

**James Blackstone Memorial Library  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, May 5, 2021**

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

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

**Trustees (Absent):** Norman Dahl, Don Gentile, Jeff Valette

**Friends of the Library:** Al Bertoline

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

**Guests:** Amy Graver, Nikki Whang, Yale SOM,

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

**Additions to the Agenda – none**

- 1) **Presentation by Amy Graver**—Amy Graver, owner of Elements Design and local poet, made a presentation about her background, her experience as a poet, and the Connecticut Poet Laureate program. She described a number of ideas about the ways a poet laureate can make poetry more available to the residents of Branford. Ms. Graver asked for the board’s support to create the position of Poet Laureate of Branford, and to appoint her the first such Poet Laureate. In general, the board was in favor of creating the role, but expressed concern about supporting her role without knowing the criteria or whether there are other candidates. Beth Law thanked her for her presentation and said we would do more work on this topic.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes (April)**— Beth Law presented the minutes of the April 7, 2021 meeting of the Board. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the minutes that had been circulated with the materials for this meeting; Jack Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.
- 3) **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that the library is no longer requiring appointments for browsing or the reading room. The mezzanine and tables in the reading room are available by appointment. The new service update is posted on our website. The best practices for reopening issued on March 19 still require social distancing, capacity limits, face coverings, a 48-hour quarantine for returned materials, and barriers that protect all of the service desks. Our new self-checkout machine has been ordered and is expected in a few weeks - this will help facilitate more convenient checkout of materials. Staff have reported that they are 100 percent vaccinated; a few have a second vaccination scheduled. In response to a question from Heather Nolin, Karen noted that there has been a somewhat more upbeat feeling at the library, which has been a bit busier in May.
- 4) **Friends of the Library** – Al Bertoline noted the celebratory payment of the Friends’ donation of \$30,000 to the library. He reported that the Friends are holding a series of smaller sales in their warehouse at River Run: The first weekend (Friday, 5/14/2021 through Sunday, 5/16/2021) is

Children's and Young Adult books. The second weekend (Friday, 5/21/2021 through Sunday, 5/23/2021) is for Adult Fiction Books. Hours for the sale are Friday and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Al thanked trustee Adam Spilka for his assistance in updating the Friends bylaws, which were recently adopted. The Friends have implemented a new cloud storage platform for information and data. Al reminded the board that books can be donated in the bin at the library; large donations can be picked up from the donor.

- 5) **Treasurer's Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3,320,000. She noted that the change in the investment value reflects an increase of \$35,000 from the April 7th value of \$3,285,000, reflecting continued strength in the markets.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the March variance statement, noting that expenses have been trending consistently with the past few months. The contribution increase reflects the \$30,000 donation from the Friends, and these funds have been restricted. The operations budget is running a \$91,000 deficit – below what was predicted, but expected when the budget was amended in July 2020.

6) **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on April 29 to review the following:

- **Friends Gift** – The Friends of the Library have awarded the library a \$30,000 gift in addition to their annual support of programs and extra resources. The Finance Committee reviewed library needs and are recommending that the funds be allocated toward the purchase of furniture for the rotunda. There was general discussion about whether there should be furniture in the rotunda, and if so, what kind of furniture it should be. Maryann Amore made a motion to allocate the funds toward the purchase of furniture, pending board approval on the design. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion. The motion carried with Pat Sanders and Heather Nolin abstaining.
- **FY 2021-2022 Budget** – Janice reported that the Branford RTM's Education Committee held its meeting on Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and voted unanimously to approve the JBML budget requested amount of \$1,598,035. Janice noted that it had been a complicated year, and referred to the assistance of First Selectman Cosgrove and Finance Director Finch. She also thanked Ed Prete, chair of the RTM's Education Committee and ex officio trustee, for all his hard work. Mr. Prete noted that it had truly been a team effort. Janice said that the final step in the budget process is the May 11<sup>th</sup> budget meeting of the RTM which is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. and will be held via Zoom; she encouraged trustees to attend.

**Project Planning Committee—**

- The committee did not meet this month. There is still no resolution on the 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. There was discussion of what might be done to bring the matter to a close.

**Development Committee—**

- Katy reported that the annual appeal has earned over \$6,700 so far. The library also participated in the Great Give, earning \$750 from 16 donors so far. She noted that

the shredding event is scheduled for September 18. Finally, Katy reminded trustees that she is looking for candidates to film videos.

- Spring Fundraiser – Bid for Blackstone – Katy reported that the auction is live, and there are bids on many items. One item has already sold for the “buy it now” price. Katy noted that the auction had brought in \$1,200 to date.
- 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Michelle reported that the committee is still open to anyone who would like to join. It is planning two brainstorming sessions – all trustees are encouraged to attend.

**Nominating Committee**— Pat Sanders presented the proposed slate of officers for the FY 2022 year, for election at the June meeting:

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

**Governance Committee**—

- An updated list of board committees and current membership was circulated to the board. Pat Sanders asked the board to review it and notify her if there are any changes.
- Pat also reviewed the board skills inventory document and asked trustees to complete it. She will forward the link to the document.
- Pat noted that a Board vacancy will be created when Ed Kirk’s term is up in June. She presented Trustee candidate Sue Wharfe, whose resume was circulated with the materials for the meeting. Ms. Wharfe is to serve July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024. Ed Kirk made a motion to approve Sue Wharfe for the term; Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor. Ms. Wharfe will be invited to the June meeting.

**Strategic Planning** –

Karen reported that staff have begun working with Innovation Builders for training in the Community Deep Needs Assessment process. Three staff members are receiving intensive training in conversation facilitation. Three other staff members are training in data capture. A screener questionnaire will go out next week to recruit participants for the conversations, which will take place between May 24 and June 21. Michelle reported that Jeanine from Innovation Builders, Karen and Michelle will meet with the Strategic Planning Committee before the next board meeting to present an update on all strategic planning activities including a report on results of internal stakeholder reviews.

- 7) **Library Director Annual Review** – Mary-Rita Killelea explained the process for the annual review; Karen will email her self-evaluation to trustees by May 14.
- 8) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – none.
- 9) **Adjournment** – Maryann Amore made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

10) Next regular meeting—June 2, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jensen

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