

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, August 9, 2022, at 6:16 p.m. Those Trustees present were Burstein, Chanyasulkit, Hung, Kramer, Livingston, Margolis, Vanderkay, and Zelkha, with Lohe and Martin-Page joining later.

Also present were: A. Hirst, Incoming Library Director; 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.¹

- I. Comments from the Chair
 - A. Burstein welcomed Amanda Hirst, the incoming Library Director, who is scheduled to start on August 22nd, to overlap with the end of Interim Dir. O'Brien's tenure.
 - B. Trustees were invited to attend the introduction of Lib. Dir. Hirst at the upcoming Select Board meeting.

- II. Comments from the Public (5-minute limit)
 - A. Susanna Stiefel, Vice-President of the Friends of the Brookline Public Library ("Friends"), was in attendance, and she said she was there on behalf of the Friends' president, Pam Roberts.
 - B. Anthony Ishak, TMM-P1 and bicyclist, and David Kroop, President of Biking Brookline, appeared and made a presentation to the Board about bike parking.
 - i. They worked on bike parking guidelines in the spring with the Town of Brookline and that were recently passed in Town Meeting. These guidelines apply to new, residential zoning. They are currently working with Alexandra Vecchio, Brookline Director of Parks and Open Space, to develop guidelines for bike parking in Town buildings and other public spaces. Thus, they are interested in understanding the bike parking needs of the various library branches, with the goal to return to Dir. Vecchio in September with recommendations.

There was discussion about the square footage of the various library branches, the current staff demand for bike rack spaces, and the Library's need for more bike rack parking, generally. Asst. Dir. MacKenzie provided that there currently are four (4) bike racks in front and one (1) on the side at the Brookline Village branch. There had been discussion with Erin Gallentine (Commissioner of Public Works) prior to the covid pandemic, about adding more bike racks. Ishak expressed his goal that Library employees have adequate, safe, secure bike parking and clarified that the expansion of bike rack spaces at the Library was not expected to come from Library funds.

Burstein directed that this discussion now be moved to, and coordinated by, Interim Dir. O'Brien, Lib. Dir. Hirst, and it should include chair of the Building

¹ See attachment, "20220809_Trustee Roll Call Votes."

and Grounds committee, Vanderkay. Interim Dir. O'Brien volunteered to send a follow up email to include Asst. Dir. MacKenzie.

III. Secretary's Report

A. Minutes. It was moved that the July monthly meeting minutes and the July special meeting minutes be approved.

M: The motion to approve the July monthly meeting minutes and the July special meeting minutes was seconded and passed unanimously.

B. Correspondence. There was discussion about storing correspondence from the Trustee mailbox. Martin-Page offered to set up a new online BOLT folder for storing electronic copies of correspondence. Burstein requested that nothing be thrown out yet. There was discussion about archiving physical copies in the Library for the sake of future historical interest.

C. Other Items. Margolis' Library face mask and Cawthorne's and Fredkin's name badges are in the mailbox for pickup. There was discussion about the location of the mailbox and needing a badge made for Kramer.

IV. Treasurer's Report. None.

V. Library Director's Report

A. Statistical. A written report was provided.

B. Financial:

i. Interim Dir. O'Brien highlighted that the Library is in good shape and doing well for FY23. We have expended 18.16% of the appropriation so far, largely due to the majority of the subscription renewals being paid in July. We have a heavy salary line in July due to the clothing allowance coming out. We started out with a revised budget of \$4,409,122.93, and we are currently at \$3,590,480.84. Interim Dir. O'Brien forecasted an upcoming problem with the utilities line item, which was underbudgeted for, and this underbudgeting of utilities will be an issue Town-wide that O'Brien hopes the Town will rectify. The 2023 budget was done in July of 2021, and since then, Town-wide, the utilities usage has outpaced the amounts budgeted. The Town is aware of this issue.

ii. Interim Dir. O'Brien made the annual request, described in more detail below.

iii. Lohe asked for a status update on the personnel budget problem about which we recently learned, and she asked what has had to happen to align personnel expenditures with the budget allocations. O'Brien described that the Library budget will be tight this year. The Library has done a trial run of the anticipated salary line per month and per week, such that the Library knows what it should be expending. The Library has taken care to put a "firm rein" on overtime. Interim Dir. O'Brien stressed that if we start managing now vs. later in the 4th Quarter, we could get the budget "very close." The Library may need to dip into state aid again; however, she doesn't think we will need assistance from the Town this year, as long as a tight rein is kept on the budget. Interim Dir. O'Brien said she would go over all of this with incoming Lib. Dir. Hirst.

Interim Dir. O'Brien and Lohe both emphasized the ongoing need for the

Board to hear from the (library) director to know what is happening with the Library's finances. Interim Dir. O'Brien highlighted that upon the beginning of her tenure in May, the Library was \$400,000 in the hole in payroll and was two weeks out from not being able to make payroll. She and Snowy Quinn (Business Manager) worked together to get that number down, such that the Library only needed to negotiate with the Town for \$70,000. She described that there was some "pain" involved and advised that the "pain" needed to be started now to avoid "agony" in the 4th Quarter.

- iv. At the Library Business Manager's request, Interim Dir. O'Brien made the annual request that the Board vote to allow the Library to move funds allocated in the FY23 budget between Personnel and Supplies, as needed, in order to better manage the FY23 budget as the year progresses.

M: The foregoing request was moved and seconded and passed unanimously.

- v. Change in Page position salary and classification: The Town reviewed minimum wage employees across the town, and Library Pages fell under this category. The Library has three levels of Pages that all make the same money and have the same job descriptions. Interim Dir. O'Brien recommended that the Board vote to collapse the three levels into one Library Page position. There was discussion. It was clarified that there would be no change to salaries, and this change would align with the current hiring practice, under which all pages are hired at level three. This change also will not affect the total number of pages.

M: It was moved and seconded that the Board consolidate the three Page positions into one Page position, and the motion passed unanimously.

- C. CMR 605: Interim Dir. O'Brien gave a reminder of her encouragement from the last board meeting that the Trustees be reading Chapter 78 of the Massachusetts General Laws. She encouraged the Board to also read before the next meeting Code of MA Regulations 605 for an explanation of how MA general laws are implemented by the MA Board of Library Commissioners. She highlighted the provisions describing how state aid is distributed, the requirements cities and towns must satisfy to qualify for state aid, the minimum requirements for spending funds on books and materials, and nonresident lending. Burstein added the MBLC laws and regulations code link to the zoom chat window and offered to resend, as needed, via email: <https://mblc.state.ma.us/about-us/laws-and-regulations/code.php>.
- D. Policy recommendations: Burstein gave some procedural history regarding how the library services committee recommends policies. Library services usually reviews, discusses, and works out policies beforehand, then they bring them to the full Board. If more needs to be worked out, then the discussion goes back to the committee. Burstein described this was done in response to previous instances when the board meeting discussion would stall on a particular policy topic. He highlighted library exam proctoring requests as an example of an urgent policy discussion that had been brought by the staff previously. He framed that Asst. Dir. Savin's request needed the Board's consideration prior to a review by library services, which would happen after the August Board meeting.

Asst. Dir. Savin explained that the existing study room policy was for the three smaller study rooms on the main level near the public restrooms. The changes

being requested to the existing study room policy are to add clarity about the duration, making, and allowed quantify, of room reservations per day. A group meeting room policy is needed to apply to the two new group meeting rooms, which were converted from the computer lab space at the end of June. A staff policy committee reviews and discusses these policy recommendations before they are brought to the Board.

M: A motion to approve the staff recommended study room policies and group meeting room policies was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Lohe bade farewell until September, at 7:19pm.

VI. Trustee Committee Reports

A. Buildings & Grounds update: Vanderkay followed up on the July meeting discussion with a visit to the Putterham branch and observed that it was in “disgraceful condition.” She followed up with conversations and other communication with the Town, Dir. Vecchio, Comm’r. Gallentine, and consequently, Putterham is now being improved. Vanderkay has mentioned Interim Dir. O’Brien’s observations about the conditions of the ailanthus trees in her communications to the Town. She plans to look into the condition of the Coolidge Corner branch grounds before the next meeting, and she thanked Cmm’r Gallentine and her department.

B. Other

- i. Programming Committee: Livingston provided updates on the upcoming, “An Evening with Ben Mezrich” program. It is taking place on October 12th, at the Tappan Street ninth grade campus building. Livingston and Lohe toured the space. Livingston described more details about the space and how well-suited it will be for the program. There is room for participants to spread out. Masks will be required. Hank Philippi Ryan will moderate. Brookline Booksmith will sell books in the atrium area. There will be a set up for Q&A. The space is ADA compliant. We are awaiting a final confirmation from the featured author, Ben Mezrich. The program committee will be asking for Trustee volunteers as the time gets closer.
- ii. Zelkha spoke about the recent investment committee meeting. The Trustee endowment is down (and aligns with what’s happening with endowments and other investments nationally), but we have sufficient cash on hand. One of the committee members has resigned because he moved. Trustees were asked to please ask around for interested folks to replace him on the committee. Burstein added that the Chair needs to formally appoint new folks to the committee.

VII. Old and New Business

A. Ratification of Library Director Contract: Burstein provided some procedural context. Technically this motion is not needed because of the already approved special meeting motions authorizing the Chair to negotiate the contract, so he was presenting this motion as a formality.

M: A motion to ratify the Library Director Contract was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

B. Vacation Request: Burstein provided some context for the motion. The Board has the authority to grant the Library Director extra PTO, beyond the limited days allotted in the first year of employment, and the Library Director is required to make a written request for these days. The Library Director initially requested four, but Burstein recommended five, consistent with what was granted to the previous Library Director. The Board was presented with the written request for five vacation days for incoming Lib. Dir. Hirst to be used before June 20, 2023.

M: A motion to approve the foregoing request was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

C. Brookline Day Schedule: Martin-Page reminded the Board to volunteer for time slots on the Brookline Day sign-up spreadsheet in the BOLT folder. Burstein added some context and description about Brookline Day. Foundation intends to have a table and asked whether the Trustees wanted to collaborate, and Burstein told them about the longstanding practice of the Trustees' participation at the Library's table. He asked Thibault (Foundation) to coordinate with Hung, who is the Foundation liaison, and with Interim Dir. O'Brien and incoming Lib. Dir. Hirst. Livingston suggested that they have a table together with the Friends. There was also discussion about coordination with Friends, and Burstein will follow up with emails. There was discussion that in the least, the Foundation table should be next to the Library table. Burstein requested that Trustees let the Board know if they cannot attend Brookline Day (via an additional column in the spreadsheet, if possible). Margolis shared that he has signed up. Livingston shared that she can't volunteer that day because she would be out-of-town.

D. Date of October 2022 meeting: Burstein detailed that the second Tuesday in October is the second day of Sukkot (Jewish holiday), which will end that Tuesday evening around 6:50pm. Burstein abstains from technology as part of his religious observance. He asked that the Board move the meeting to 7:15pm, when he would be going back online, or choose an alternative night, or Vice-Chair Margolis could run the meeting at the normal time. Livingston suggested that Jon could start the meeting as Vice-Chair, and then Burstein could join later at 7:15pm. It was not yet clear whether the October meeting will be in person or remote. Burstein shared that he wants the September meeting to be in person to welcome Lib. Dir. Hirst, but after that, it is unclear, as we are keeping an eye on covid. Asst. Dir. MacKenzie has reserved the Coolidge Corner meeting room in September because Hunneman Hall at the main branch is already booked. He did reserve Hunneman Hall for October; nothing is reserved for the November or December meetings. The Commonwealth has extended remote meeting provisions to February. Kramer and Zelkha shared that they, too, observe this holiday and would be late to the October meeting for the same reason. Martin-Page raised that the Board aim to be as inclusive as possible regarding our meeting times, with respect to Trustees, patrons, other members of the public, and future potential board members, and suggested that the Board either start the meeting later or move the meeting to another evening. Burstein gave an example of how a similar issue was handled by the Select Board, such that the meeting date was changed. Chanyasulkit raised that the Board should also check in with the library staff and keep in mind how this issue could affect them, too. The Board discussed.

M: A motion to change the start time of the October meeting to 7:30pm was made

and seconded and passed unanimously.

Asst. Dir. Savin suggested that October meeting be completely remote due to delayed meeting start time, which would potentially mean needing to provide access to the public after hours, and Burstein agreed and confirmed a remote October meeting.

E. Other. None.

VIII. Remarks for the Good of the Order:

Burstein gave a reminder about Lib. Dir. Hirst being introduced to the Select Board on August 23rd.

Martin-Page asked about any additional Trustee Relations committee sign-ups. Burstein updated that there had been no additional signups for either the Trustee Relations or the Staff Advocacy committees, and he requested interested Trustees to email him.

Margolis presented a resolution on behalf of the Board in appreciation of Interim Dir. O'Brien's service as our Interim Library Director.

M: A motion to approve the foregoing resolution was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

IX. Adjourn

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

Adjourned 8:07 p.m.

A true record.

ATTEST



Koinonia I. Martin-Page
Secretary
2022