

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 2, 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, Don Gentile, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Heather Nolin, Ed Prete, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka

Trustees (Absent): Ed Kirk, Liz Ferguson, Matt Roth, Jack Thompson, Jeff Vailette

Staff: Karen Jensen, Library Director, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager

Guests: Nikki Whang, Yale SOM, Susan Wharfe

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

Additions to the Agenda – none

- 1) **Approval of Minutes (May)**— Beth Law presented the minutes of the May 5, 2021 meeting of the Board that had been circulated with the materials for this meeting. Maryann Amore made a motion to approve those minutes; Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

Beth then introduced Susan Wharfe, who will begin her term as trustee on July 1. Susan described her professional training, her work with various non-profits in Branford and her enthusiasm for libraries, noting that she had lived in Branford since 1986. Trustees welcomed Susan.

- 2) **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen had circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that the strategic planning process is going well. Maryann Amore asked about Project Outcome; Karen responded that this is an initiative developed by the Public Library Association of America to help libraries conduct meaningful assessments of program impact. Karen reported that the library will use Project Outcome tools to assess a handful of programs in June, and will provide a report at the July meeting. Maryann also commented that the library’s participation in the Webs Archive program is impressive, and she hoped there will be some publicity around this. Karen confirmed that a press release is planned. In response to a question from Pat Sanders, Karen noted that all children’s programs will be virtual this summer: the children’s librarian is out on maternity leave until September; the programs were planned in advance of COVID restrictions being lifted; and children under 12 are still not eligible for the vaccine. These factors make it difficult to switch to holding programs in person. Heather Nolin noted that she had not been able to access some areas of the library’s online archives and that the problem may be related to the IP address. Karen will look into this.
- 3) **Friends of the Library** – In the absence of Al Bertoline, Friends President, Beth reported that the Friends annual meeting will take place at the library on June 15. All trustees are invited to attend. Karen added that the mini book sales in May were very successful, earning almost \$10,000 over the two weekends they were held.

- 4) **Treasurer's Report** – Janice Kochanowski reported that today's approximate value of the investment account is \$3,350,000 – up \$30,000 from May.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the April variance statement, noting that it is trending in line with the past few months. The report now specifically identifies \$80,000 in Board-restricted donations.

5) **Committee Reports—**

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on May 27. The RTM approved the budget that was submitted by the library, with no changes. The Finance Committee will review and recommend updates to the investment policy at their next meeting, for presentation to the board in July.

Project Planning Committee—Roof Repair Update – Karen noted that the architect, town engineer and construction manager had visited the building with the fire marshal to review the issues affecting the certificate of occupancy. A decision is pending.

Building & Grounds Committee – In the absence of Liz Ferguson, Karen reported that the Building & Grounds Committee had its initial meeting and reviewed pending building projects. Kathy and Karen will obtain quotes from sound system vendors. The duct cleaning is finished, and the AC chiller should be delivered in early June. The Committee will begin work on a plan of maintenance and preservation for the building – a document that will help with planning and is required for some grants.

Development Committee—

- 125th Anniversary subcommittee – Michelle Blank presented a summary of the work of the committee. The subcommittee held two brainstorming sessions during the previous month. Near-term priorities include preparing a press release announcing a year-long anniversary celebration, finalizing a logo, and identifying a few realistic anniversary initiatives/activities. She stressed the importance being cognizant of limited resources (staff, time, funds) when deciding upon anniversary activities because staff is already very busy with ordinary operational matters, remaining responsive to changing Covid requirements, and strategic planning tasks. Michelle underscored that utilizing trustee time and talent will be key to successfully executing any anniversary program/event. The next step is for the committee to present the limited list of initiatives for the Board to consider, all of which will require trustee leadership and hands-on support. Michelle also responded to questions and suggestions from trustees regarding partnerships and additional activities.

Governance Committee—

- Pat Sanders reported that the committee had developed a questionnaire and exit interview process for outgoing trustees, which is designed to improve orientation, enhance engagement, say “thank you” and assess continuing interest. Ed Kirk, whose term ends on June 30, participated in the process; a report from the committee will be shared with trustees. Beth Law acknowledged the board's appreciation for Ed's service over the past six years as a trustee.
- Appointment of Trustees to serve second terms, July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024

- Michelle Blank made a motion to reappoint Beth Law, Liz Ferguson and Janice Kochanowski for second terms. Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.
- Mary-Rita Killelea made a motion to reappoint Pat Sanders to a second term. Maryann Amore seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

Nominating Committee—Pat Sanders presented the slate of officers for FY 2022:

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

Michelle Blank made a motion to approve the officers for FY 2022; Norman Dahl seconded the motion. The motion carried with all voting in favor.

Strategic Planning Committee – Michelle Blank presented the progress to date. The initial internal alignment interviews have been completed and a full report was made to the committee. The report is available to trustees; Michelle will present a summary in July. Karen reported that staff have been immersed in the training process for the community deep needs analysis. Jeanine from IB facilitated the first two community conversations last week. Members of staff are reviewing recordings of the conversations facilitated by IB; nine additional sessions that will be facilitated by Blackstone staff are planned for the upcoming weeks. Michelle noted that there is overlap between some of the topics discussed during the Step 1 internal conversations and the Step 2 community conversations. The final Strategic Framework and companion Strategic Plan will integrate the results from Step 1 and 2.

- 6) **ARPA grant submission** – Karen had circulated a memo in advance of the meeting recommending that the library apply for \$17,786 available in funding through the State Library, to pay for laptop computers that can be loaned for use in the building and on the library terrace. There were questions about how to keep the laptops secure; they will be checked out to patrons using their library cards; they may be used only on Library premises, for a limited period of time; we can consider software that will enable them to be tracked, or shut down remotely.
- 7) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – none
- 8) **Library Director Annual Review** – Adam Spilka made a motion to enter executive session in order to discuss the Library Director’s annual review. Pat Sanders seconded the motion and the meeting entered executive session at 7:00 p.m. The executive session concluded at 7:25 p.m. and the meeting resumed.

Adjournment - With no further business, Norman Dahl moved to adjourn the meeting; Michelle Blank seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

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