

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, July 12, 2022, at 6:16 p.m. Those Trustees present were Burstein, Chanyasulkit, Fredkin, Hung, Kramer, Livingston, Lohe, Margolis, Martin-Page, Vanderkay, and Zelkha, with Cawthorne joining later.

Also present were: D. O'Brien, Interim Library Director; D. Savin, Assistant Director for Administration; and R. MacKenzie, Acting Assistant Director for Technology.

All votes were conducted by roll call vote.

I. Comments From the Chair

- A.** Burstein and the rest of the Board welcomed new Trustee Kramer to the Board.
- B.** Burstein shared two library staff updates, including the retirement of Julie Falsioni after devoting forty-nine years to the Library, noting that Falsioni requested a quiet retirement. The second staff update was about the passing of longtime admin Mimi Gaffey, and the Board had a moment of silence in her honor.

II. Comments From the Public

No members of the public were present.

III. Secretary's Report

- A.** Minutes: Martin-Page thanked Lohe for serving as substitute secretary for the June meeting and moved that the June minutes be approved.

M The motion to approve the June meeting minutes was seconded and passed unanimously.

- B.** Correspondence: There was no correspondence.
- C.** Other items: There were no Other Items.

IV. Treasurer's Report:

Lohe thanked Martin-Page for help uploading the final versions of the budget. Regarding the Final FY22 Budget Report and the FY 23 Budget, Lohe reported that we came in under the FY22 budget by approximately \$9,000, largely due to a reduction of activities because of Covid-19. Lohe described that this facilitated more contributions to the Chair's discretionary fund and that the FY22 is more than our total budget for FY23. Even so, the Trustee Endowment overall is down, consistent with what's happening in the national financial environment currently. The final total was \$205,590,000. The investment committee will meet later in the month.

Margolis asked about the Books and Materials line item and why it seemed low in comparison to previous years. Lohe recounted the Board's decision last fiscal year to stay the course and not raise amounts for

almost all the budget items. In addition, the library staff book purchasers came in under budget. Lohe further described that we get more money annually from the Foundation to purchase digital materials and the like, so next year, we have budgeted \$160,000 for Books and Materials, which is back up to FY18 levels.

Livingston asked whether the Trustees were paying for the DEI training or whether the Town was contributing. Lohe responded that the Trustees, Foundation, and the Friends have paid for this, with the Trustees having contributed the lion's share.

Burstein asked whether there was a list delineating the Chair's discretionary fund expenses from over the year, and Lohe noted that expenditures included [face] masks for the staff, totaling \$800, farewell parties and gifts, several floral arrangements sent to various admin members and Trustees. Lohe has reached out to Interim Dir. O'Brien and Asst. Dir. Savin see about meeting with them to discuss financial systems they've used and how discretionary funds were used, so that the Board might get the benefit of their experiences. The current system that we are utilizing is that the Treasurer decides what is charged to the Chair's discretionary fund, and it is generally used for stuff that we need to do that is not paid for in another way. FY23 Budget was passed in a previous meeting, and in it, the Chair's discretionary fund and the Unanticipated Expenses were increased.

Livingston asked about a plan for a gift for Julie Falsioni, given her tenure, and whether such gift could come from the Chair's discretionary fund. Burstein delegated this discussion to the Staff Appreciation Committee, along with Margolis, Lohe, Livingston, the Interim Dir. and Asst. Dir., and also agreed that the funding for this could come from the Trustee Funds, generally, and the Chair's discretionary funds, more specifically. Margolis added that a gift or gesture in acknowledgement of Mimi Gaffey should be included in such planning, and Burstein agreed.

V. Library Director's Report: Statistical; Financial

Interim Director O'Brien highlighted that the Staff Development Day was handled beautifully by Asst. Dir. Savin and that this was the first convening of the entire staff since the covid pandemic began. The assembly went nicely and there was wonderful camaraderie between the staff at different branches. She acknowledged the work of the budget team made up of Asst. Dir. Savin, Asst. Dir. MacKenzie, and Business Manager Snowy Quinn, for helping to close out FY22. She attended a staff meeting of Town Department Heads at the Brookline golf course and noted that she and the aforementioned budget team also received kudos from Town Management for their work in closing out FY22.

Martin-Page asked whether the library staff had ideas or preferences regarding honoring and acknowledging Julie Falsioni and Mimi Gaffey.

Interim Dir. provided that the Trustees could support the anticipated efforts from the circulation staff, as it had been discussing about doing something to acknowledge Julie Falsioni in August. The Trustees could also support a memorial tribute to Mimi Gaffey in the form of a collection of books in her honor, related to one of her passions or hobbies.

Kramer asked for context for the Patriot Act note in the report, and Burstein explained that the history of this stemmed from the dedication of the Library staff to protecting the privacy of its patrons. Therefore, consistently including a note in the report that there have been no Patriot Act requests in the past month is a way to lawfully alert patrons and the Board that a Patriot Act request has happened in the absence of such a note.

Burstein highlighted the statistical report, particularly for new Trustees, to get a feel for how busy the Library is.

VI. Trustee Committee Reports

A. Buildings & Grounds: no votes were taken; meeting was mostly informational.

B. Library Director Screening Committee: Burstein updated the Board on the Library Director search. The Screening Committee has met twice and has prepared interview questions. Candidate interviews will be taking place on the upcoming Wednesday and Thursday, and those interviews will be conducted via executive session. The aim of these interviews will be to pick 2-3 finalists to for the Board's approval. It is anticipated that these finalists would come in-person to the Library in late July or August to meet the staff, from which meeting Asst. Dir. Savin would provide a report to the Board summarizing the staff opinions of the finalists. Then, the finalists would interview with the Board, after which the Board would vote.

C. Other: Livingston, Chair of the Program Committee, shared that programming continues to be a challenge due to the covid pandemic. While the committee has selected a speaker for "An Evening With...", it still is working on finding a location that is available, has good ventilation, and accommodate participants being spread apart. The Board discussed the challenges of hosting this event outside, due to issues with sound/acoustics and unpredictable weather.

VII. Old and New Business

A. Reduction of Size of Board of Library Trustees: The Board discussed Sassan's research of the statutory requirement that the size of Library Trustee Boards be a multiple of three. However, it was noted that some boards, like Newton's, have five members. Interim Dir. put forth MGL

Chapter 78 Section 10, which lays out roles and responsibilities of Trustees, and requires board members to be appointed in multiple of threes, with staggering terms.

Interim Dir. O'Brien further shared that she'd provided new Trustee Kramer with a copy of Chapter 78, and each Trustee should read and refer to it, as it outlines the Trustees' powers, duties, and responsibilities. Martin-Page distributed to the Board a link to Ch 78 in the zoom chat box.

B. Other:

Livingston asked about having a Trustee onboarding subcommittee, to provide Trustees with an orientation, materials like Ch 78 and organizational charts, tour of the branches, introductions to the Branch Managers, and a Trustee mentor to call with questions.

Martin-Page asked about having at least one Board meeting a year in each of the library branches, once in-person meetings resume. Currently, in-person meetings only take place in the Brookline Village Branch, and Board visits to the other branches would happen around new Trustee orientation tours pre-Covid. However, attendance for these tours has been optional. Martin-Page commented that having Board meetings at each of the Branches is important to help the Board keep in its awareness that it is making decisions that impact the people and facilities at these branches. Martin-Page asked the Chair about having a committee to discuss the same.

Burstein appointed a committee to discuss and make one or more proposals regarding each of the two foregoing requests, related to Trustee orientations and meeting at each of the branches. He named it the Trustee Relations committee (until that committee decides on a different name, for e.g., Trustee Onboarding or Trustee Development), and Martin-Page and Livingston volunteered to serve on the committee. Burstein asked other Trustees interested in serving on this committee to send him an email. Livingston discussed how due to potential issues with extending branch open hours, the Library Dir. or Asst. Dir. would need to coordinate in-person meetings at the different branches. In the past, the Library Dir. needed to organize any Trustee meetings at the various branches because it required a branch to stay open.

The Board discussed that the Town is resuming Brookline Day, which Vanderkay brought to the Chair. It is happening on Sunday, September 18th, in Coolidge Corner. Martin-Page volunteered to prepare and upload to the August meeting materials a sign-up spreadsheet for Trustees to sign up for shifts at the Library's Brookline Day table.

The Board discussed the Putterham branch's lawn. Livingston reported on the front garden being in poor condition during her visit there the previous week. Ten years ago, a landscaping firm designed and installed landscaping at Putterham, only charging the Library for the materials. The labor was free. It was unclear who was responsible for maintaining it under that agreement. There is a nearby garden that appears to be well-maintained by the Town, while the Putterham front garden is not. This issue was sent to the Building and Grounds committee to discuss, and committee member Vanderkay volunteered to look into the conditions of the Putterham front lawn. Vanderkay commented that similarly, the Coolidge Corner branch lawn could use some attention. Burstein asked Interim Dir. O'Brien to see if there were any details about the agreement regarding the Putterham lawn in the Library's records.

Vanderkay asked whether there were any updates regarding lawsuit being brought by a former employee. Interim Dir. O'Brien hadn't heard about any updates. There may be public records with updates. Burstein concluded that the Board has no role in the lawsuit, and Trustees could direct any questions to Town Counsel.

Livingston asked about the status of employee contract negotiations. Asst. Dir. Savin shared that the negotiations are ongoing. The last scheduled meeting between the Town and the Union had to be canceled. The Board discussed past advocacy for the library staff and how that advocacy should be continuing to happen. There is a Library Advocacy committee, that focuses largely on advocacy via social media, and Burstein asked about Trustee interest in a Staff Advocacy committee that would propose staff advocacy-related motions and would suggest advocacy actions the Board should take. The Board discussed how the need for advocacy is highlighted in the challenges the Library is continuing to have with hiring and retaining staff. The Board discussed its desire that the Library staff is happy and feel supported. The Board also discussed some of its limitations in influencing labor negotiations, which can be legally complex and highly political. There was discussion of some aspects of the negotiations around previous Library Dir. Slymon's contract. Asst. Dir. Savin updated the Board that Town staff at her level and above, as of July 1st, would be accruing four vacation weeks per year, which is an increase for which the Board had advocated. There was discussion of the Board's power, duties, and responsibilities and whether the Board is more of a management or policy board.

Interim Dir. O'Brien shared her previous experience with Trustee support and advocacy in Plymouth. She posited that per Chapter 78, the Board of Library Trustees is not a management board but a policy-making board and has an important role to play in advocating for the library staff. Although the Board is prohibited from participating in staff labor

negotiations, it can advocate for upper-management staff contracts. She highlighted that four of the six open library positions are management and administration. The Board also discussed that a third of the Trustees are also Town Meeting Members, who could help organize the Board's advocacy efforts there. Burstein underscored that his current priority is to lead the Board in hiring a new Library Director; however, he invited Trustees to email him with their interests in serving on a Staff Advocacy committee.

VIII. Remarks for the Good of the Order:

Burstein noted that the special laws authorizing remote meetings of Town boards and commissions is set to expire on July 15th. It is anticipated that this date might be extended to February 2023, and if so, Burstein will opt to hold the August meeting remotely. If the remote meeting provisions do expire, Burstein asked that Trustees be prepared to meet in-person for the August meeting and to email him and Interim Dir. O'Brien ahead of time if not so potential technological accommodations can be made. To allow the Trustees to spread out, an in-person August Board meeting would take place in Hunneman Hall, which Acting Asst. Dir. MacKenzie shared that he had already reserved proactively for an August meeting. The Board thanked Acting Asst. Dir. MacKenzie, and Burstein requested that he reserve Hunneman Hall for September and October, too, just in case. The Board discussed again, briefly, the anticipated upcoming Library Director candidate interviews.

IX. Adjourn

M: A motion was made, and seconded, to adjourn the meeting, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjourned 7:49 p.m.

A true record.

ATTEST



Koinonia I. Martin-Page
Secretary
2022