

**James Blackstone Memorial Library**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

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):** Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Norman Dahl, Liz Ferguson, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Heather Nolin, Matt Roth, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson,

**Trustees (Absent):** Don Gentile, Ed Prete, Pat Sanders, Jeff Vailette, Sue Wharfe

**Friends of the Library:** Al Bertoline

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

**Guests:** Nikki Whang, Yale SOM

**Public:** none

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

**Additions to the Agenda – none**

- **Approval of Minutes**— Beth Law presented the minutes of the July 7, 2021 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the minutes. Norman Dahl seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report prior to the meeting. She noted that activity in the library has picked up over the summer and doubled from last year, with an average of more than 200 patrons per day coming into the library during the month of July. Fall programs are a mix of zoom and in-person since some programs work best in a zoom format and patrons have requested that other programs be held in person. Miss Carly is back and Sunday hours from 1-4 pm will resume on September 12. September is Library Card Sign up Month and Katy McNicol has designed two new library cards commemorating the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. September is also the month that the community-wide survey, developed as part of the strategic plan, will be released. It will be live on the website and widely distributed through an email to all patrons, a press release to local media and through library partners. The roof finials and smoke detectors are scheduled to be re-installed next week, after which the Library will submit final paperwork on the construction project and receive the balance of funds from the state.
- **Friends of the Library** – Al Bertoline again noted the success of last years’ fundraising efforts in raising over \$82,000 for the library. He reported that online sales are steady and that the Friends’ annual book sale will be held under the tent on the green from September 30-October 1.

- **Treasurer's Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3,509,000, an increase of \$100,000 from the July 7 value of \$3,409,000, reflecting continued strength in the markets.

Kathy Oxsalida reviewed the July variance statement and highlighted that income and expenses are running close to budget in all areas except for Grants income. In addition to the Friends' grant income the library received two additional grants. The first was from the family of a deceased patron and consisted of \$5,000 to purchase a memorial bench and \$2,500 to purchase materials on diversity for the children's and teens collections. The second was from Community History Web Archives and consisted of \$1,100 to provide training and resources for librarians to build an online collection of local history.

- **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee did not meet in August and that the committee approved by email the Investment Management Agreement with Hightower for the restricted funds relating to the Nolin Creative-in-Residence program. The authorized signers executed the agreement and the funds have been placed in a separate account. The IMF will follow the same guidelines used for the regular endowment with respect to investments, withdrawals and management fees. Janice announced a vacancy on the Finance Committee and asked any interested board members to contact her.

**Development Committee—**

- **Shredding Event** -- Maryann Amore reported that the second annual Shred-a-thon shredding event will be held at the Blackstone Library on Saturday, September 18 from 9am to 12pm. Tickets cost \$10 and entitle the holder to shred two copy-paper sized boxes of materials. The event is being promoted through emails and posters. Follow-up programs are being explored. Matt Roth noted that the Library's cost is \$750 and we are seeking sponsorships at \$200. Norman Dahl agreed to be a sponsor. Michelle Blank suggested that copies of the community-wide survey be handed out at the event.
- **Leadership Circle Event** - Katy McNicol announced that a reception for Leadership Circle donors will be held on the terrace on October 17.
- **125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** – Michelle Blank thanked Nikki Whang for her work in putting together a comprehensive spreadsheet of the events making up the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. The spreadsheet includes the resources needed from the staff and the board, including opportunities for board leadership and sponsorship support. After a final committee meeting in the near future where goals will be established the spreadsheet will be distributed to all board members with a request that final decisions on involvement be making before the upcoming October 6 meeting. Michelle stressed that Trustee involvement will be necessary to make these events successful.

**Strategic Planning** – Michelle Blank reported that the Strategic Planning Committee met with Jeanine Esposito from Innovation Builders who updated them on the results of the deep needs community interviews. Karen Jensen noted that all but two community interviews have been completed and that after the two remaining interviews are conducted the data will be analyzed

for trends and patterns. Michelle stated that data analysis will be completed by mid-October and Jeanine will report the findings to the board by the end of November. Innovation Builders will then provide training in strategic plan drafting to the staff and the final version of the strategic plan will be written after the new year.

**Buildings and Grounds** – Liz Ferguson reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee met in early summer to begin their planning “to keep the library beautiful for the next 125 years.” She announced that two subcommittees have been formed, a grounds and landscaping subcommittee led by Pat Sanders and a maintenance and conservation subcommittee consisting of Liz, Heather Nolin and Adam Spilka. The grounds and landscaping subcommittee, whose purpose is to ensure that the grounds are maintained according to plan and to make recommendations for further upkeep and enhancement, completed a walk of the grounds and submitted a report to the committee chair.

#### **Policy Updates –**

- **Procurement Policy** – Karen Jensen reported that the threshold for major contracts going out for competitive bid needed to be updated and raised from \$7,500 to \$12,500. Adam Spilka suggested a change that better reflected the Library’s status as an independent corporation, noting that this change did not affect the purchasing procedures described in the policy. There was discussion of whether the proposed \$12,500 threshold is appropriate for the Library. Maryann Amore made a motion to amend the Procurement Policy as presented and reflecting Adam’s suggested change. Matt Roth seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- **Rental Policy** - Karen Jensen presented a revised Rental Policy, noting that it had not been updated since 2013. There was discussion of the new proposed rates, and whether free set-up time should be included. Adam Spilka stated that he had a number of somewhat technical comments on the contract portion of the policy largely relating to ensuring consistent use of terms. He did not believe that it was worth taking the Board’s time to go through them, and suggested that the Board’s approval include such changes as he, Beth Law and Karen Jensen agreed. Maryann Amore made a motion to amend the Rental Policy as presented, with such changes as agreed by Adam, Beth and Karen. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **Public Comment - none**

- **Adjournment** –Mary-Rita Killelea made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m.
- Next regular meeting—October 6, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea

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