

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
March 3, 2021

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

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

Trustees (Absent): Norman Dahl, Liz Ferguson, Heather Nolin, Jeff Vailette

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline

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

Guests: Eloise Owens, Yale SOM, Nikki Whang, Yale SOM

Beth Law called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She introduced Nikki Whang, who will work with the library as a fellow with the Yale School of Management. Eloise Owens is graduating in May, and her last meeting with the library will be in April.

- 1) **Additions to the Agenda** – none
- 2) **Approval of Minutes (January)**— Beth Law presented the minutes of January 6, 2021 noting one proposed change. Ed Kirk made a motion to approve the minutes of January 6, 2021 with the proposed change; Maryanne Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor. *Note: The February 3, 2021 meeting was cancelled.*

Director's Report – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that she and Katy McNicol have been participating in the strategic planning conversations and are learning a great deal about the process through working with Trustee Michelle Blank. Staff have been very pleased to have the opportunity to participate and really felt that their contributions were valued. The reference staff has begun featuring facts about the library's history on the webpage and in social media in advance of the Library's 125th anniversary on June 17. Karen also reported that the computer lab will re-open by appointment later this month.

- 3) **Friends of the Library** – Friends President Al Bertoline reported that the winter issue of Marble Columns has been mailed. The group is planning a new rollout of Wild Apricot membership management software, and they have completed a peer review of the FY 2019 finances. January was a record month for online book sales. The Friends have also started the process of updating their bylaws and they are evaluating the book storage facility at River Run. Don Gentile asked about the secret to the success of the online sales. Al responded that the team is very dedicated to providing exemplary service and maintaining a high sales rating and noted that the pandemic has also motivated people to buy books.
- 4) **Treasurer's Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that the approximate value of the investment account is \$3,145,000. Kathy Oxsalida presented the January variance statement, noting changes in development and fundraising on the income side, and reduced income from operations due to elimination of overdue fines and lack of income from event rental and copier fees due to COVID-19. The January report reflects the anonymous \$50,000 donation. Approximately \$19,000 received from the Friends in reimbursement for programs is reflected in the grants line. Decreases in fundraising expenses are related to the road race and there was an unexpected increase in professional fees. The salary line is under budget – a full-time employee retired and was replaced

with part-time staff, and the library has not been open on Sundays. A portion of this savings has been allocated to fund the increased use of electronic materials. Kathy noted that the budget is not linear, and any known income and expenses are budgeted in the month they are expected to occur. Accordingly, the variance statement amounts are year to date, but cannot be used for projections.

5) **Committee Reports—**

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on February 25 to review the following:

- **PPP Loan** – The Library received written confirmation from the Guilford Savings Bank on February 17 that the loan of \$171,000 has been paid off and the file closed. The Trustees' executive committee has approved using a substantial portion of the resources that were freed up as a result of the PPP loan to fund the sinking fund. The initial contribution would pay for the chiller and the duct cleaning, at a cost of slightly more than \$100,000. We would ordinarily look to the town for capital funds and are viewing this approach as partnering with the town and sharing this benefit broadly. The Board of Finance and the Education Committee, which Ed Prete chairs, have approved these matters; it will be considered by the full RTM on March 10th.
- **Designation of Major Gift** – At the last meeting the Board decided that the Finance Committee would discuss the allocation between the endowment and strategic initiatives, and asked Karen to contact the donor for further guidance. The donor would like as much as possible to go into the endowment. Based on this, the finance committee voted in support of contributing the entire \$50,000 to our investment account.

Janice requested a motion that the Board approve the entire donation will be contributed to its investment account. Maryanne Amore made the motion; Adam Spilka seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

- **Request for Funds reallocation** – In January, the board approved reallocating \$23,745 of the \$32,903 funds that were budgeted for Sunday hours, vacation coverage and health insurance benefits to fund Hoopla/Kanopy at \$18,000; Overdrive ebooks/audiobooks at \$3,000 and a subscription to the HelpNow/VetNow database at \$2,745. There is \$9,158 dollars remaining. Karen has researched further the self-checkout station and book lockers. She would like the board to consider funding the self-checkout station. The cost is approximately \$3,000. The Blackstone Library is one of the few libraries that does not have a self-checkout station. In addition, she has requested that the board approve funding for a floor polishing machine. Cost of the machine is \$3,473. The Finance Committee voted in support of purchasing both the self-checkout station and polishing machine. Janice requested a motion that the Board approve funding the Self-Checkout Station. Mary-Rita Killelea made the motion; Maryanne Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor. Janice requested a motion that the Board approve funding to purchase a polishing machine. Jack Thompson made the motion; Ed Kirk seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.
- **FY 2021 – 2022 Budget Request** – Janice presented the Finance Committee's recommended budget request for Town funding. She thanked First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove, Finance Director, Jim Finch, Board of Finance member Jeff Vailette, and RTM member Ed Prete for their valued input into this year's budget process. She noted that the goal is to ensure transparency in the process and stated her

belief that this year's budget process ensures the library and town moves forward and enables us to work together in a more collaborative environment.

The 2021-2022 budget aims to accomplish three things: First, create a sinking fund with the library contributing \$100,000 for the chiller replacement and duct cleaning. Second, create a sustainable endowment. In order to preserve the endowment for the future, we need to reduce the withdrawals each year. The proposed budget reflects a 3.25% withdrawal compared to the historic 5% rate. Third, in looking at the year over year comparative increase, it is important to note that this year is a re-set year. The request includes a two-year increase as the 20-21 grant from the Town was flat. In addition, the increase includes the 1.75% difference in the endowment draw.

Janice then referred participants to the three budget documents that had been circulated with the materials for the meeting, and highlighted noteworthy items among the revenues and expenses. The presentation was followed by a general discussion. Ed Prete thanked Kathy Oxsalida, Karen Jensen, Adam Spilka and Janice Kochanowski for helping him to better understand the budget request. He also thanked the trustees who attended the education committee meeting on March 1. Ed Prete stated that he supports efforts to sustain the endowment and put the library on a stable funding path. The amount of the increase is concerning and he encouraged trustees to contact their local representatives to advocate for the request. Further discussion followed regarding the operation of the sinking fund, where additional funding could come from, and related matters. Ed Kirk made a motion to approve the budget request and Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

Project Planning Committee—

- Roof Repair Update – The roof repair work is complete; scaffolding has been removed and the committee is working on closing out the project. The committee will meet on March 11 to discuss pending issues delaying the issuance of a certificate of occupancy – an early detection fire alarm in the children's area, and a decision on whether the historic doors at the computer lab entrance, and auditorium balcony entrance will need to be fire-rated.

Development Committee—

- Spring Fundraiser – Katy presented information about the spring fundraiser which will be an auction of experience baskets in mid-May. She thanked those who have secured items or offered their own services. Six items are confirmed: A family photo shoot with Tricia Bohan, secured by Mary Rita Killelea, who is also offering a tutoring services package. Pat Sanders is working with the Branford Garden Club to offer a floral design class; Cheryl Kaiden has confirmed two packages – Innerpeace, with an outdoor yoga class and also a studio tour with artist Mark Massaro, which includes a class, art supplies, wine, snacks, two glasses and a work of art. Ed Kirk is offering to lead two guided area day hikes, including a hiking guide and beer – the winner can choose from two locations. Trustees should reach out to Katy with their contributions.
- 125th Anniversary – June 17 marks the date. We would like to acknowledge this important milestone with a year-long celebration. Beth Law asked those interested in participating on a committee to contact Karen.

Governance Committee—

Pat Sanders reported that the Building & Grounds Committee has been re-established with the following members: Liz Ferguson, Trustee; Heather Nolin, Trustee; Pat Sanders, Trustee; Adam Spilka, Trustee; Andy McKirdy, Friends of the Library; Ray Ferguson, Community Member; Susan Barnes, Community Member; John Hoeffler, Town Engineer.

The Committee's function is to review physical plant maintenance, capital acquisitions and improvements. It meets at least quarterly and is composed of 4 board members, 2 or more outside (community) members, a Town facilities representative, and one Friends member.

Strategic Planning –

Michelle Blank reported that interviews with staff and trustee groups are complete. Interviews with key community stakeholders (programming partners) have started this week. The community deep needs analysis will begin in April; a core team of staff members has been recruited and will attend training as part of this work.

- 6) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – none.
- 7) **Adjournment** – Ed Kirk a motion to adjourn the meeting; Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.
- 8) Next regular meeting—April 7, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jensen

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