

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

Trustees (Present): Michelle Blank, Chad Edgar (Zoom), Paul Gavejian (Zoom), Nancy Goldstein, Larry Greenberg, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Andy Melnick (Zoom), Jack Thompson, Lisa Zwack

Trustees (Absent): Liz Alcorn, Shahida Soomro, Sue Wharfe

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

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

Yale SOM Fellow: Brianna Hoelting

Public: Judith Barron

President's Remarks – Janice Kochanowski called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. She thanked the Trustees for their assistance during such busy times and asked for their continuing support through the upcoming four months, particularly with respect to the upcoming mini golf and shredding fundraising events. Janice urged Trustees to attend forthcoming Town RTM, Finance and Education meetings where the Blackstone budget will be reviewed and approved.

Additions to the Agenda – none

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

Director's Report – Katy McNicol highlighted several partnership programs that took place during February. She also reported that the reference staff is offering additional support in the computer lab and developing written guidelines to support patrons. The circulation staff is busy updating books moving in and out, refreshing books in the lobby and supporting several book clubs. Katy attended numerous professional and Town meetings in February including a Town Board of Finance meeting where she presented information about the Blackstone. Katy will present the library's annual budget before this board in mid March. The CLA conference will be held this year in Groton at the Mystic Marriott April 27-29.

Friends of the Library – Barbara Barrett reported that the choice for an alternative venue for the Fall Book Sale has been narrowed to two viable options, Foote Park and the Branford Train Station. Barbara noted that the Town has been very helpful in this regard and that a decision should be reached by May 1. The Friends Spring Warehouse Sale will be held on May 3.

Treasurer's Report – Larry reported that during a challenging month for markets in general the Blackstone funds did fairly well. Total accounts increased by \$55k for the month or 1.1% to just under \$5m. Within this total the main endowment account increased by \$61k or 1.4% to \$4.37m. The Creative-in-Residence account declined \$7k or 1.3% to \$551k.

Kathy Oxsalida reported that the Fall Appeal was very successful. While budgeted at \$42,000 the appeal raised \$54,000. Repairs and maintenance, along with utilities, continue to go up as expected. Professional fees have come in and that item has righted itself and is close to budget.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee— Larry reported that the committee met on February 27 and discussed a number of items, some of which will be covered in the buildings and grounds report. The estimate for piano repairs has gone up from \$5,500 to \$8,200. The committee approved \$350 to repaint a portion of the mural in the Children's Room on the recommendation of the building and grounds committee.

Buildings and Grounds Committee – Michelle Blank reported that she and Katy met with the Board of Finance and Finance Director Jim Finch on February 24 to discuss upcoming building maintenance projects that the Blackstone will need to address in 2025 and beyond, including projects that will be self-funded and projects that will require financial support from the Town. The Board of Finance recognized the need for the Blackstone to address significant water infiltration issues and agreed to tentatively set aside \$400,000 to address these problems. Official allocation of these funds will require the library to come to the town with specific remediation proposals and quotes. The Town suggested the Blackstone engage a professional consultant to do a facilities study and develop a strategic multi-year plan that presents a comprehensive assessment of the maintenance needs and capital repair projects needed to ensure the Blackstone building stays in good condition. The Building & Grounds committee also discussed requests by non-profit organizations to use our outside grounds for events since the Town Green will not be available this Spring and Summer. The committee feels it would be a win-win to support non-profits in this way, provided we have a Grounds Use Policy in place to ensure we maintain the beauty of the library grounds. The committee is developing an application form and process, modeled after the Town's application and guidelines. Michelle provided background information on two requests to use the grounds. The Garden Club would like to have their Spring Sale on the Blackstone Lawn; it will last about 21/2 hours and utilize 25-30 tables and a pop-up tent. The Club will provide insurance. The Board discussed the request. Michelle made a motion to allow the Garden Club to use the Blackstone grounds for their Spring Sale. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried. Michelle introduced Judith Barron, the Executive Director of the Community Dining Room. Judith presented a brief overview of the work of the CDR and outlined how the organization would like to make use of the grounds this summer. They plan to hold 8 dinners on Tuesday evenings from June 17-August 22. An average of 164 patrons is estimated to attend and they will bring their own blankets and chairs. Set up will involve 4-5 food tables and alternate sites for rain and extremely hot weather are available. The Board discussed the CDR proposal. Nancy made a motion to allow the CDR to use the Blackstone grounds for their summer dining program for 8 Tuesday evenings from June 17-August 12. Lisa Zwack seconded the motion. The motion carried. Finally, Michelle reported that the initial RFQ/RFP draft for the balcony project is complete. She and Katy will review the RFQ/P with Town Engineer John Hoefflerle next week to move the project forward so the library can post an INVITATION TO BID for architectural services.

Development Committee – Nancy updated the status of the mini golf event, including using Fresh Market for food and Coastal Wine and Liquor, which has volunteered to provide vendors. There will be

several large raffle drawings that will bundle beer, wine, liquor and raffle tickets offerings. The committee is investigating fundraising events put on by other non-profit organizations to gather new ideas for events. Nancy is working with Brianna Hoelting to draft a comprehensive description of the roles and responsibilities of the Development Committee.

Rhea Williams reported that the mini golf event has raised \$5,400 to date with revenue for several holes expected in the near future. Flyers will be available in the coming weeks along with online promotions. Ticket sales will go live in about 2 weeks.

Governance Committee – Chad Edgar reported that the committee is refining a draft bylaws amendment that would provide a process for email voting in the event that a quorum is not available at a Board meeting.

Children’s Room Mural Alteration – Katy discussed recent public allegations regarding the author of the quote painted on the mural in the Children’s section of the library. She would like the board to approve removal of the quote. Both the Building and Grounds and Finance Committees approved recommending to the board the removal of the quote. The artist who created the mural can paint over the quote for approximately \$350. After much discussion, Larry motioned to paint over the quote from the mural. It was seconded by Michelle. The Committee voted to paint over the quote with 9 members in favor, 1 member opposed and 1 member abstaining.

Adjournment - Janice made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Cheryl Kaiden seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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