

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 4, 2022 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was conducted as a “hybrid”; participants were able to attend in person at the Branford Police Department or remotely via Zoom teleconference.

Trustees (Present): Michelle Blank, Don Gentile, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Heather Nolin, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson

Trustees (Absent): Maryann Amore, Norman Dahl, Liz Ferguson, Ed Prete, Jeff Vailette, Susan Wharfe

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline

Staff: Karen Jensen, Library Director, Katy McNicol, Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager

Guests: Alyson Matthews, Yale SOM Fellow

Public: none

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

Additions to the Agenda – Beth Law announced that the Board would enter Executive Session at the close of the regular business items set forth on the agenda.

- **Approval of Minutes**— Beth Law presented the minutes of the April 6, 2022 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the minutes. Heather Nolin seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report prior to the meeting. She highlighted some items from that report. The tree identification tags have arrived and will be installed in the next few weeks. Frank Zdunek, the Blackstone’s custodian, was featured in *The Sound* and recognized for his many years of service to the library. Technical services assistant Pat Bussman retired in April and the library will be searching for a replacement. The Mini Golf Fundraiser, held April 30-May 1, was a huge success and Karen thanked the trustees for their support.
- **Friends of the Library** – Al Bertoline noted that the Spring Book Sale will be held for the first time on the library grounds May 15-16. He reported that the Friends have nominated a new slate of officers and will be voting on this new slate in May.
- **Treasurer’s Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that today’s approximate value of the investment account is \$3,378,000. The change in value is a decline of \$194,000 from the April 6, 2022 value of \$3,572,000. Janice presented some highlights of a conversation she had with Rob DeLuca on April 6. Markets are down sharply due to higher inflation and the geo-political tension in Ukraine. The markets are pricing in a slower growth environment with higher inflation. YTD the return on the endowment is down 10.9% as compared to the S&P, which is down 12.9%. Janice reported that she asked Rob to give a market update at the June 1 board meeting and noted that he will be presenting

to the Board of Finance on May 30.

- Kathy Oxsalida reviewed the March variance statement and stated that, similar to the February statement, it remained steady. She noted that the March statement did not reflect the Mini Golf Fundraiser which took place April 30-May 1.

- **Committee Reports—**

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on April 28 and discussed 2 items:

1. **FY 2023 Budget Request** - On Tuesday, April 3 the RTM Education Sub-committee approved without modification or questions the \$1,650,816 operating budget and the \$35,000 sinking fund capital request. The RTM will vote on this budget at their upcoming meeting on May 10.
2. **De Laurentis Bequest** - Various uses for the remaining \$495,467 balance of the DeLaurentis Bequest were discussed. The committee considered a wide range of possibilities, including requests from various sub-committees and items related to the strategic plan. They also discussed the importance of honoring Linda DeLaurentis. Janice announced that based on their discussion the committee is making 3 recommendations; to contribute 25% of the entire gift amount, or \$127,784, to the endowment; to fund the conversion of the balcony into a meeting room, as contemplated in the renovation plan; and to commission a mural to be painted in the Children's Room. Janice noted that funding for the balcony conversion and commissioning a mural will require involvement of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. Cheryl Kaiden moved that the Board approve contributing 25% of the entire gift amount, or \$127,784, to the endowment. Heather Nolin seconded the motion. The motion carried. Adam Spilka moved that the Board approve the Finance Committee work with the Building and Grounds Committee to explore the cost of enclosing the balcony and painting a mural on the wall of the Children's Room. Jack Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Development Committee – Katy McNicol reported that the Spring Appeal has raised over \$1,300 to date and the Great Give has already raised over \$1,300. Katy thanked the Board for their support of the Mini Golf Fundraiser held April 30-May 1 and announced that the event netted over \$15,000, exceeding budget expectations. Matt Roth expressed the Board's gratitude to Katy for her outstanding work in organizing, coordinating and executing the most successful Mini Golf event ever held at the Blackstone and noted the diverse cross-section of Branford residents that enjoyed the sold-out, After-Hours event. Katy announced that the annual Shred-a-thon event will be held on Saturday, June 4 from 9am to 12pm. She encouraged the Board to seek out sponsors and to consider volunteering to help.

Governance Committee - Pat Sanders announced that she is resending the Board Self-Assessment to all members and asked that it be returned no later than May 11. The results will be announced at the September Board meeting. She reported that two members are leaving the Board in June and that the

Governance Committee voted to bring Chad Edgar forward as a candidate at the June meeting. On behalf of the Nominating Committee Pat presented the slate of officers for FY 2022;

Adam Spilka, President
Beth Law, Vice President
Janice Kochanowski, Treasurer
Jack Thompson, Assistant Treasurer
Mary-Rita Killelea, Secretary

125th Anniversary Committee – Michele Blank reported that the committee is working to get the word out for the Blackstone Birthday Bash being held on the library grounds on Saturday, June 25. There will be signage at the Shred-a-thon and logistics are being worked out and finalized.

Strategic Planning Committee – Michelle Blank thanked Blackstone staff Karen Jensen, Katy McNicol, Sarah Mallory, Christina Kondziela, Angela Meikle, and Jenna Anthony for the outstanding work they have done and continue to do on the 3 step Strategic Planning Initiative. Under the direction and supervision of Innovation Builders they have completed Stage 1, holding internal stakeholder conversations, and Stage 2, conducting a community needs assessment. Under the direction of Michelle the team is currently completing their work on Stage 3, writing the Framework Story and creating the Blackstone’s Strategic Framework Lens, which will be introduced at the Blackstone Birthday Bash on June 25.

Branford Historical Society Loaned Items– Adam Spilka reported that the Building and Grounds Committee met on April 8 to discuss a request by the Branford Historical Society/Harrison House to convert items that had been loaned by the library to outright ownership and to determine whether there were any loaned items of value to the library that needed to be returned. The committee concluded that there were no items that the library wanted or needed back or items of unusual value. The committee also suggested that if the Branford Historical Society decides in the future to sell any of the donated items they should inform the library and give it the opportunity to re-acquire the item. Adam further noted that the committee will express these considerations in a letter to the Branford Historical Society. Adam requested a motion. Heather Nolin moved that the Blackstone Library convey ownership of all donated items to the Branford Historical Society with the stipulation that (1) the document will reflect the historical ownership of the items, and (2) in the future if they decide to sell any donated items the library should first be provided an opportunity to reacquire them. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Memorial Donation with Restrictions – Adam Spilka reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee met on April 8 to review a request to establish a memorial garden on the grounds of the Blackstone Library and to assess its impact on the property. After discussion the committee determined that since the library grounds are a limited and precious resource the library needs to establish a policy to address gifts and bequests that affect the grounds. They concluded that the establishment of a memorial garden is not consistent with the library’s current needs. The committee expressed gratitude to the donor and suggested discussing with the donor several alternative uses of the funds that would honor the donor’s intent.

Public Comment – none

Director Search Administration Committee – Adam Spilka summarized the status of this project. Candidates have been through a pre-screening call, and two rounds of interviews. A third and final round is still to be scheduled. Adam stated that he believes the interviewers share the views of the Committee that we have found strong candidates for the position.

Executive Session -- Beth Law asked for a motion that the Board enter Executive Session. Heather Nolin so moved. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried. The board entered Executive Session at 6:58.

The board exited Executive Session at 7:37.

Director Search Committee – Adam Spilka thanked the trustees for all of their efforts to help find the next library director.

- **Adjournment** –Cheryl Kaiden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40
- Next regular meeting—June 1, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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