

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 2, 2022 6:00 p.m.
Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street

The meeting was conducted as a “hybrid”; participants were able to attend in person at the auditorium in the Library, or remotely via Zoom.

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Chad Edgar, Liz Ferguson, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Ed Prete, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson,

Trustees (Absent): Don Gentile, Nancy Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden, Jeff Vailette, Sue Wharfe

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

Staff: Katy McNicol, Library Director, Tina Strell, Development Director

Yale SOM Fellow: Alyson Mathews

Public: none

Adam Spilka called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Additions to the Agenda – Adam Spilka requested that a report from the Buildings and Grounds Committee be added to the Agenda. Jack Thompson so moved. Beth Law seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes— Adam Spilka presented the minutes of the October 12, 2022 meeting of the board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the minutes. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director’s Report – Katy McNicol circulated her written monthly report prior to the meeting and highlighted some additional events during the month of October. She attended the monthly LION board meeting and the Fairfield Library Administrator’s Group (FLAG) meeting. At the FLAG meeting nonprofit consultant Sharon Danosky spoke about library boards and their roles and best practices. Katy noted that she would be a good resource for board training and development in the future. The library’s program planning committee met to discuss potential adult programming for the winter session. Program coordinator Jenna Anthony will book the programs and a new calendar will be printed by the end of November. Carly Lemire reestablished the library’s social media committee. At the first meeting how to post to the library account was demonstrated for new staff and ideas for regular ongoing posts were discussed. Katy and Adam attended a state library construction grant information session. Attendance is a requirement in order to apply for state grants for construction projects. The library will resume regular tours once a month on Saturday beginning in December. Katy submitted the Blackstone’s annual report, due every November, to the Connecticut State Library. She also submitted her annual report, a copy of which was circulated with the materials for this meeting, to the Town of Branford. She noted that yearly copies of annual reports from all department heads are compiled into a book and available at the reference desk.

Friends of the Library –Barbara Barrett reported that the Friends had been very busy over the past month, including participating in the BACA Doors event and passing out books as part of the Scarecrows on the Green event. They are currently getting ready for their annual gift basket sale and will be collecting donations, baskets and contents to fill the baskets until November 25.

Treasurer's Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3,393,000 which reflects an increase of \$197,000 from the October 12 value of \$3,312,000. Janice noted that the markets continue to be impacted by economic news and inflation worries. Janice then presented the September variance report that had been circulated with meeting materials. She noted that we've seen an uptick in donations, partly due to being named as a recipient for memorial donations. The favorable variance in salaries, payroll taxes and benefits is expected to shrink when all open positions are filled. A couple of expense accounts are over budget, but are balanced by Repairs/Maintenance being significantly under-budget. This may call for a re-balance of the sub-accounts.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee discussed Katy's request that the library purchase a 3D printer cart that will cost between \$800-\$1400. The library will be starting 3D printer classes taught by a community volunteer and he will need a cart to wheel the printer into the auditorium for these classes. Both 3D printers are currently housed in the Children's Department on a counter. The new cart will hold all the requisite supplies in one spot and will allow the printer to be moved around the building for various displays and demonstrations, bringing additional attention to the library's STEAM equipment and offerings. The committee approved the purchase of the 3D printer cart.

Development Committee – Tina Strell reported that the Leadership Circle reception was held on October 13 and that turnout was good despite inclement weather. The mini-golf event will be held the weekend of April 29-30, 2023 and the shredding event on June 10, 2023. Katy passed out Fall Appeal letters to trustees for their personal notes and stated that the letters would go out before Thanksgiving.

Buildings and Grounds Committee – Liz Ferguson reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee met to revisit the idea of enclosing the library balcony to create additional meeting space, an idea that had been part of the original renovation plan. The committee met with Town Engineer John Hoeffler and David Stein of Silver Petrucelli + Associates, the renovation plan architect, to talk through treatment and cost options for the creation of one or two meeting rooms. Trustees discussed the advantages and disadvantages of creating one or two additional meeting spaces with respect to treatments and library needs.

Board and Staff Biographies and Photos – Katy McNicol reported that the staff's Social Media Committee wants to do a regular employee spotlight where a staff biography with photo is posted to social media. Katy plans to include some of these spotlights in her monthly director reports so that people will get to know the staff a little better. In this regard she would also like to share individual trustee biographies, circulated with the materials for this meeting, with the staff and asked trustees who are agreeable to send a photo to her.

Branford Poet Laureate – Adam Spilka initiated a discussion about the establishment of a Branford Poet Laureate. Amy Graver, a local Branford poet, made a presentation to the Board last year about creating the position of Branford Poet Laureate. Ms. Graver then met with First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove who suggested that she meet with the Blackstone board and present her proposal. Adam has also discussed this idea informally with the Executive Committee, Jim Finch and Katy and all expressed approval at considering this project. The board then discussed various approaches to establishing a Branford Poet Laureate, including coordinating with other town organizations such as Town Hall and the Willoughby Wallace and setting up a council to decide job qualifications, responsibilities and the application and selection process. Suggestions included arranging poetry readings, conducting workshops, teaching classes and arranging poetry projects with local schools. The board decided to move this discussion forward in the coming weeks.

Public Comment – none

Adjournment – Pat Sanders made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:56pm

Next regular meeting, followed by annual holiday gathering, December 7, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea
Secretary

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