

Minutes
James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
November 4, 2020

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

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

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

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline

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

Guests: Ed Prete, Chair of the Education Committee, Branford RTM

Beth Law called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

- 1) **Additions to the Agenda** – none
- 2) **Approval of Minutes (October)**—Pat Sanders made a motion to approve the minutes of October 7, 2020; Maryann Amore seconded the motion and all voted in favor, with Michelle Blank, Ed Kirk and Janice Kochanowski abstaining.
- 3) **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that since the library has reopened the stacks, reading room and study areas on September 14, appointments for browsing the stacks are no longer necessary. Karen reported that Sandy Johnson is retiring on December 18 after 37 years of service to the library. Karen also pointed out that the Library was featured in the September issue of *Branford Neighbors* (along with Trustee Jeff Vailette) with a focus on resources to learn about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Beth Law applauded the youth services department’s take and make kits, and their successful collaboration with ERACE on Zoom.

- 4) **Friends of the Library** – Friends President Al Bertoline reported that the Friends Fundraising Taskforce has been meeting to discover new ways to raise funds in support of the library. He and Beth Law thanked Trustees Pat Sanders and Mary-Rita Killelea for agreeing to participate on the committee. Al noted that the Friends and the Library had both sponsored a door for BACA’s Painted Doors of Branford which will be displayed on the Town Green November 7 & 8. The Friends’ Board has added two new members: Carol Titcomb and Robert DiGoia.
- 5) **Treasurer’s Report** – Adam Spilka reported that the approximate value of the investment account is \$2,958,700. He introduced Kathy Oxsalida, the library’s business manager, who is essentially the library’s CFO. Kathy presented the September variance statement noting that \$5000 was transferred from fundraising sponsorships from last year’s cancelled minigolf tournament. Program operations are low and will continue that trend, especially as the library has eliminated overdue fines. Salaries are lower but will begin to normalize as a staff member on temporary part-time status has returned to full-time. Materials of the collection are higher as some of the larger expenses for databases come due in the 1st quarter. Utilities expenses have been lower than expected. Repairs and maintenance is higher due to a need to replace out of date lighting fixtures in the auditorium.

There were also some expenses related to the HVAC chiller. Other categories of expenses are in line with expectations.

Adam continued with the Treasurer's report, noting that he had attended the most recent Board of Finance Committee meeting at the request of Finance Director Jim Finch. Adam and Jim made a presentation regarding the sustainability of the library's investment account which was well received. Adam noted that he believes that the Library has made progress in its goal to improve communications with town officials. Ed Prete noted that he agreed and felt encouraged that the library and RTM can have a more collaborative relationship. Jeff Valette concurred that the presentation was excellent.

6) **Committee Reports—**

Finance Committee—

- PPP Loan – Adam Spilka reported that the library had received a notification from Guilford Savings Bank that it had sent a recommendation to the SBA to forgive the full amount of the library's loan. The Library is awaiting the final decision from the SBA.

Project Planning Committee—

- Roof Repair Update – The committee met on October 8 and discussed the final phases of the project. The steel structure supporting the roof was delivered this morning by crane. Scaffolding has been installed in the auditorium and painting is about to begin. The committee also received a proposal from Downes Construction for including the HVAC chiller in the project. Since the cost of including the repair in the project was more expensive, and exceeded contingency funds, the decision was made to complete the repair at a later date. The rear roof repair and auditorium painting is expected to be complete by the end of December at which point the renovation project will wrap up.

Jeff Valette noted that the chiller repair is considered to be a capital expense, and recommended that the library obtain a detailed proposal to include in its capital request to the Town.

Jack Thompson asked about the status of the balcony enclosure; Karen Jensen stated that it had been an add alternate to the project and would have been completed if there were contingency funds. Unfortunately, now that the project is at its end, the funds are not sufficient to complete the enclosure. The carpet has been replaced and the ceiling will be painted – the area is still available for use when there are no programs in the auditorium.

Development Committee—

- Fall Appeal – The appeal has been printed and staff are assembling the mailing which will go to over 1500 households. Katy will package letters for donors that trustees have "claimed" so that trustees can write personal notes. These letters are available at the library. All trustees are reminded to review the "unclaimed" donor list. The appeal will be supported by a series of emails – the first being Beth Law's video message which was sent today.
- Target Circle—Katy McNicol reported that the library was featured again in the fall and had received \$982 from the program this time. (The library earned \$850 in donations when featured in the spring.)

Governance Committee—

- Pat Sanders wanted the Trustees to be aware of a series of virtual workshops offered by the Association of CT Library Boards in November. Karen will forward descriptions of the programs and links for registration.

Strategic Planning – Michelle Blank presented a plan and timeline for initial interviews with internal stakeholders. She will work with Karen and Yale SOM fellow Eloise Owens in the next month to begin talking with stakeholders. The committee has identified a consultant to work with the library to create a strategic framework. Michelle will present the proposal at the December meeting.

- 7) **Sunday Hours** – Karen reported that activity has not picked up significantly and she recommended waiting at least another month to open on Sundays. There was no objection.
- 8) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – none.
- 9) **Adjournment** – Mary-Rita Killelea made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Pat Sanders seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.
- 10) Next regular meeting—December 2, 2020—Location TBD

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jensen

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