

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

A virtual meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library was convened on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at 6:18 p.m. Those Trustees present were:

Burstein, Cawthorne, Chanyasulkit, 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 joined the meeting again as a prospective candidate for the Board of Trustees.

I. Secretary's Report

- A. Minutes

M: Livingston moved to approve the minutes from both the March monthly meeting and the April 4th special meeting. Zelkha seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Library Director's Report

- A. The political climate around libraries continues to heat up. A local community had an attempt at a take-over of their Library Board. The precise reasons are unknown to Director Slymon at this time. Requests to remove books almost never happen in Brookline. Book banning is not a big issue here.
- B. Representative Tommy Vitolo requested putting earmarks through to benefit the Library, and Director Slymon has submitted a few items, including some things for which the Library initially requested ARPA money. The ARPA process has been very slow-moving.
- C. The Library's ARPA request for permanent solar device chargers outside of all the buildings may have been approved but this is unconfirmed. The initiative will be beneficial to community members needing to charge devices even when the Library is closed.

- D. Linda Carlisle, founding member of the Brookline Library Foundation and president for 11 years, has passed away. There will be discussion between the Foundation and the Board of a way to honor her legacy. Director Slymon suggested a children's room for the Putterham branch, reflecting Linda Carlisle's love of children and fulfilling Putterham's need for a dedicated children's room. Margolis added that Linda Carlisle was a motivating force for the renovation of the Brookline Village Library.
- E. There was discussion of solar panels on the Library roofs. Putterham has had some for years. The Brookline Village roof is not well designed for solar panels. Coolidge does not get enough direct sunlight to make them beneficial there either.
- F. The opening of the Tool Library was this month. It was well received by the patrons. Many patrons gave suggestions for other tools that can be added to the collection. People are excited to get access to tools they need or want to use but may not be able to afford. A reminder from Director Slymon that the more dangerous items are age-restricted, although most other items in our collection are not age-restricted. Because of liability issues and the small size of the collection, the Library is not accepting tool donations right now unless they are new from the store, with receipts.

III. Trustee Committee Reports

- A. Burstein has appointed Margolis, Cawthorne, and Hung to a committee to assist with hiring the interim director.
 - a. Margolis suggested a motion to allow the Chair to hire an interim director on a relatively brief contract, with precise terms to be negotiated, so that there is no question about Burstein's authority to do so. Burstein clarified that the contract would likely be for five or six months, with the flexibility to end as soon as a permanent director is hired.
 - b. Trustees discussed what the role of the full Board of Trustees should be in this decision and the need for haste in hiring both the interim and permanent directors.
 - c. The interim position has not been advertised. The MLN has a brief list of retired directors who are interested in interim work. The pool of interested individuals is very small.
 - d. Nobody on the staff has expressed interest in the interim role.
 - e. The committee has one candidate in mind. Burstein has already interviewed this person and will send their resume to the rest of the Board. If Trustees have any concerns about this candidate, they will notify the committee.
 - f. Director Slymon stressed the need for nimbleness in this project, especially since anyone who is retired from municipal library work has limits on how much they can work and on how much money

they can make without jeopardizing their pension. The Board does not want to find themselves in a position where they need to hire a second interim director. Even in the best-case scenario, an interim director will be necessary for at least a month or two.

- g. The Board discussed the possibility of revisiting the authority that the Trustees have given to the Library Director in the past couple of years, which has allowed the Director to make quick decisions for the good of the Library over the course of the pandemic. This authorization rests on a trust between the Board and Director Slymon. Any new director, or interim director, would continue to hold this power, unless the Board votes to rescind or amend it at the May meeting. Trustees will revisit this issue at the May meeting.

IV. Old and New Business

A. Approve FY 23 Action Plan

- a. Assistant Director Mitchell will post the approved Action Plan on the Library website, and Director Slymon will submit it to the MBLC.

M: Lohe moved to approve the FY 23 Action Plan. Margolis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approve Strategic Plan

- a. The Strategic Plan is not ready to be approved at this meeting. Trustees will vote to approve the Strategic Plan at the May meeting.

C. Establishment of the Anne and Richard Reed Fund

- a. The fund is to be used for adult and family programming, not children-only programming, and is to be divided equally across the three locations.

M: Lohe moved to establish the Anne and Richard Reed Fund. Margolis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

M: Livingston moved to allocate \$5,000 from the Board's unrestricted endowment fund to the Anne and Richard Reed Fund. Margolis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Director Slymon proposed that the Board close all three branches of the Library on Friday, June 17th, for the whole day for the annual staff professional development day, which Assistant Director Savin will be organizing and facilitating. Director Slymon also proposed that the Board authorize a 2-hour delayed opening day for the end of every quarter moving forward (September, December, and March), so that the staff can have half days of professional development. Director Slymon further suggested that the Trustees authorize the closing of all three branches of

the Library on Friday, June 16, 2023, for the annual professional development day next year, so that it is all set for the next director.

M: Livingston moved to authorize the closures suggested by Director Slymon for staff professional development. Vanderkay seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Remarks for the Good of the Order

- A. There was a reminder that the next meeting will begin with the election of the Chair and other officers of the Board. Those Trustees who are up for re-election on May 3rd were reminded to get sworn in prior to the next Board meeting.
- B. Shakespeare is not running for re-election.
 - a. Trustees discussed the possibility of an exit interview, perhaps a letter or a form with consistent questions that are asked of all Trustees who choose to leave the Board. Livingston and Cawthorne will develop a list of questions. Trustees discussed the qualities of a verbal versus written exit interview. Shakespeare will be reminded that information he shares in an exit interview will be brought to the Trustees publicly in an open meeting. The Board expressed their disappointment in losing Shakespeare as one of their members.

VI. Adjournment

M: Vanderkay moved to adjourn. Lohe seconded. The motion passed.

Adjourned 7:54 p.m.
A true record.

ATTEST



Koinonia I. Martin-Page
Secretary
2022