

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, October 6, 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, Don Gentile, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Ed Prete, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe

Trustees (Absent): Norman Dahl, Liz Ferguson, Cheryl Kaiden, Heather Nolin, Jeff Vailette

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

Guests: Nikki Whang, Yale SOM

Public: Robert Dahill, President of The Pine Orchard Association

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

Additions to the Agenda – Beth Law noted that a report from the Finance Committee is added to the Agenda.

Approval of Minutes— Beth Law presented the minutes of the September 1, 2021 meeting of the Board that were circulated with the materials for this meeting. Jack Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Director’s Report – Karen Jensen circulated a written report prior to the meeting. She noted that circulation is up, the new 125th Anniversary library cards are quite popular and Miss Carly’s outdoor story time has been very well received. Progress continues under the Strategic Plan. The staff is charting the results of their community conversations and the final conversation with English second language learners will be held next week. Going forward the staff will categorize the 330 responses that were received from the Community Survey.

Friends of the Library – Beth Law reported that the annual Friends Book Sale on the Green raised approximately \$60,000 this year. Karen Jensen noted that when combined with the money previously raised from their Spring Sale the total amount is the highest amount ever raised by the Friends. Beth and Karen expressed gratitude to the Friends, and to both staff and trustees of the Library for their support and assistance with the book sale.

Treasurer’s Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that today’s approximate value of the investment account is \$3,389,000, a decrease of \$120,000 from the Sept 1 value of \$3,509,000, reflecting the volatility in the markets. She noted that the balance remains up from January’s balance of \$3,114,000

Kathy Oxsalida reviewed the July through August variance statement and highlighted that income and expenses are running close to budget. She noted that the \$8,600 in donor restricted funds received in July are footnoted and that the salary line is under budget because 24 hours are unfilled due to part

time staffing changes. In response to a question by Ed Prete she also confirmed that the monies spent on Buildings FF&E were not budgeted and were therefore paid out of library reserve funds previously allocated by the Board, rather than by the Town.

Janice Kochanowski then shared with the trustees some wonderful news for the library. On Monday we learned that Linda DeLaurentis, a longtime patron, had bequeathed 25% of her estate to the library for general purposes. Included with the letter was a partial disbursement of the estate in the amount of \$226,000. Janice noted that the final amount and when these funds will be disbursed will not be known until the estate is settled. The Finance Committee will ask staff and various subcommittees for lists of projects, including cost estimates, that they would like to be considered. The Finance Committee, in accordance with the Gift Policy, will review the proposals and present recommendations to the full board for approval. On behalf of the library and the board Janice expressed gratitude for this generous gift.

Committee Reports—

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on September 30 and discussed the following:

- **Year End Audit** – The auditors met at the library from September 13-17 to gather the required information and are now in the process of preparing their report. Once this report is completed they will present it first to the Finance Committee and then to the entire board.
- **Investment Portfolio Review** – The committee discussed having the Andriole Group present an update on the Investment Portfolio and provide some market perspective on a quarterly basis to the Finance Committee and the full board. The Andriole Group agreed to provide on a quarterly basis a comprehensive presentation to the Finance Committee and an executive summary presentation to the full board. These presentations will begin at the respective November committee and board meetings. Finally, due to some issues with setting up the Creative-in-Residence Investment Portfolio Janice was able to negotiate a reduction in the investment advisory fee from 75bps to 65bps.
- **Endowment and Fall and Spring Appeals** – The committee discussed establishing a policy that a designated percentage of all donations go to the budget for ordinary operations and that a designated percentage of the Fall and Spring Appeals funds go toward the endowment. No recommendations were made and exploratory discussions will continue.

Development Committee—

- **Shredding Event** – Maryann Amore reported that the second annual Shred-a-thon was a fun event and that participants expressed both their continuing support for the library and their gratitude to the library for providing this important and cost-effective service. She noted that as this annual event becomes established the use of earlier and more extensive advertising should generate more sponsors and participants. Maryann

thanked Katy McNicol for finding a new vendor and negotiating a lower price.

- **Leadership Circle and Fall Appeal** - Katy McNicol announced that a reception for Leadership Circle donors will be held on the terrace on October 17. She also noted that the Fall Appeal is approaching and thanked members who have agreed to write personal notes to donors. The Fall Appeal letters will go out the week before Thanksgiving.
- **125th Anniversary** – Michelle Blank presented an update on the status of planning for the Blackstone’s yearlong 125th Anniversary Celebration. Already underway are many staff driven projects, including media announcements and news coverage, commemorative library cards, weekly anniversary inspired website postings and a list of 125 BOOKS WE LOVE. Events in process include revealing the initial outcomes of the strategic plan and launching the Creative-in-Residence program. Proposed activities to be developed primarily by staff include a 125th Anniversary coloring book, rotating history displays, a family program and a Blackstone history book. Proposed activities to be developed and led by board members include a time capsule, building banners, a Blackstone Brew, a Blackstone Bookmobile and a Blackstone 125th Birthday Bash. Michele encouraged all members to become involved in an event in some capacity and recognized members who have already agreed to lead or sponsor an event.

Buildings and Grounds – Karen Jensen reported that the Fire Marshall inspected the final changes to the building and suggested minor adjustments. The work has been completed and the library is awaiting his final report. She noted that Susan Barnes, Bonnie McKirdy and Kathy Oxsalida, led by subcommittee chairwoman Pat Sanders, took a walk of the grounds with Cameron Pierce of The Davey Expert Tree Company and Tony Nardella of Nardella Landscaping. These walks identified trees that need pruning and recommendations for other near-term work.

Meeting Dates and Holidays – Karen Jensen presented the Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule 2022 and the Scheduled Holidays and Early Closings 2022 to the board. She noted that because of the July 4th holiday the July date was a choice between July 6th or 13th. Since there is no meeting in August the board choose July 13 for their meeting date. Karen also noted the addition of June 20, Juneteenth National Independence Day, a new federal holiday, to the holiday schedule. Janice Kochanowski made a motion to approve the Trustees Meeting Schedule 2022 and the Scheduled Holidays and Early Closing 2022 documents. Pat Sanders seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Art Exhibits – Karen Jensen presented the Exhibit Policy (which includes the Application for Exhibit @ James Blackstone Memorial Library) document to the board. She noted that minor changes had been made to the existing policy, including new hanging opportunities due to the renovations. She stated that the library had discussed entering into an informal partnership with BACA to display the work of selected artists on a rotating monthly basis and noted that all exhibiting artists will be encouraged to conduct demonstrations in the library. Michele Blank made a motion to approve the Exhibit Policy. Adam Spilka seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Branford History Collection – Karen Jensen presented the Branford History Collection policy document to the board. She explained that this policy governs access to the Blackstone archives collection and is required in order for the Blackstone to accept the Pine Orchard Association historical records. Jack

Thompson made a motion to approve the Branford History Collection policy. Don Gentile seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Acceptance of Pine Orchard Association Records – Karen Jensen reported that the Pine Orchard Association asked the Blackstone library to house their historical records collection from 1903 to 1992. She noted that the library is able to provide community wide safe and secure access to these records for many reasons, including primary resource research. Karen explained that she needed to execute a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Preservation of the Historical Records of the Pine Orchard Association, Inc, By the James Blackstone Memorial Library in order to accept these records. The board discussed the meaning of certain terms contained in the memorandum and the responsibilities being assumed by the library. Adam Spilka explained that the language contained in the memorandum was required by the rules of the State Archivist. The board also discussed the content and the condition of the historical records being accepted by the library and the availability of library space to house these records. Jack Thompson made a motion to approve the memorandum and related resolutions. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. 7 members voted in favor. 4 members abstained. The motion carried.

Public Comment – Ed Prete addressed the board and encouraged ongoing conversations between the board and the Branford RTM. In furtherance of these communications he suggested that 3 or 4 representatives of the library come before the RTM Education Committee at its December meeting to update them on events and activities going on at the library.

Adjournment –Mary-Rita Killelea made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Matt Roth seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Next regular meeting— November 3, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea

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