

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, February 14, 2023, at 6:15 PM. Those Trustees present were:

Trustees voted to convene the meeting.

Present: Burstein, Cawthorne, Fredkin, Hung, Kramer, Lohe, Livingston, Margolis, Martin-Page, Vanderkay, Zelkha.

Absent: Chanyasulkit

Also present: Library Director, A. Hirst; Assistant Director to Administration, D. Savin, Dr. Adrian Carter from the Carter Development Group

All votes were conducted by roll call vote.

I. Comments from the Public (5 minute limit)

- a. Judith Goleman says she is excited to run for the upcoming term to fill Kramer's vacant position in the spring and is currently gathering the 50 signatures she needs. She finds the process gratifying and hopes to become a member in the spring. She is planning on attending the March, April, and May meetings before the election.
- b. Rabbi Mendy Uminer would first like to thank the library as a member of Brookline for its service in the community. He and his children have unfortunately been the target of antisemitic harassment. He was told by a couple that the sign about antisemitism was taken down in front of the library. So he wrote to the Trustees, explaining the situation. The Trustees replied that it was damaged, and they need to vote on it in the next meeting. The Rabbi found this troubling, as it was only a small sign and does not feel supported by the community or the library in the small sign provided out front. The Rabbi also wonders who decides who is marginalized and why there isn't a sign supporting those victims, including people suffering from antisemitism and wanting to speak on the behalf of those troubled by this.

II. Dr. Carter's Report

- a. Dr. Carter will provide a quick recap of the feedback The Carter Development Group has received and the changes that are going to be implemented.
- b. The Staff's feedback included wanting more bonding experiences, more diversity in hiring, noticing a division in part-time and full-time staff, worry around how the library can be seen and interpreted as exclusionary, and

language barriers with Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Russian, and Korean patrons and staff.

- c. The Board of Trustees would like to know how welcome do patrons feel at the library and how to increase diversity on the board.
- d. Library Foundation would like to increase diversity in their organization.
- e. Friends of the Library would like to increase diversity and recruitment strategies that may help with diversity.
- f. CDG did a Best Practices study with multiple libraries and worked with the American Library Association for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach services and received direct feedback from 10 different libraries about Best Practices.
- g. The CDG has reached out to important members of the community, such as Chief Diversity Officer for the Town of Brookline and HR Director for the School District.
- h. CDG tentative recommendations for consideration: Develop strategic and creative communication plan which will highlight DEIB initiatives already put in place at Brookline Library. Develop Digital Equity initiative. Conduct compensation and pay equity study. Mitigate MLS requirements, Develop BIPOC Career Mentorship Program and Internship program. Continue developing English Speakers of Other Languages Program. Develop the Library as a Civic/Community Center. Strategic Community Partnerships.
- i. Next steps: In March, Dr. Carter will be visiting the library in person, re-engaging the staff and the development of the Equity Employee resource Group, conducting training for the staff, trustees, foundation and friends. Final report will be ready between April and May.
- j. Cawthorne mentions being at the Librarians of Color Conference and reaching out to ethnic associations that have upcoming conferences for recruitment.
- k. Burstein brings up the Pride flag and the Black Lives Matter flag as well as the Stop Asian Hate and Stop Anti Semitism signs. Hirst had told Burstein that the Town is developing policies around these signs.
- l. Martin-Page also mentions, for context, the December incident, when the flags were vandalized with stickers. Hirst clarifies the stickers were related to a video game with white supremacist overtones.
- m. Dr. Carter recommends the Library remove the flags and show support in other ways. Dr. Carter recommends taking into consideration the collections of books, which he says the Library has already been engaged with and encourages the Library to continue with. Campaign through social media and highlighting the collection as well. Develop a campaign from month to month and year to year to include all the groups that are underrepresented.
- n. Margolis brings up how to show support to the numerous causes that call for support with the flags. He also brings up the legality and being pushed into a

corner under obligations. He also says libraries should remain a place of neutrality and include materials that may be deemed as controversial.

- o. Dr. Carter talks about making sure to execute these issues holistically and for the library to remain an inclusive and culturally relevant space.
- p. Burstein asks about appearances and how it would look to take down the BLM flag in the middle of Black History month. Dr. Carter recommends seeing if there are flags for other causes like Women's History Month and Native American Heritage Month and to replace them for each month. There wouldn't need to be a flag for every month. Shows business consistency. And have a Best Practices to represent different cultural groups in the Library's representation of them.

Kramer asks how the process for the public emailing the Trustees works. Burstein explains it only goes to the chair and the director of the library, not the entire board.

Martin-Page wants to know how the staff feel about the flags. Hirst says most of the feedback she received was about the stickers as many staff identify with the groups the flag represents and felt supported that the vandalism was taken seriously by the community. Flags were removed due to damage and staff noticed. Martin-Page asks how staff might feel and how patrons might respond. Hirst talks about the role of libraries remaining neutral and the debate within the profession about whether libraries actually meet that standard.

Hirst says the conversations the Library is having about flags has led to the Town to start a conversation about an overall policy. Zekha has re-ordered the antisemitism signs. Hirst adds that the community has already started reaching out with concerns about taking the flags and signs down while they are being replaced and what that signifies. Burstein recommends that if the signs and flags are taken down, a statement would need to be made by the Library.

The Board has decided not to make a vote about the flags but would like to form a committee (Public Expression Committee) and gather information from the town and put the signs back up that were taken down by an outside party or the weather.

III. Secretary's Report

- a. The minutes for previous meetings will be discussed in the March meeting.

IV. Treasurer's Report

- a. Lohe says only a fraction of the Trustee's budget has been spent. This is because the biggest expenditures usually come in the third and fourth quarters.
- b. Lohe and Hirst previously discussed attending upcoming conferences.

- c. Business Manager Shirley Yang received the Books and Materials expenditures from the Town of \$100,000 for items that were to be purchased with Trust Funds.
- d. Lohe says reevaluating the budget, by the end of February, \$116,000 of the FY23 budget will be spent (57%) which is 7 months into the fiscal year.

V. Library Director's Report

- a. Budget: The Library has spent 59% of their municipal budget and received their State Aid award in December and another will be coming in April.
- b. Hirst would like to call out the excellent job of the CC staff during the Lunar New Year program (356 patrons on average per hour).
- c. Personnel- Gina Wise (head of Circulation) resigned and moved to Newton Library. One full-time Librarian from Tech Services resigned. The Library hired a full-time custodian, Patricia Cartagena Perez, and two full-time Library Assistants, Sarah Collier and Celia Dennis, as well as a part-time library assistant, Mac Miller.
- d. The Library has not been served with any court orders since the last meeting
- e. Lohe asks about the cleaning budget and Hirst explains that while the Library had the custodian on leave with Workers Comp. During that time, the library hired a part time custodian through CleanCo, a contract cleaning service. Hirst will be contacting the Town in regards to moving the money from Personnel to Cleaning Service Budget.

VI. Trustee Committee Reports

- a. All reports were written and designated that no oral reports needed to be made.

VII. Old and New Business

- a. Hirst is asking the Trustees to allow all the branches of the Library to be closed on March 17th 2023, from 9-1pm for a staff development day, for the Carter Development Group to run.

M: Margolis makes a motion to approve the Library being closed on March 17th for staff development. The motion passes.

- b. Hirst requested the Library close on Easter. Burstein says the Library has always closed on Easter.
- c. FY24 budget and advocacy: The Library will be receiving their municipal appropriation requirement to meet our full award of State aid for the next year, which will fund collections at 12%. The Library received additional funds for utility costs and leased technology. The Library will also have a small budget increase in Personnel which would adequately fund the clothing allowance.

However, the budget does not fully fund our personnel for FY24, if we were to hire back all vacancies and raise all of our part-time staff to 16 hours a week.

- d. Bookmobile: Hirst requested an all electric Bookmobile from the ARPA grant, as it was a green initiative supporting communities most affected by Covid. The Friends of the Library agreed to fund \$75,000 of the cost of the Bookmobile, and the Foundation voted to fund up to \$100,000 of the Bookmobile cost. Total cost estimate is \$225,000. The Town would maintain and insure it, as it would be part of their fleet. The Library would operate and create services for it. Martin-Page asks if this would go to schools and the senior center, and Hirst confirms this is the plan, as well as visiting headstart programs, daycares, parks and community events as well as other destinations.

I. Comments from the Chair

- a. Burstein requests that the Trustees move the meeting due to conflicting dates with Passover.
- b. Nominations committee: There will be a new board after May, at least one new member. This committee would be for Trustees interested in running for positions, like secretary or treasurer. Sharon Kramer and Lori Cawthorne have been asked to serve as nomination committee members.
- c. Burstein will be running for chair for a third year, but does not want to get in the way of anyone else who would like to serve as chair.
- d. Library Director's 6 month evaluation after the first 6 months of the position. Hirst has filled out the self-assessment version of the evaluation. Burstein asks the Trustees to send their feedback by the 27th, which Burstein will then compile and discuss via an executive session at the end of the March meeting, as it is a personnel issue. Burstein plans to appoint a new committee to come up with a new LD 1-year evaluation form.
- e. The next meeting will be March 14th.

M: Livingston makes a motion to end the meeting. It passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Minutes drafted by Carrie Zuttermeister

A true record.

ATTEST


Koinonia I. Martin-Page
Secretary
2022-2023