

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

A hybrid meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library was convened on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 6:15 PM.

Present: Burstein; Fredkin (remote); Goleman (remote); Livingston; Lohe; Margolis; Martin-Page; Vanderkay (remote), Vogt, Zelkha (remote)

Absent: Chanyasulkit; Hung

Also present: Library Director, A. Hirst; Assistant Director to Administration, D. Savin, Executive Assistant to the Library Director, C. Hesslein; Librarian III - Reference Supervisor, J. Steytler

Trustees voted to convene the meeting.

All votes were conducted by roll call vote.

I. Introduce Jess (Librarian III - Head of Reference)

- A. Jess was promoted from Librarian II - Archivist to Librarian III - Reference Supervisor; Burstein asks about the status of the Archivist role; Jess explains that the Library will hire an Archivist, that the job description is currently being refined, and that she will help onboard the new hire
- B. No other Board members have questions for Jess; Board members offer congratulations to Jess

II. Comments from the Chair

- A. Burstein explains that he held the first DEI Committee meeting but hasn't had time yet to write the report, that the meeting is available to watch, and that he talked with Hirst about a variety of Action Items the DEI Committee wants to move on and how the Library has already begun work on recommendations from the Carter Development Group

III. Comments from the Public (5 minute limit)

- A. No members of the public present

IV. Secretary's Report

A. Minutes

1. There were no requests for changes to the drafted minutes for November's meeting; Martin-Page asks for a motion to approve the minutes; Lohe moves; Margolis seconds
2. All present Board members vote 'yes' except for Vogt (abstains); the minutes are approved

B. Correspondence

1. The only correspondence received were statements for the Treasurer; Martin-Page provides those to Treasurer Lohe

C. Other items

1. Nothing to report

V. Treasurer's Report

A. Other

1. Lohe discusses the latest State Street report; the endowment increased about \$200,000 this month due to appreciation and income

VI. Library Director's Report

A. Statistical

1. Hirst offers general news and noteworthy items about the Library, such as the Library's Instagram account being followed by the American Library Association, the Library's launch of a TikTok account, and a number of well-received programs recently held across all locations
2. Hirst explains that there is nothing new to report regarding ARPA funding and that she is meeting with the Town Purchaser and Fleet Manager next week to discuss next steps

3. Hirst informs Board that we will learn of the ship date for the Automated Materials Handler (sorter) next week
4. Hirst explains that two staff members at Coolidge Corner recently resigned and that the PLB has hired a new Children's Librarian at Coolidge Corner who will start in mid-January
5. Hirst informs Board that there were no FOIA requests or court orders served
6. Hirst explains that the Library should end the calendar year statistically up compared to last year
7. Margolis comments about the potential danger of using TikTok as it could expose us to penetration from China; Burstein agrees that concerns are valid but we need to meet people where they are – TikTok is one of the most popular social media apps for Generation Z
8. Lohe asks Hirst about the recent turnover issue; asks for thoughts about what to do to stop turnover as it can be exhausting and demoralizing to staff; Hirst explains that other Libraries in the area are experiencing turnover as well but acknowledges that having three full-time employees in one branch leave is more significant
9. Hirst explains that in terms of potential solutions, we can continue to advocate for increasing salaries, as Cambridge and Newton have more competitive salaries
 - a) Burstein adds that the DEI committee discussed if some library positions should continue to have MLS as a requirement; mentioned that Hirst is considering changing some position structures to expand the hiring pool

10. Hirst clarifies that when looking at staffing more holistically there is no clear logic to how the PLB staffs individual departments; expresses her desire to have a mix of roles in each department to create more consistency across all departments and locations; cites how a part-time Library Assistant with an MLS degree was able to work out of class for a while to cover gaps in staffing and reiterates that this type of coverage is helpful in cases of vacancies
11. Hirst adds that we hired the Librarian I (Children's Librarian) in Coolidge Corner; the Librarian II role has been posted externally; the Assistant Branch Supervisor role is open externally; and the Librarian III - Branch Supervisor (Coolidge) was opened internally today
 - a) Hirst clarifies that the Librarian III - Branch Supervisor (Coolidge) is first open to internal applicants in the Union; if there are no internal applicants, then it will be opened to external candidates
12. Vogt asks what the salary differential is between Brookline and Cambridge / Newton; Hirst answers that it is around \$4-\$8 higher per hour in Cambridge / Newton; Vogt asks if this has been discussed with the Town; Hirst explains that this is a Town-wide issue; cites that Brookline has experienced roles that have been historically hard to fill due to the offered salaries; confirms that salary discussions are happening Town-wide
13. Goleman asks about possibility of offering competitive counter-offers when a full-time staff member is offered a job elsewhere; Hirst says that she has never heard of that in the Library field; mentions she can ask the Town about the possibility

- a) Burstein explains that there is a municipal salary structure that likely contains no mechanism to make a counter-offer; cites example of how Trustees can positively advocate to the Town when it comes to matters of pay (example provided: when the Town lessened vacation time offered to Assistant Directors, Trustees advocated to reverse the decision; the Town ultimately did reverse it)

B. Financial

1. Budget is on track

VII. Trustee Committee Reports

A. Policy Committee

1. Last month the Policy Committee came to the Board with a proposed updated Parental Responsibility Policy; there was a lot of discussion about why the policy was being updated and many Board members expressed some concerns with the updates; the Policy Committee was tasked with addressing the Board member's concerns by revising the updated policy
2. The Policy Committee met in early December; Vogt, the chair of meeting, wasn't able to attend so Burstein chaired in her absence; in addition to Policy Committee members, Paul Campbell, Brookline Police Officer (representing Chief Jen Paster), and Julie Kellndorfer, Youth Services Supervisor, attended
3. After incorporating the Board member's feedback, the Policy Committee voted 3-0-0 to approve the updated Parental Responsibility Policy

- a) The main areas addressed were related to the encouragement of caregivers accompanying children under 9 years old and when the Brookline Police are contacted in cases of emergency or when a child is unattended as of the Library's closing time
4. Burstein mentions that the reason this needs to be addressed is because unlike the schools, Library staff don't have an 'in loco parentis' or 'duty of care' responsibility to see that a child is watched for a few hours after the Library closes until a parent or guardian can pick them up; Burstein clarifies that no Library staff member will abandon an unattended child, which is why the Police Department is part of this process; that there is no other department to bring an unattended child to; that the Police are aware of their role in this process; and that this does appear in policies in other municipal libraries in the area and nationally
5. Hirst clarifies that suggestions from Fredkin were incorporated into the Library's procedures
6. Burstein states that the policy is now in front of the Board to vote on
7. Margolis clarifies that the Library's lack of 'in loco parentis' responsibility does not equate to lacking a full duty of care; Library staff still must exhibit some level of duty of care and do so by following this policy and its attendant procedures
8. Margolis offers that a comma should be inserted into a particular sentence to provide clarity; Hirst adds the comma
9. Lohe asks about how often a child is left unattended; Hirst says it happens around two times a year and most often when the Library closes at 5pm but people think it closes at 6pm

10. Martin-Page expresses appreciation for the effort that was made to address concerns; asks for clarification about activating emergency response; Hirst clarifies that 911 is only called in cases of true emergencies; the internal dispatch (not 911) will be used in cases of unattended children at closing times
11. Fredkin states that he understands the need for the policy and that there are not many other alternatives; informs Board that his suggestions (as referenced earlier by Hirst) were for staff procedures to reflect how they should contact law enforcement when effecting this policy so that potential mistakes in communication are mitigated
12. Zelkha asks for clarification that 911 will not be called when a child is unattended at closing; Hirst confirms
13. Zelkha asks how this updated policy will be communicated to the public; Hirst explains that all policies are posted to the website and procedural changes are communicated to all staff
14. Board members offer suggestions for how to publicize the updated policy: post it in the Children's areas in all location; reference it in the next newsletter
15. Burstein provides historical context that we haven't advertised policies to the public; Martin-Page expresses concerns about catching people off guard if it is not publicized; Vogt suggests we replace the sign in the Children's Room (about how those under 9 years old need to be accompanied) with the updated policy

16. Zelkha asks if there is a way for parents to list their emergency contact number; Hirst explains that we have an operational procedure to verify current contact information
17. Burstein asks Hirst to reference in her Director's Report when a situation like this transpires
18. Burstein asks to move the policy; Vogt makes the motion; Goleman seconds the motion
19. The Board unanimously votes to approve the policy; new policy to be posted

B. DEI Committee

1. Burstein explains that he is late with submitting the report but that the Committee identified metrics to work on

C. Staff Appreciation Committee

1. Fredkin explains that the Committee has had two meetings and has arrived at some decisions: the party will be on February 2nd, 2023 from 5:30pm - 8:30pm and will include classic video games and mini golf
2. Fredkin asks Board to look at report for a link to a volunteer sign up sheet for Trustees to volunteer for the event; 3 times to volunteer: set up; during; clean up
3. Fredkin asks for a Trustee to read out Library compliments; explains that the Committee is brainstorming fun ways to facilitate staff getting to know the Trustees better, since staff expressed that desire

D. Programming Committee

1. Meeting report is in Drive; nothing to discuss

E. Trustee Development Committee

1. Meeting report is in Drive; meeting again in January 2024; Trustee Development Committee is focusing on new member orientation

F. Friends

1. Vanderkay adds that Friends report and latest financials are in Drive

VIII. Old Business

A. Parental Responsibility Policy

1. See above

IX. New Business

A. No new business

X. Remarks for the Good of the Order

- A. Burstein reminds Board of the Trustees' commitment to holding Board meetings at other locations; indicates that the January 2024 Board meeting (January 9th, hybrid meeting) will be held at Coolidge Corner
- B. Discussion ensues about which month Board should meet at Putterham; Savin reminds Board that Putterham is closed on Tuesdays (the night Board meetings are usually held); Hirst to recommend date for Putterham meeting

XI. Adjourn

- A. Margolis moves to adjourn; Livingston seconds
- B. The Board unanimously votes to adjourn the meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 PM.

Minutes drafted by Courtney Hesslein

A true record.

ATTEST



Koinonia I. Martin-Page

Secretary

2023-2024