

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 5, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street

Trustees (Present): Michelle Blank (via Zoom), Chad Edgar, Liz Ferguson, Larry Greenberg, Nancy Goldstein, Beth Law, Andy Melnick, Janice Kochanowski, Pat Sanders, Sue Wharfe

Trustees (Absent): Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Jack Thompson, Lisa Zwack

Friends of the Library: Barbara Barrett

Staff: Katy McNicol, Library Director; Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager; Tina Strell, Development Director

Yale SOM Fellow: Brianna Hoelting (via Zoom)

Pat Sanders called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Library Director Annual Review – Pat Sanders called an Executive Session to discuss the annual review of Library Director, Katy McNicol. All non-board members were asked to leave the meeting during the Executive session and were told they would be called back in when the Executive Session ended. Pat Sanders commenced the Executive Session meeting at 6:02 pm.

The Executive Session ended at 6:06 pm and all non-board members attending the regular Board of Trustees meeting were called back into the auditorium.

Approval of Minutes — Nancy Goldstein moved to approve the minutes. Janice Kochanowski seconded the motion. The motion carried with 3 trustee abstentions.

Director’s Report – Katy McNicol reported on what happened at the CT General Assembly regarding the status of the HB 6800 state legislation about restrictive ebook licensing contracts that affect public libraries. After some discussion, the bill was tabled with no action taken. Katy reported on the STAFF APPRECIATION EVENT that was organized by Tina Strell. The event was very well attended, with staff enjoying the down time with friends. There is a new part-time circulation hire, Marcus Fort, who has strong graphic design experience. She announced that there will be a Best Board Practices workshop on June 15th and invited trustees to attend. Katy ended her presentation by recognizing the unique contributions and service of each of the three retiring trustees – Beth Law, Pat Sanders and Liz Ferguson. She gave them each a small gift of gratitude from the library – a beautiful illustration of the Library.

Friends of the Library – Barbara Barrett thanked the trustees who contributed to The Friends campaign to raise funds to support the cost of the tent for the Fall Book Sale. She reported that, to date, they have raised 80% of the cost. They continue to get ready for the Fall sale. A small group of Friends members will be receiving an award from the Friends of Connecticut for outstanding support during The Friends big warehouse move. The ceremony will be in Avon and she invited trustees to attend. On June 18, The Friends will have their Annual Meeting. There will be refreshments and a talk from a vintage book expert. Trustees are invited.

Treasurer's Report – Janice Kochanowski reported that the current value of the investment account as of close of business yesterday was \$4.126m, up \$101k from May 1st's balance of \$4.025mm. The Artist in Residence investment account totals \$519 up \$17k from May's balance of \$520k.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the variance report. She stated that the variance remains positive.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee—Janice Kochanowski reported that the Finance Committee met on May 29th. The committee approved the reinvestment of the maturing US Treasury Bill for another 6 months. Net amount of \$309,725 at a yield of 5.373% with a Maturity value of \$318,000. Settlement on 5/31/24, maturing on 11/29/2024. The committee also approved some updates to the Investment Policy. Many of the updates were around the investment advisor and investment manager roles. Also, the policy was updated to reflect the Monte Carlo analysis to be run as needed rather than every four years. The committee worked closely with GYL regarding the updates. Janice Kochanowski also reported that the Finance Committee approved using some of the favorable budget variance to fund the cornice repair, garage roof repair and additional anchors as well as fixing the water fountain with new parts so patrons can fill water bottles.

The NEXT Finance Committee Meeting to be scheduled by Larry Greenberg with date and details TBD.

Building and Grounds - Liz Ferguson reported that work on the garage roof and screen is continuing.

Development Committee – Nancy Goldstein reported that the Library raised \$12,000 at the Mini Golf event. The Shredding Event takes place this Saturday on June 8th; volunteers are needed. There are two open spots on the Development Committee for outside members from the town. She asked trustees for any referrals. Tina Strell announced SAVE THE DATE for the fall EVENING WITH THE SPIRITS fund raiser to be held on October 19.

Governance Committee – Sue Wharfe began with a discussion of the appointment of Trustee Candidate Shahida Soomro for a term ending June 2027. Shahida Soomro is a strong advocate for the Blackstone library, and is currently a member of the RTM Education committee, which reviews and approves the library's budget request to the town. After all trustees had the opportunity to express their thoughts on a potential conflict of interest, Sue Wharfe motioned for the appointment of Trustee Candidate Shahida Soomro for a term ending June 2027. Chad Edgar seconded the motion. The motion carried with 7 YES, 2 NO and 1 ABSTENTION.

Chad Edgar motioned for the Trustees Janice Kochanowski and Sue Wharfe to serve second terms, July 2024-June 2027. Nancy Goldstein seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Sue Wharfe will conduct Exit interviews held with the three retiring trustees – Beth Law, Pat Sanders and Liz Ferguson.

Nominating Committee – Liz Ferguson motioned for the Election of the officer slate for FY2024-2025 as follows:

- President: Janice Kochanowski
- Vice President: Cheryl Kaiden

- Treasurer: Larry Greenberg
- Assistant Treasurer: Jack Thompson
- Secretary: Mary-Rita Killelea

Michelle Blank seconded. The motion carried unanimously, with all nominated candidates being elected to hold their respective officer positions.

Website Redesign Project Update – Katy McNicol presented an update on the extensive review of Website Development proposals from six vendors. The team reviewed all proposals and then met with three of the six. The consensus among staff was to select STIRLING BRANDWORKS to work with as they presented themselves as being able to deliver a modern, clean, functional site within the approved budgeted amount for the redesign project. STIRLING has worked with libraries and they have optional add-on services that include providing user research services to refine design goals/priorities. They will provide staff training on updating site content. They will also provide training on making system/plugin updates, with the goal of enabling the Library staff to take over most of the ongoing maintenance, going to them for support only as needed. They will develop the site in Wordpress, which is the Content Management System (CMS) the Library currently uses. The Director proposed to have Stirling develop the site, with an add-on for user research services and one year of maintenance/ support. During the first year, the Library will assess the level of support needed moving forward and will work with STIRLING to get a cost-effective hourly or monthly rate.

Public Comment – none

Introduction of New Board Members - Sue Wharfe introduced two of new trustees whose term begins next month. Liz Alcorn and Paul Gavejian gave brief personal statements about their community involvement.

Adjournment – Pat Sanders made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Larry Greenberg seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on July 10, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Blank, Ph.D.
Vice President

Note: minutes are provisional until approved by the Board of Trustees.