

Minutes of the Board of Library Trustees, Public Library of Brookline

A virtual special meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library was convened on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at 6:33 p.m. Those Trustees present were:

Burstein, Cawthorne, Chanyasukit, Healy, Hung, Livingston, Lohe, Margolis, Martin-Page, Vanderkay, Zelkha.

Shakespeare was absent.

Also present were: S. Slymon, Library Director; E. Mitchell, Assistant Director for Technology; and D. Savin, Assistant Director for Administration.

All votes were conducted by roll call vote.

I. Comments from the public

- A. Rick Fredkin introduced himself as a prospective candidate for the Board of Trustees.
- B. Michael P. Herdeg noted their concerns about the library budget and town budgets overall and advocated for allocating more money to the library budget.
- C. Marissa Vogt added their gratitude for the library staff. Vogt had also previously submitted a written statement in support and praise of the library.

II. Discussion of staffing issues

- A. Burstein called for a vote to approve the Trustees' statement to the Select Board. The statement will be delivered by the Chair at the end of the April 5th Select Board meeting.

Burstein read the statement, which is printed here in full:

“With the announced resignation of the Library Director and the Assistant Director of Technology, the library is facing a crisis. The Trustees are about to embark on a search for an Interim Director, which we hope will be quick, in order to give us the time to do an adequate full search for a new Library Director, as was done back in 2013-2014.

To that end, we are asking the Select Board to help the library by doing the following:

1. The two Assistant Director positions should be given vacation time of four weeks instead of two. As we have said at Advisory Committee meetings, the fact that

subordinate positions get four weeks of vacation makes it difficult to hire for these positions. The last search for an ADT took over seven months because quality candidates turned us down. We would like to make these positions attractive enough to hire quality candidates quickly rather than have them go to other towns. This would include adding the vacation time for the current Assistant Director of Administration.

2. The library's administrative assistant has been on leave for a lengthy period, and we have a temp filling the role who has been helping us keep up with details and institutional memory. I am told that since this is a temp position, we can't keep her working past mid-May or else the town would have to provide benefits. At this point, the Trustees would like to see the town do whatever is needed to keep this person in the position past the departure of the current Library Director.

Finally, not for now but very soon, we will have to start the process of hiring the new Director. We will need to make sure that we do not repeat the mistakes that led to Sara's resignation and confirm that the compensation and benefits for the Library Director of Brookline are comparable to that of other similar positions. Otherwise, we will not be able to attract the quality candidates we want. That will be even more true with Sara's departure, which will be noted by those candidates.

The loss of Sara Slymon is a major blow to our town. If you ask anyone in town about the library, they will tell you how much they appreciate the initiatives she has brought to us over the past eight years. If you ask the library staff, they will tell you how much they have appreciated her leadership. The Trustees are asking the Select Board to help us ensure that the library continues to serve the public at the level the residents of Brookline have come to expect.”

M: Margolis moved to give the Trustees' support to this statement that Burstein will deliver at the Select Board meeting. Livingston seconded. Passed unanimously.

B. Board discussion of staffing issues

1. There was clarification that the Family Medical Leave Act requires a workplace to hold someone's job for up to 12 weeks when they have a qualifying medical circumstance that keeps them out of work. After 12 weeks the employer may choose to fill the position or not. An employee who is out of work for a workplace injury is not subject to this 12-week limit.
2. Discussion of hiring an interim director. The Board wishes to find someone to take over as soon as Slymon leaves. Burstein will look into the procedures necessary. Slymon has recommended some

candidates. Burstein thanked Slymon for her efforts in easing the transition.

3. Livingston suggested beginning the lengthy process of finding a new permanent director as soon as possible, beginning with discussions about what the Board is looking for in a candidate. Around half the Board has been through this process before. Slymon and Mitchell have begun collecting documents from the last search, to aid in the process. Last time, a screening committee narrowed down the applicants, and the Board interviewed the finalists and took a vote to hire the director. The Board will work on a tighter timeline than the last time they hired a director, when they had 8 months to prepare for the director's departure. The Trustees consider hiring a director to be one of their most important duties. There was discussion of the time and effort that this hiring process will require of the Board.
4. Burstein proposed putting together a small committee of Trustees to work on the director job description and job posting as soon as possible. Job description changes must be approved by the Town's Human Resources department. There was discussion of different places to post the job so that a diverse group of applicants can be reached.
5. The Board discussed the issue of compensation and the Trustees' lack of authority to determine the director's compensation even though they hire and oversee the director. The director's salary cannot be supplemented by the Trustees and must come from the Town only.
6. Discussion of staff dissatisfaction in the library that is contributing to resignations. Trustees need to look into the causes of dissatisfaction in the library and other town departments.
7. Slymon will provide the Board an exit interview in the form of a letter. Other staff exit interviews, including the assistant directors', are between the employee and the director and do not involve the Board of Trustees. Slymon will bring employee satisfaction issues to the attention of the Trustees as needed.

III. Adjournment

M: Margolis moved to adjourn the meeting. Vanderkay seconded.

Meeting adjourned 7:33 pm.

A true record.

ATTEST



Koinonia I. Martin-Page
Secretary
2022