

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, May 10, 2022, at 6:15 p.m. Those Trustees present were:

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

Chanyasulkit arrived late.

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. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers

- A. The Committee reported that Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary are up for election.
- B. Hung nominated Michael Burstein for Chair. Lohe seconded. Burstein accepted the nomination. Michael Burstein was elected unanimously.
- C. The Committee nominated Jonathan Margolis for Vice Chair. Margolis accepted the nomination. Jonathan Margolis was elected unanimously.
- D. The Committee nominated Koinonia Martin-Page for Secretary. Martin-Page accepted the nomination. Koinonia Martin-Page was elected unanimously.
- E. The Committee nominated Carol Lohe for Treasurer. Lohe accepted the nomination. Carol Lohe was elected unanimously.
- F. All four officers were unanimously elected and will serve from May 2022 until April 2023 at the next election.

II. Introduction of Dinah O'Brien

- A. Dinah O'Brien introduced herself to the Board. She will be the Interim Director of the Library during the search for Director Sara Slymon's replacement. O'Brien has served as Director of the Mansfield Public Library and the Plymouth Public Library. She also served as the Director of Community Resources for the Town of Plymouth before her retirement.
- B. The Board welcomed O'Brien and thanked her for accepting the position.

III. Comments from the Public

- A. No comments from the public.

IV. Secretary's Report

- A. Minutes

M: Martin-Page moved to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Margolis seconded. Vanderkay put forth a correction to the spelling of Linda Carlisle's name. Trustees voted to approve the minutes under the condition that the spelling mistake is corrected. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Treasurer's Report

- A. Lohe received the monthly report from State Street. The market is down currently.
- B. Lohe introduced the FY23 Budget. It is about \$10,000 more conservative than FY22. This difference could be put toward funding other library projects.
 - 1. The yearly budget is determined based on the endowment from the last three years, as of March 31st. It is currently accruing at around 4.5%.

M: Lohe moved to accept the Trustees' budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Livingston seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Library Director's Report

- A. The town has installed black rubber on the ramp on the Town Hall side of the BV library. This is hopefully a temporary solution to the flooding in the Rabbit Hole downstairs.
- B. Director Slymon reported that union negotiations are not going well for the library and the other unions in town. Slymon does not anticipate a new library AFSCME contract being signed quickly or easily. The AFSCME main contract was passed by only 3 votes, an incredibly low margin.
- C. State aid for the library went up \$12,000 last year. Director Slymon has been using state aid primarily for facilities improvements and has left around \$100,000 in the fund for the next director to use as they see fit.
- D. Ricky Sirois, Branch Manager for Coolidge Corner, has resigned. He is leaving for a library job with a higher salary and a shorter commute. Resignations for these same reasons have become a troubling trend

townwide. Staff often cannot afford to live in Brookline and can make higher salaries for the same job position elsewhere.

- E. As of May 20th, there will be 6 empty positions at the library that need to be filled: Library Director, Assistant Director for Administration, Business Manager, Assistant to the Director, Coolidge Corner Branch Manager, and Part-Time Custodial Assistant. There is also still a full-time Custodian out on Worker's Compensation. O'Brien and Savin will be working together to fill many of these positions.

III. Trustee Committee Reports

- A. No Committee Reports filed this month.
- B. Burstein reminded the Trustees that per the Trustees' bylaws, committees currently in place will stay in place until the June meeting, when new committees are seated.
- C. The Foundation president requested a new Foundation liaison, since Matthew Shakespeare has left the Board. Burstein appointed Kristin Hung as the new Foundation liaison. She will attend the Foundation's meeting this month.
- D. Burstein has not appointed a new Friends liaison yet, and they have not requested one.

IV. Old and New Business

- A. Approve Strategic Plan
 - 1. Shakespeare chaired the committee to work on the strategic plan. Hung, Livingston, Margolis, and Zelkha served on the committee. They worked with Director Slymon and a staff committee to develop the final draft of the strategic plan, which is now presented for the Board's approval.
 - 2. The strategic plan is a big picture, values-based, 5-year plan that is supported every year by action plans that attempt to implement those values and goals in concrete ways.
 - 3. Lohe proposed adding some new, more contemporary names to the "About the Public Library of Brookline" section, under "Notable Community Members." A few names were suggested: sculptor John Wilson, media personality Liz Wallace, and author John Hodgman. Livingston will collect name suggestions from the Trustees to give to O'Brien, who will pass them along to the library

archivist so they can update the history section. The Board can then vote to amend the Strategic Plan.

M: Strategic Plan was proposed by the committee. The Board took this as a motion to approve the Strategic plan. Zelkha seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Library Director Transition

1. Cawthorne, Hung, and Margolis served on a committee to hire the interim director. The whole Board vetted O'Brien's resume for the interim director role. O'Brien was hired and began at the library Monday, May 9th 2022. She will stay on through the end of August, if necessary.
2. O'Brien will be meeting with department heads and learning from Director Slymon during this week of crossover. Slymon's last day is Friday, May 13th 2022.
3. Admin staff who are leaving have been preparing knowledge transfer documents. Business Manager Snowy Quinn will be staying on in a part-time capacity to finish out the fiscal year and ease the transition.

C. Library Director Hiring Process

1. Burstein gave an overview of the director hiring process. The ad has been posted, with a deadline of June 15th for resumes to be submitted. A screening committee will look at resumes and conduct preliminary interviews to narrow down the candidates to a top three. These top candidates will visit the libraries and do a longer, public interview with the Board. The Board can leave to discuss the candidates in an executive session, and then must come back to a public meeting to vote on the candidate they wish to hire. The candidate must be chosen by majority vote. These public interviews will hopefully take place in late July or August. If the Board does not have a candidate chosen by the end of August, they will need to find a new interim director.
2. The Screening Committee will be chaired by Burstein. The eight voting members of the committee will be Trustee Michael Burstien, Trustee Chris Chanyasulkit, Trustee Lori Cawthorne, Trustee Jonathan Margolis, Assistant Director Danielle Savin, Foundation President Karen Aquiline, Friends President Pam Roberts, and a member of the Select Board. The three non-voting members of the committee will be HR Director Ann Braga, Interim Director Dinah O'Brien, and Waltham Library Director Kelly Linehan.

3. Director Slymon suggested that the members of the Screening Committee, the process, and the timeline be published publicly.

D. Close for Juneteenth

1. Director Slymon petitioned the Board to close the libraries on Sunday, June 19th 2022. The town will be observing the holiday on Monday, June 20th, so all the libraries will be closed, but Slymon proposed closing on Sunday as well, for the actual holiday. Only the Coolidge Corner branch is set to be open, due to summer hours, and only from 1pm-5pm. There will be celebrations and events throughout town on this day.

M: Lohe moved to close the libraries on June 19th, 2022. Vanderkay seconded. Trustees discussed the importance of recognizing this holiday versus the community value of keeping the library open. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Greenberg Bequests to Brookline Library Foundation and Friends of the Brookline Library

1. Natalie Greenberg, a longtime patron, left \$150,000 to the Foundation and \$150,000 to the Friends in her will. The Friends proposed giving their \$150,000 to the Trustees to create a Natalie Greenberg Trust Fund to be used for technology for the visually impaired, senior programming, and travel books.
2. The Board was unable to accept this proposal and create the fund because it would be a restricted fund and the proposal did not include the necessary flexibility in language that anticipates changing needs in the future. The Friends declined to adapt the proposal to include this flexibility in language.
3. When the new Friends liaison is appointed, the Board will learn more about what the Friends plan to do with the Greenberg bequest.

F. Annual Motion to Move Money

1. Director Slymon asked the Board to vote to allow the director to move money around in the budget in order to balance the books for the end of the fiscal year.
2. Trustees will still have to vote, in the next two meetings, on the other annual motions: to allow the director to pay the bills and to cancel the August meeting, if they so choose.

M: Lohe moved that the Trustees authorize the director to transfer funds between any and all accounts in order to properly close out the FY2022 budget. Margolis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Update on Anti-Racism Initiative

1. Director Slymon and Interim Director O'Brien will meet with Dr. Carter this week. Dr. Carter has been doing a best practices study and gathering information from libraries across the country who are working on anti-racism initiatives. O'Brien will work with Dr. Carter in the next three-month phase, which will include the first in-house trainings.
2. Director Slymon reminded the Board that they still have \$15,000 to spend on additional anti-racism training to supplement the initiative.

H. Update on the Karimi Lawsuit

1. Director Slymon reported that the lawsuit is still pending and will go to trial in August. Slymon will be required to testify but not to attend the whole trial. After this trial, there will be no further avenues for litigation.

I. The Edith Pearlman Book Award

1. The Award is sponsored by the Board of Library Trustees. The winner was given a check for \$50, three of Edith Pearlman's books, and their name on a plaque in Brookline High School. Martin-Page attended the ceremony.

V. Remarks for the Good of the Order

- A. The Board thanked Assistant Director Emily Mitchell for her service to the library and assistance to the Trustees.
- B. Burstein read the letter that he and Margolis wrote to commemorate Slymon's directorship, which was published in the Brookline TAB. The Board thanked Slymon for her incredible years of service and all she has done for the library.

VI. Adjourn

M: Cawthorne moved to adjourn the meeting. Vanderkay seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 11 to 1.

Adjourned 8:40 p.m.