

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Wednesday, September 9, 2020
Minutes

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Liz Ferguson, Don Gentile, Mary-Rita Killelea, Cheryl Kaiden, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Frank Twohill

Trustees (Absent): Norman Dahl, Ed Kirk, Heather Nolin, Jack Thompson, Jeff Valette

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline **Guests:** Eloise Owens, Yale SOM Intern

Staff: Karen Jensen, Library Director, Katy McNicol, Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach

Public: Wayne Cooke

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

- 1) **Approval of Minutes (July)**—Don Gentile made a motion to approve the minutes of July 8, 2020; Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 2) **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that the library has received many expressions of appreciation from our patrons, some of which were highlighted in the report. The new fall event calendar has been published and staff created a document which will be shared with Branford Schools highlighting all of the services available from the library that support our students. Circulation of physical materials is lower than previous years because of the COVID pandemic. However, Overdrive circulation over the summer increased by 50% over last year and HOOPLA circulation doubled. Attendance at online library programs, especially the adult programs, has increased well beyond last year’s totals for in-person programs.
- 3) **Friends of the Library** – Beth introduced the new Friends President, Al Bertoline. Al reported that the Friends had held very successful book sales in August, raising a total of \$16,753 and have one more weekend planned in September. There may be a “clearance sale” which will be announced. Online book sales have netted \$7,000 over the past two months. The Friends are working harder than ever to support the library given the new restrictions in place because of COVID-19.
- 4) **Treasurer’s Report** – Adam Spilka reviewed the July financial report and explained the format changes in the variance sheet and balance sheet that had been circulated for the meeting. There has been recent market volatility and the long-term investment approach has not changed. The approximate value of the investment account is \$2,930,000.
- 5) **Committee Reports**—
 - Finance Committee**—
 - PPP Loan – Adam Spilka reported that the library had applied for and received \$171,000 in PPP loan proceeds. The loan may be forgiven if used for certain limited purposes.
 - Project Planning Committee**—
 - Roof Repair Update – The committee met on August 27. The construction crew has completed the removal of the terracotta material and all of the steel is exposed. The lead abatement process has taken place, and the new steel frame that will

support the existing steel ribs is scheduled to be moved into place during the week of September 14.

- In August, the library learned that the project was one of 15 historic renovations to receive a Connecticut Preservation award. The award recognized the design of the new entry as “respecting and enhancing the historic architecture, creating a dignified entry while leaving the architect’s original design intact and in use at the front.”

Development Committee—

- Road Race Update – Liz Ferguson reported that the Road Race remains on hold until there is more information from the State on whether it can be held.
- Fall Appeal – Katy McNicol reminded the Trustees to review the unclaimed donor list in advance of the Fall appeal, which will be mailed in November.
- Katy also reported that the Library was featured in the Target Circle donation program and earned \$850 last spring. We have been featured again and Katy will update the board on the response at the October meeting.

Governance Committee—

- Orientation for new members & Skills Inventory - Pat Sanders reported that the new trustees received an orientation via zoom. The Skills Inventory is available as a google doc; trustees are asked to complete the document.

Strategic Planning – the working group comprised of Maryanne Amore, Pat Sanders, Mary-Rita Killelea, Beth Law and Michelle Blank met on August 20. Michelle has professional experience in strategic planning, and offered to help the library with the initial steps. Michelle and Karen met the following week, and Michelle will begin by speaking with stakeholders – Karen is getting names and contact information together. Michelle recommended that all trustees review the New Haven Public Library’s Strategic Framework document; Karen will circulate to the board.

- 6) **Confidentiality of Records and Patron Privacy Policy** – Karen reported that cameras were installed at the library entrances in August. Consequently, the library needs a policy addressing patron privacy and confidentiality. Karen asked the Trustees to approve the proposed policy that had been circulated for the meeting. Adam Spilka made a motion to approve; Maryanne Amore seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 7) **Library of Things Policy** – The Library staff have created a new Library of Things which patrons can use at home. The Library of Things has evolved from devices and equipment, to offering things like sewing machines, telescope, etc. The proposed policy replaces the existing Device and Equipment policy. Karen asked the Trustees to approve the proposed policy that had been circulated for the meeting. Don Gentile made a motion to approve; Maryanne Amore seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 8) **Reopening Guidelines for Fall** – Beth Law read a letter submitted by Wayne Cooke regarding the library’s reopening. Beth applauded all of the services that the library is providing safely throughout the pandemic and directed Trustees to the reopening FAQs posted on the Library website. The library began offering contactless pickup of books and other items that are loaned since May 20 – a status which the State Library recognizes as being “open”.

The library has been offering computer access successfully since July 13. At this time, there are still libraries in towns close to Branford whose buildings remain closed. She stated that we are still in a pandemic and we want to do everything in our power to open safely and avoid becoming the cause of an outbreak after Branford has done so well. Karen is in close contact with other CT libraries. It

has been helpful to learn from their experience; we are very ready to move into the next phase. The Trustees reviewed the library's plan to reopen that had been circulated for the meeting. More areas of the library will be open beginning September 14. Maryann Amore made a motion to approve the plan; Liz Ferguson seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

- 9) **Resolution to Eliminate Overdue Fines** – Karen explained that several libraries in the LION system have abolished fines permanently over the summer. Because charging fines creates a financial barrier to library services for those who need them most, Karen asked the Trustees to approve a resolution abolishing fines permanently. Maryann Amore made a motion to approve; Pat Sanders seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 10) **Sunday Hours** – Karen reported many area libraries are not planning to open on Sundays during the fall. The Trustees discussed resuming Sunday hours and will review as part of the next phase of reopening at the October meeting.
- 11) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – Wayne Cooke asked why the library does not return a surplus back to the Town. Treasurer Adam Spilka responded that (a) we don't yet know the amount of any surplus at the end of FY 2020, and (b) any unspent funds should be returned to the library's investment accounts to be available for future library support. The FY 2020 audit will be reviewed at the October meeting.
- 12) **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 7:17 p.m.
- 13) Next regular meeting—October 7, 2020—Location TBD

Note: Minutes are unofficial until approved by the Trustees.