

**James Blackstone Memorial Library
Board of Trustees' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street**

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michele Blank, Chad Edgar, Nancy Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders

Trustees (Absent): Liz Ferguson, Don Gentile, Ed Prete, Jack Thompson, Jeff Vailette, Sue Wharfe

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

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

Yale SOM Fellow: Alyson Mathews

Guests – Zach Sims

Public: none

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

Welcome to Zachary Sims, Yale SOM Fellow – Katy McNicol welcomed incoming Yale SOM Fellow Zach Sims to the Board. Zach will replace Alyson Mathews who is leaving in June. Alyson worked with Katy and Kathy Oxsalida to develop a robust emergency management plan for the library. Zach has a strong interest in fundraising, supporting youth endowment and education advocacy.

Additions to the Agenda – None

Executive Committee Update – On behalf of the entire Board Beth expressed condolences to Trustee Sue Wharfe on the loss of her husband. She also reported that after several conversations regarding ways to honor the memory of past president Adam Spilka the committee will observe the grieving process of the family and suspend planning until an appropriate time.

With the loss of Adam Spilka, Beth Law is serving as President of the Board of Trustees. The committee recommends Pat Sanders as Vice President, filling those duties through the end of the fiscal year. A motion was put forward by Chad Edgar to approve the nomination. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes—Beth presented the minutes of the February 4, 2023 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Chad Edgar made a motion to approve the minutes. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director's Report – Katy McNicol circulated her written monthly report prior to the meeting and highlighted some additional items. She noted that the weekly baby story times are very popular, with between 60-70- people attendees over two Wednesday baby-2 classes. The Adult Friday Board Game Group had 40 people come out to play and the Music by Bill Evans concert had an audience of 65. Katy attended a CLA legislative session regarding proposed ebook legislation. Under the current licensing structure libraries get charged exorbitant prices for an ebook license with an expiration date. A CLA committee has helped draft a bill that would change that structure and make the pricing fair. This

bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Planning and Development and Katy plans to keep the Board updated and share any opportunities to support the bill.

Katy reported that on February 9, the day of the Blackstone's scheduled Awakening to Change program, the library received several concerning phone calls and an email, alleging that the program was racist and promoting CRT, and calling for the program to be cancelled. Registration was closed, the speaker notified of the calls and email and the program went forward. The speaker reported that, while having to interrupt one disruptive participant with factual data and ask for respectful discourse, she was pleased with how all participants ended up listening to one another and having a good discussion. Katy stated that the Blackstone has a programming policy similar to their collection development policy stating that The Blackstone provides programs with a wide range of perspectives that serve the entire Branford community.

Finally, Katy noted that the Head of Youth Services job posting closes on Friday, with 25 applications received to date, and encouraged trustees to consider joining many Blackstone staff members in attending the CLA Conference on May 1 and 2 at the Mystic Marriott hotel.

Friends of the Library—Barbara Barrett reported that the Friends continue to focus on reducing expenses and generating income. The Friends will meet with Jaime Cosgrove tomorrow to discuss finding an area to keep their book storage containers and they are requesting a capital grant from The Branford Foundation to purchase these containers. The Friends are also soliciting sponsorships for fall events in order to raise \$10,000 to rent the tent for their annual book sale.

Treasurer's Report—Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3.505mm. The change in value represents a decrease of 84k from the February 1 value of \$3.589mm.

Kathy Oxsalida reported regarding formatting changes to the Variance Statement. Previously some restricted donations were included in the Donations or Grants line on the monthly operations variance statement. Along with their corresponding expenses they were adjusted at the bottom of the page to give a truer picture of the operations variance. That activity is now being recorded as Other Income and Expenses, separate from the operations budget. This eliminates the need for the adjustments. The one exception is the Friends activity which, although unbudgeted, funds many important programming needs and remains in the operations statement as a separate income and expense account that cancel each other out and does not affect the net total.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Committee met with Jaime Cosgrove and Jim Finch on February 27 to review the FY 2023-2024 Budget, details of which were circulated with the materials prior to this meeting. Both were very supportive of the current budget and the work done over the past several years. The budget will be sent to Board of Finance for their review on Thursday, March 23 at the Firehouse. The Board of Education sub committee budget hearing will follow on Monday, April 3 at the Community Center, with the vote held on Monday, May 1.

Highlights to the proposed Blackstone Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 include:

Income; The requested Town contribution to the Blackstone is budgeted at \$1,700,340, an increase of \$49,524 or 2.99%, reflecting 89.22% of the library's total operating budget. The proposed withdrawal from the endowment is \$90,386. Continuing the commitment by the Town Administration, the Board of Finance, the RTM and the Blackstone to sustain the library's endowment this year's withdrawal is commensurate with the 2.25% assumed inflation factor. The proposed budget also includes direct

revenues from program operations, donations and direct appeals for a total of \$80,500, a fundraising goal for special events projected at \$25,000 and other grants estimated at \$9,000. This income brings the total library contribution to \$205,386, which reflects an increase of 2.63% and makes up 10.78% of the operating budget.

Expenses; Primary drivers include the following. The salaries amount of \$1,023,078 reflects an overall salary increase of \$18,540 or 1.85%. In accordance with all unaffiliated Town employees the library is proposing a salary increase of 2.25% for full-time staff and 2% for part-time staff. The budget for Sunday staffing and vacation replacement hours remains at \$25,000. Employee benefits and insurance increased by \$31,000 or 8.1%, reflecting a 10% increase in the cost of health insurance. Enrollment changes, salaries, payroll taxes and benefits and insurance are the biggest budgeted expense, totaling 79.7% of the budget. Materials of the collection reflect no change and make up 5.5% of the budget. Development fundraising reflects an increase of \$1,000, which is balanced against income from library fundraising events.

Janice asked for a motion to recommend that the Board approve the FY 2023-2024 Budget. Pat Sanders so moved. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Development Committee – Matt Roth reported that the Committee continues to focus on the mini golf event to be held on April 29-30 and the shredding event to be held on June 30. Tina Strell announced that all holes for mini-golf have been purchased, 3 out of 10 prior scorecard sponsors have returned, and that she continues working to secure the major sponsor. Auction donations are going well and mini-golf tickets are now on sale.

Governance Committee - Pat Sanders reported that in order to keep the 3-year rotation schedule consistent the committee is looking for a new member to fill the remaining term of trustee Adam Spilka. She also noted that 4 trustees will be invited to renew at the end of this year.

Buildings and Grounds Committee – Katy reported that the outdoor furniture has been ordered, with delivery scheduled within the next few weeks. Kathy Oxsalida and Liz Ferguson, along with Katy, will meet with a representative from Silver Petrucelli next week to review the scope of the balcony enclosure study. The muralist for the children’s room will begin work at the end of May.

Public Comment – none

Adjournment –Cheryl Kaiden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:28pm

Next regular meeting— April 12, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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