

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
January 6, 2021

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

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

Trustees (Absent): Maryann Amore, Norman Dahl, Don Gentile, Cheryl Kaiden

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

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

- 1) **Additions to the Agenda** – none
- 2) **Approval of Minutes (December)**— Ed Kirk made a motion to approve the minutes of December 2, 2020; Janice Kochanowski 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 with COVID numbers increasing over the holidays, the library has temporarily closed the computer lab and is open for short browsing appointments. She brought the board’s attention to an event happening on January 25th in collaboration with the Branford Community Foundation and BCTV – a talk with Debby Irving, author of *Waking up White*. She encouraged Trustees to attend. Finally, Karen announced that the library had received a major gift of \$50,000 from an anonymous donor. The donor has asked that we designate the gift toward the Library’s endowment and new initiatives recommended as a result of the strategic planning process. Adam Spilka commented on the impressive variety of programming conducted on a regular basis by the library, and asked about the process. Karen credited the excellence of the staff who participate on the programming committee, especially Jenna Anthony, Carly Lemire and Sarah Mallory, who are all directly responsible for programming. She also credited strong collaboration with the Friends of the Library and their generous funding for the success of Library programs.
- 4) **Friends of the Library** – Friends President Al Bertoline reported that the Friends of the Library annual book sale is scheduled for the Town Green on October 1, 2 and 3, 2021.
- 5) **Treasurer’s Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that the approximate value of the investment account is \$3,114,000. Kathy Oxsalida presented the November variance statement, noting that the auditorium kitchen repair is complete and the rest of the furniture ordered for the children’s area has been received. Expenses are in line with what has been budgeted.
- 6) **Committee Reports**—
 - Finance Committee**— Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on 12/29 and will hold regular meetings on the Thursday preceding each month’s board meeting. She also expressed gratitude toward the anonymous donor.

- **PPP Loan** – Janice reported that the Library is still awaiting the final decision from the SBA. They have 90 days from submission of the forms, which was approximately 11/17.
- **Request for Funds reallocation** – Karen Jensen had circulated a memo regarding requested \$33,000 in funds that will not be used for Sunday hours and vacation coverage due to the COVID pandemic, as well as funds allocated toward health insurance coverage for an employee who has retired. She recommended reallocating such funds to electronic materials and a self-checkout machine. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to vote on each item separately; Ed Kirk seconded the motion. Trustees discussed the merits of funding the various items described in the memorandum, which included Hoopla/Kanopy at \$18,000; Overdrive ebooks/audiobooks at \$3,000 and a subscription to the HelpNow/VetNow database at \$2,745, plus a self-checkout station at \$9,000. All voted in favor of reallocating funds toward the first three items. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to table a vote on the self-checkout machine to the February meeting; Pat Sanders seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Karen will get specific quotes on the self-checkout machine and book lockers prior to the next scheduled Finance Committee meeting.
- **Amended Gift Policy** – Adam Spilka explained that the Finance Committee reviewed the Library’s gift policy, last amended in 2016. Because the Library solicits gifts designated for the operating budget through its annual appeals, and the Leadership Circle for these appeals includes categories for donations up to \$5,000, the Finance Committee recommends increasing the limit of gifts subject to Board restriction from the current amount of \$1,000 to gifts over \$5,000. A discussion followed and Ed Kirk recommended a change to the designation of one paragraph. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to amend the policy as written with Ed’s suggestion; Ed Kirk seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

Project Planning Committee—

- **Roof Repair Update** – The building committee met on December 3, 17 and 30. The auditorium ceiling has been painted and the room is being cleaned to turn back to the library. The roof repair is behind schedule due to a combination of the holidays and necessity of some workers to quarantine due to COVID. The staging will be up for a few weeks more.

Development Committee—

- **Fall Appeal** – The appeal has received approximately \$46,165 to date.

Governance Committee—

Pat Sanders explained that with the end of the renovation drawing near, it is time to re-establish the Building & Grounds Committee. 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. Those who are interested in serving should speak with Pat, Beth or Karen.

Strategic Planning –

Michelle Blank reported that she had worked with committee members to finalize a contract which she will present to Innovation Builders. Michelle, Karen, Eloise and Katy are working on a schedule and questions in order to interview internal stakeholders in January and February. Included in this group are all trustees, select former trustees, select staff, and select programming partners. A discussion ensued about allocating a portion of the \$50,000 donation to strategic plan initiatives. Ed Kirk thought it might be counterproductive to determine an amount to allocate from the anonymous gift for initiatives before completing the plan. Liz Ferguson wanted to ensure that any funds from the gift will be allocated to initiatives identified through planning, and not on the planning process itself. It was decided that the Finance Committee will discuss the amounts to allocate, and Karen will contact the donor for further guidance.

- 7) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – none.
- 8) **Adjournment** – Heather Nolin made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Adam Spilka seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.
- 9) Next regular meeting—February 3, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jensen

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