

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, October 12, 2022 6:00 p.m.

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): Michelle Blank, Chad Edgar, Nancy Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Matt Roth, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe

Trustees (Absent): Maryann Amore, Liz Ferguson, Don Gentile, Ed Prete, Pat Sanders, Jeff Vailette

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

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

Yale SOM Fellow: Alyson Mathews

Public: none

Adam Spilka called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Additions to the Agenda – none

Approval of Minutes— Adam Spilka presented the minutes of the September 7, 2022 meeting of the board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the minutes. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Director’s Report – Katy McNicol circulated a written report prior to the meeting and highlighted some items from that report. She first thanked the Friends and trustee volunteers for the hugely successful Annual Book Sale on the Green. Katy also noted that the Friends Quick Picks gift - best seller books with shorter loan times and no holds – has been implemented and is very popular, with books are flying off the shelves. Katy introduced Tina Strell, the new development director, to the board. Tina worked most recently in the Development Office at Mercy High School in Middletown. The library also welcomed three new staff members; Alondra Lopez, Circulation, Stephanie Carvin, Reference and Emily Yates, Reference. Blackstone Teen Librarian Sarah Malloy is leaving to become the new Library Director in East Haven and a new teen librarian was recently hired. During the week of October 9 at the Town’s request the lights were blue and pink in honor of National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Week. The library is participating in two trunk and tree events, Friday, October 21 at Foote Park and Saturday, October 29 in front of Town Hall. Staff and Friends members will decorate a trunk and pass out candy. The theme is a haunted library with books and witchy librarians. Katy met with Courtney Rosenberg of the Community Dining Room and Frank Carrano of BACA to discuss partnership opportunities. Jenna Anthony from the Blackstone staff will be joining the board of the Community Dining Room and partnering with them to collect food.

Adam invited Cheryl Kaiden to discuss BACA. Cheryl, who is on the board of BACA, explained that they had applied for \$70,000 in federal funds that are being administered by the town. A vote, expected to be close, was to be taken at the meeting of the RTM that same evening; Cheryl encouraged listeners to attend the RTM meeting to show their support.

Strategic Framework –

- **Public Facing Document.** Katy presented the draft of the public facing version of the Strategic Plan which was circulated with the materials for this meeting and noted that since the circulation of this document the cover pictures have been updated to reflect the diversity of Branford and the Blackstone library patrons. She explained that after the full internal version of the Strategic Plan was approved in September she worked with Michelle Blank and Adam to create a shorter, more streamlined version that will be posted and shared with the public and town officials. Michelle Blank moved to approve the public facing Strategic Plan. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- **Implementation Priorities.** Katy presented the draft strategic plan priority highlights document that was circulated with the materials for this meeting. Katy explained that this document sets forth highlights of the priorities list for the current and next fiscal year. To determine these priorities a multi-step process was followed: internal strategic framework and community assessment documents generated for each initiative were reviewed; a long list of actions and projects was created; and, changes that began to achieve strategic plan goals without impacting the current budget were prioritized. Many items on the resulting list refocus the day-to-day activities of the library and are not expected to incur any expense. While some items come with a cost the library has existing gifts, bequests and funds that can pay for these items without impacting the operating budget. Katy and the Finance Committee are currently reviewing the list and appropriate funding sources. After this review they will present a final version to the board.

Friends of the Library – Barbara Barrett gave a special thanks to trustees who volunteered at the Annual Book Sale and announced that proceeds from the Book Sale, together with several smaller events, are approaching \$70,000 raised this year for the library by the Friends (not including approximately \$60,000 in online sales). The Friends are reengineering their warehouse and adding new shelving and are in the process of finding new warehouse space. A small subgroup of their board is working with the town to find new cost-effective space. The Friends will present their annual Scarecrows on the Green event and are planning two trunk or treat events at Foote Park and Town Hall along with their annual gift basket sale.

Treasurer’s Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that today’s approximate value of the investment account is \$3,312,000 which reflects a decrease of \$197,000 from the September 6 value of \$3,509,000. Janice noted that the markets continue to be impacted by economic news, inflation and job reports. Kathy Oxsalida presented the August variance report. She noted that it was consistent with prior months and stated that the positive report reflected the fluid staffing situation.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on October 6 and addressed three issues.

- **Building and Grounds Committee Recommendation:** The Buildings and Grounds Committee recommended that the library purchase an accessible parking sign because a patron who sought to park out front was not aware that accessible parking was available in the rear parking lot. The cost of this sign is less than two hundred dollars. The Finance Committee authorized this purchase as a normal operating expenditure.
- **Old Policy Review and Reinstatement:** The Finance Committee recognized that too much process had been required to permit staff to incur the relatively minor expense of the parking sign. Kathy informed the committee of an old policy that gave staff discretion to pay out smaller expenditures that are in line with but not specifically contemplated by the approved budget. The committee will review reinstating or updating that policy.

- **Strategic Planning Priorities:** The committee began a review of some strategic planning priorities and plan to present recommendations to the board before the end of the year. They are asking committees to provide Katy with any planned spending that falls outside of the normal operations for consideration. These will then be incorporated into recommendations for the DeLaurentis Bequest, Friends gifts and any requests that fall under the sinking fund.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for October 31 at 4 pm.

Building and Grounds Committee – Adam Spilka referred to the minutes of a recent Building and Grounds Committee meeting that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. He noted that: no responses had yet been received for the mural in the children’s space; Katy is reviewing quotes received for the granite bench; Liz Ferguson and John Hoefflerle have contacted Dave Stein to discuss the enclosure of the balcony; the Hughes memorial tree has been planted; and Kathy informed the committee of a leak in the roof above the mezzanine, which leak has been examined by a roofer and we are awaiting a proposal.

Development Committee – Matt Roth reported that the committee met on Thursday, September 15. They will continue to meet monthly on the third Thursday at 5 pm in the upstairs conference room. The committee reviewed a spreadsheet of events from last year and discussed establishing two annual events in the fall and spring of each year. The spring 2021 Mini Golf event was very successful financially and well received by the Branford community. The committee discussed making Mini Golf an annual spring event and expanding the auction to include a virtual auction. There will be one shredding event and Katy will follow up with the shredding company to find potential available dates. A car or electric bike auction for this year was also discussed. Matt introduced Tina Strell, the new Development Director. Tina is putting together a Leadership Circle Wine & Cheese Reception to be held on Sunday, October 23, from 4-6 pm. Katy stated that Fall Appeal letters are ready and will be going out shortly. Katy presented the Fundraising Together Checklist which was circulated with the materials for this meeting. She explained that this document was drafted several years ago for the purpose of informing board members of all the different ways they can participate in fundraising activities in support of the library’s mission. The document has been reviewed by the governance and development committees and she asked board members to complete the form and return it to Tina at their earliest convenience.

Meeting Dates and Holidays: Katy presented the 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule and the 2023 Scheduled Holidays and Early Closing which were circulated with the materials for this meeting. She noted that the April 5 meeting date was changed to April 12 because of Passover and that the holidays are the same as 2022. Jack Thompson moved to approve the documents. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Public Comment – none

Adjournment – Cheryl Kaiden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:43pm

Next regular meeting— November 2, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea

Secretary

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