

**James Blackstone Memorial Library**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
**Wednesday, July 8, 2020 6:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

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

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

**Guests:** Jim Finch, Town of Branford Finance Director   **Public:** Wayne Cooke, Carolyn Sires

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

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

- 1) **Public Comments** – Wayne Cooke asked if the Board would address two questions: *1. Why is the library still not open when other libraries on the shoreline are open? 2. Please explain the reported \$99,000 budget surplus in FY '20.* Beth Law stated that the questions would be addressed by agenda items 6 and 9.
- 2) **Additions to the Agenda** – Beth Law asked for a motion to add ***Applying for a PPP Loan*** to the agenda. Adam Spilka made the motion; Ed Kirk seconded and all voted in favor.
- 3) **Presentation** – Town of Branford Budget Process – Jim Finch, Town of Branford Finance Director
- 4) **Approval of Minutes (June)**—Pat Sanders made a motion to approve the minutes of June 3, 2020; Ed Kirk seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 5) **Director's Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She added that patrons continue to appreciate the contactless pickup service and the library has received compliments on the variety of virtual programs being offered. She drew the Trustees' attention to an insert that had been published in *The Sound* called *CT Summer on the Shoreline*, which featured 10 of the library's summer programs in its calendar section. The library was also in the news with Miss Carly's feature as Person of the Week and letters to the editor regarding the RTM's decision on the Library budget. Karen reported that donations have been received as a result of the letters that were published. Karen also asked Trustees to complete the conflict of interest disclosures and return. She is also updating the Trustees manual and would like trustees to update their bios if necessary. She will circulate the current bios to all.

Beth Law shared that she is very impressed with the number and quality of programs offered by the Youth Services department this summer. Adam Spilka applauded the decision to highlight books relating to social justice in the printed director's report.

- 6) **Library Reopening** – Governor Lamont has included libraries in CT's phase 2 reopening plan. Sector rules for Libraries reopening were circulated; Karen reported that the library is in compliance and plans to open the building for computer access by appointment beginning July 13. Karen and library managers worked together to create a plan that incorporates the guidelines and is specific to the Blackstone building.

In response to Mr. Cooke's question, Karen explained that approximately 10 libraries in CT were open on June 17, and that the degree of opening is left to interpretation by individual libraries. The Blackstone and Willoughby Wallace libraries have been offering contactless borrowing since mid-May; the Blackstone Library is hosting a variety of virtual programs and staffs the building during regular hours to help residents with reference and tech questions. The Willoughby Wallace Library opened their doors on June 6<sup>th</sup>; the Blackstone Library is a much larger operation and completely different building. Karen wanted the Board to be aware of opening plans and guidelines in advance; thus an opening date one week later. She asked the board to approve the plan submitted. Adam Spilka made a motion to approve the plan and authorize the Library Director to implement changes as developing conditions deem necessary. Ed Kirk seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

- 7) **Remote Work Policy** – Karen explained that until COVID – 19 is no longer a threat, some employees may continue to work remotely when appropriate. She asked the board to approve a policy outlining the guidelines for remote work. Pat Sanders made a motion to approve the policy; Ed Kirk seconded the motion with all voting in favor.
- 8) **Friends of the Library Report** – In the absence of the Friends liaison, Karen reported that Al Bertoline was elected as president at the Friends annual meeting in June. Barbara Barrett is the new vice president; Jonathan Grande is treasurer; Judy Stebbins is serving as membership chair, and Ellen Carucci as secretary. The Friends have officially cancelled their book sale scheduled for September and are exploring other sources of revenue.
- 9) **Treasurer's Report** – Adam Spilka reported that May's financial report still reflects a significant amount of unspent funds. Karen purchased furniture and equipment as authorized in the amount of \$27,000, which is not reflected in the report. Adam noted the stock market's continued volatility; there is no change in long-term investment approach. The investment account balance has increased by \$162,000 to approximately \$2,791,000 as of July 8.

In response to Mr. Cooke's question, Adam explained that the Library submits its budget report in February. At that time, we have financial information only through the end of the prior month, in this case, December 2019. That financial report showed positive variances, but the report is a balance-sheet type snapshot -- it was not a projection or prediction for fiscal year-end. Nonetheless, the information was treated as if the Library were projecting a surplus. It has long been established practice, with approval from the Town Board of Finance, for the library to return unspent funds to its investment accounts.

#### 10) Committee Reports—*only as required*

##### Finance Committee—

- Amended FY 2021 Budget – Adam noted the decision of the RTM, at the Education Committee's recommendation, to provide a contribution equal to the prior year's allocation. The proposed budget reflects that lower than anticipated Town contribution and other matters adversely affecting revenues, generally resulting from COVID-related fundraising issues and the unavailability of the auditorium due to construction. Adam highlighted specific changes. Maryann Amore made a motion to approve the budget; Ed Kirk seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- Applying for a PPP Loan – Adam noted that, because the proposed budget reflects a deficit in FY'21, the Finance Committee had discussed various ways of meeting that deficit, including the possibility of applying for a Paycheck Protection Program loan. Karen requested permission to apply for a 100% forgivable loan through Guilford

Savings Bank. Ed Kirk made a motion to authorize Karen to submit the application; Maryann Amore seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Project Planning Committee—

- Roof Repair Update – Karen reported that the committee met on July 2 to review the completed construction documents and cost for the project. Now that construction documents are 100% complete, the cost of the project is estimated at \$462,800. Downes Construction is finalizing the numbers before our meeting tomorrow. The Library’s application for a \$100,000 Historic Restoration Funds grant was approved through the State Historic Preservation Office. The grant will be used to offset the \$500,000 authorized by the RTM for roof repairs.

Development Committee—

- Road Race Update – Beth reported that the Governor has delayed the Phase 3 reopening and there are no updates on the Road Race status.
- Donor Database – Katy McNicol reported that she is updating the Library’s donor database and will be in contact with new board members to set up accounts. She encouraged all trustees to think about potential donors and ways to reach out.

Governance Committee—

- Orientation for new members – Pat Sanders explained the orientation process which will take place through zoom this year. She will be in touch to set up a time.

11) **Strategic Plan** – Beth Law explained the need to appoint small working group to work with the Library Director to identify and hire a consultant for the work. She requested a motion to appoint Maryann Amore, Mary-Rita Killelea and Pat Sanders; Adam Spilka made the motion; Pat Sanders seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

12) Adjournment – With no further business, Beth called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Sanders made the motion; Ed Kirk seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 pm. The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Jensen

***Note: Minutes are unofficial until approved by the Trustees.***