

**James Blackstone Memorial Library**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, September 7, 2022**

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

**Trustees (Present):** Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Chad Edgar, Liz Ferguson, Nancy Asher Goldstein, Cheryl Kaiden, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe,

**Trustees (Not Present):** Don Gentile, Mary-Rita Killelea, Ed Prete (Ex Officio), Jeff Valette (Ex Officio)

**Friends of the Library:** Barbara Barrett

**Staff:** Katy McNicol, Library Director; Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager; Jenna Anthony, Programming Coordinator; Sarah Mallory, Youth Services; Angela Meikle, Circulation Department.

**Guests:** Alyson Mathews, Yale SOM Fellow

**Public:** None

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by President Adam Spilka.

**1. Additions to the Agenda.**

None were offered. President Adam Spilka notified trustees that the practice of sending out a draft agenda will be discontinued unless anyone had any reason to keep them going. No reasons were offered.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the July 13, 2022 Meeting of the Board.**

After noting one change to the draft of the July 13 minutes that had been circulated with the materials of the meeting, the minutes were approved.

**3. Director's Report**

Director Katy McNicol reported that it has been a busy summer, offering lots of opportunities for her to see things in action. There are new reading programs taking place throughout the building, which she observed. She reviewed the library grounds with a landscaper, worked with Kathy Oxsalida to review our new insurance policy, held several orientation sessions with new trustees, and participated in an in-service training for staff on intellectual freedom. Adam Spilka was also part of the training. She also met with Jen Payne, a local artist, who is creating an art installation/geocache project. This is a statewide artist treasure hunt, where people must solve clues to find the treasure. Also, the Strategic Planning team continued to meet throughout the summer.

Katy reported that staffing is tight at the moment, but she is in the process of hiring 5 new staff members, which should relieve some overwork. A new part-time development associate starts work on September 13.

Katy next acknowledged the members of the Strategic Planning Team who had worked with her and gave a special thank you to the staff for their hard work. She introduced staff members Jenna Anthony, Angela Meikle, Sarah Mallory, and thanked Christina Kondziela, who was not in attendance. She also acknowledged the work of former director Karen Jensen and Trustee Michelle Blank for their extraordinary contributions to the planning.

**4. Strategic Plan Framework Presentation**

Katy presented a summary of the eight strategic initiatives developed as part of the finalization of the strategic plan framework. Those initiatives are:

- a. Inspire love of learning
- b. Cultivate knowledge through access to expert minds
- c. Promote personal empowerment

- d. Support economic well being
- e. Facilitate community connections around shared interests
- f. Create a one stop Information Center/Hub for the Branford community
- g. Advance volunteerism
- h. Celebrate diversity

The materials circulated for the meeting included a comprehensive, 110-page document that detailed the development of the strategic plan and its various outcomes. Once adopted, the staff and administration will develop a plan on how to prioritize activities related to these initiatives for the coming year. Katy said that her initial considerations to identify these priorities would depend on circumstances such as staffing, space, library policies, the status of programs services and collections, partnerships, and funding.

Trustee Maryann Amore asked if a process for prioritizing activities related to the strategic initiatives had been selected. Trustee Michelle Blank offered that the strategic plan itself provided a number of “templates” that could help with this identification. There was a brief discussion of what the most appropriate targets might be, and Michelle reminded us that the groundwork for the strategic plan was solid, and that the board and staff could rely on it and the tools used to develop it to be sure that prioritization would be valid.

Trustee Cheryl Kaiden ask a question about the impact that the planning had had on staff, which they had an opportunity to describe:

Staff member Jenna Anthony felt that it was a long, difficult and very involved process, one that she learned a great deal from. What had the most impact on her was learning how excited the community was about the plan and “how much they love us!”

Staff member Angela Meikle, reported that she felt the conversation she had with the various groups and understanding the things that the community work was asking for had helped to make her a better staff person.

Staff member Sarah Mallory, Teen Services Librarian, said that she was pleased and interested to realize how universal the wants and needs of the community were, and how they coincide with staff and board needs and desires.

Executive Director Katy McNicol said she was most impacted by the quality and depth of the staff relationships and how they were working together in a whole new way. It gave her, as a new director, an opportunity to build strong working relationships with the staff.

Michelle Blank said that it was clear from the discussion and from all of the activities leading up to this moment, just how significant an investment of time, energy, effort, and creativity this planning process had required. These were in addition to the significant financial investment we had committed to, and we have every reason to proud of the outcome. With that, a motion to approve the strategic planning framework as set forth in the document circulated with the materials for the meeting was requested by the president. Trustee Michelle Blank moved for the approval; the motion was seconded by Trustee Nancy Asher Goldstein. The vote to approve was unanimous.

## **5. Friends of the Library Report**

Friends president Barbara Barrett announced that the Friends of the Library's biggest fundraiser of the year is coming up in two weeks - the Annual Book Sale on the Green. The sale will be held from Thursday September 22nd through Sunday the 25th. There are still some opportunities for volunteering at the sale.

Barbara also noted that their recent membership drive through direct mail was not as successful as they had hoped, and they will continue to be looking for new ways to reach out and recruit new members.

Barbara also reminded us that the Friends warehouse space at River Run will continue to be a problem. At the end of this lease year their rent will likely double which they cannot afford. She encouraged board members to contribute any ideas they may have about relocation opportunities.

## 6. Treasurer's Report

The 2022 Year-end fiscal year statement was reviewed. Kathy Oxsalida said that adjustments were still being made to the year-end statement and it would be reviewed again when all the adjustments were in. The next statement we receive will be an audited statement. She also reviewed the July 2022 (FY 23) and said that revenues were on target, and the only real area was that we were under-spent on salaries, which should correct itself as new staff were hired.

Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee had met on September 1. No votes are needed tonight. One of their items of business had been the DeLaurentis bequest. Katy is still gathering information in this area and will soon distribute to the board any proposals for the use of the bequest.

Also reported that we had increased our liability insurance by \$1,000,000 (from \$4 million to \$5 million) which increased the premium by \$544. We had also added an Employee Benefits Liability policy for \$1,000,000 for an \$393 annual premium.

Next Finance Committee meeting is Thursday, 9/29 at 4:30pm at the library.

## 7. Governance Committee

Pat Sanders reviewed the results of a Board Survey that most trustees participated in this year. A summary of the results was provided. There was a discussion on the opportunities presented by the finalization of the strategic plan framework in planning for board development and participation. There was also discussion of the possibility of an annual or at least regular board retreat to discuss and plan board activities and development. The recommendations presented in the report are as follows:

- Solicit Board feedback on the nature and scope of the survey.
- Continue to update the orientation manual, materials, and program.
- Consider conducting an annual planning retreat for Board members.
- Consider revising the list of Board Committees list to include an understanding of member constitution and expectations along with how to use the Board Skills Inventory.
- Continue to research Board education and development opportunities within the context of voluntary boards in the non-profit environment.
- Integrate Board operations goals and objectives into the current strategic plan.

## 8. Policy Updates

The previously reviewed Collection Development Policy was amended to create separate forms for adding titles and requesting reconsideration of titles to the collection, and to add checkboxes to the patron response pages, in order to clarify and better understand the responses received. Trustee Liz Ferguson moved policy's adoption as amended; Maryann Amore seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

## 9. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryann Amore

Trustee

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