Freedom to Read bill for public and school libraries that requires libraries to adopt clear written policies outlining how materials are selected and how challenges are handled. The Blackstone and most other public libraries already have such written policies. Once the

bill's language is finalized the library will review its policies and update the language to ensure conformity with the new bill. In-service staff training sponsored by the Friends will be held in June. The Friends are also sponsoring a kick-of weekend June 21-22 for the Blackstone summer reading project.

Friends of the Library – Barbara Barrett reported that Foote Park has been confirmed as the venue for the annual Fall Book Sale and the Friends continue to work with the Town regarding issues including lighting, lavatory availability, internet and security. The Raise the Tent project has raised 80% of the \$15,500 goal and Barbara thanked the Board for its support. A pop-up sale of world history and literature books donated by 2 professors will be held at the warehouse on June 28. The Friends will hold their annual meeting at the library on June 19 and Barbara invited all Board members to attend. Katy and Janice will say a few words at that time.

Treasurer's Report – Larry reported that the main account was up \$119,900 to \$4,531,636 and the Creative-in-Residence account was up \$17,000 to \$565,000. Overall the endowment was up \$136,000 to 5.1m. The committee decided to reinvest the \$323,000 Treasury bill that matured in May in another 6-month Treasury bill.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the April variance report and stated that there are not many changes. The Finance Committee decided that since there is a positive variance some expensive building issues could be addressed, including \$10,000 for the sconce lights and chandelier repair, \$8,000 to restring and tune the piano and funds for new shades for the conference room. Next month an increase in the Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment line will reflect these expenditures.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee— Larry reported that the committee met on May 28 and welcomed David Levine as a new member. The primary focus of the meeting was an update from investment advisor Michael Lapore from Focus Partners. Larry noted that the update covered mostly performance for and through the first quarter of this year. There were four big picture items that Michael discussed: they do not overreact to headline items, including tariffs; the inflation goal of getting back to 2% is becoming more challenging; diversification remains a critical component and benefit; and bull markets last longer than bear markets. Regarding specific performance numbers, in the first quarter of this year the portfolio was up 0.13% while the benchmark was down 0.11% so it slightly outperformed the benchmark. Since inception the portfolio was up about 4.5% while the benchmark did a bit better at 5.75%. Michael stated that the final allocation is in normal range for nonprofits and did not recommend any changes at this point.

Buildings and Grounds Committee – Michelle reported that the committee met to review two proposals for architects for the balcony renovation project. The committee used a number of criteria to compare and assess both proposals and the proposal from Lothrop clearly excelled on each of these criteria, including thoroughness and detail, substantive knowledge, motivation and desire to work with the Blackstone, collaborative style, creativity, pricing and the potential for a long-term relationship. The committee voted to recommend Lothrop as the architect for the project. The Board discussed the proposals and Michelle moved to engage Lothrop Architects Associates as the architect for the balcony renovation project. Mary-Rita seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Development Committee – Rhea Williams reported that the annual Shred-a-Thon will be held at the library this Saturday from 9:00 – 12:00. Volunteers are ready and the police and public works have secured parking spaces.

Governance Committee – Sue Wharfe presented Board members Chad Edgar and Andy Melnick for renewal of their three-year terms. Sue moved that Andy Melnick be elected for a second three-year term as Trustee. Janice seconded the motion. The motion carried. Sue moved that Chad Edgar be elected for a second three-year term as Trustee. Janice seconded the motion. The motion carried. Sue presented the Nominating Committee slate of candidates for FY2026 Officers:

President: Janice Kochanowski

Vice President: Paul Gavejian

Treasurer: Larry Greenberg

Assistant Treasurer: Jack Thompson

Secretary: Lisa Zwack

Mary-Rita moved to elect the Nominating Committee slate of candidates for FY2026 Officers. Michelle seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Adjournment – Janice made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Paul seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:04pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on July 2, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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