

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

**Trustees (Present):** Liz Alcorn, Michelle Blank, Chad Edgar, Paul Gavejian, Nancy Goldstein, Larry Greenberg, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Jack Thompson, Sue Wharfe, Lisa Zwack

**Trustees (Absent):** Cheryl Kaiden, Andy Melnick, Shahida Soomro

**Friends of the Library:** Barbara Barrett

**Staff:** Katy McNicol, Library Director, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager

**Yale SOM Fellow:** Brianna Hoelting

**Public:** none

Janice Kochanowski called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

**President's Remarks** – Janice thanked the Trustees for joining committees and urged them to consider joining the finance committee.

**Additions to the Agenda** – none

**Approval of Minutes**— Mary-Rita Killelea moved to approve the minutes. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Director's Report** – Katy McNicol reported that all at the library are very excited about the new toy library, a collaboration with Branford Community Foundation, Branford Rotary Club, and Traveling Toys Inc. Katy announced that the library has hired a new development coordinator, Jalene Cuffee, who will start next week. She will bring considerable experience to the position and Katy is excited that she is joining the staff. Changes at the Connecticut State Library mean that the library will take on some administrative duties for the internet discount program this year. The program provides considerable discounts for internet services. Katy and Kathy Oxsalida received training and it is the hope that another library consortium will take on this task next year. The library is working with their LION consortium and about 10 other libraries to implement a new Blackstone library app. Katy met with a community member who is interested in developing some podcasts around the Blackstone library. She plans to meet with him and work on a series of conversations around the theme Beyond the Pages, a Blackstone Library Podcast. Katy stated that she submitted the Annual Report to the Town and the report showed that the library had a very busy and very good year. Katy and Sue Wharfe attended a meeting with all the social service agencies in town and heard from a United Way representative about the ALICE population in Branford. This population is comprised of people who earn more than the federal poverty level and have a job and a place to live but are still earning less than the basic cost of living. This population makes up 35% of the Branford population. The meeting was about starting a conversation among the various agencies to determine how to serve this population. Katy also discussed the challenging situations encountered by library staff in dealing with patrons who are dealing with stress or

having troubles and the toll that these encounters are taking on the staff. Katy will set up training with a clinician to talk with staff about de-escalation techniques.

**Friends of the Library** – Barbara Barrett reported that the Friends are looking for volunteers with a truck or large car to pick up books on a weekly basis. Barbara also noted that the annual basket sale is upcoming and asked Trustees to contribute items and to shop for baskets. The proceeds from the sale will be used to pay for 3 months of rental fees for the warehouse.

**Treasurer's Report** – Larry Greenberg reported that the current value of the investment account as of the close of business Tuesday was \$4,372MM, down 0.6% from last month. The Creative-in-Residence account was \$550K, down 0.2% from last month.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the variance report and reported that the percentages are basically the same as last month. She noted that the income from the Evening with the Spirits fundraiser does not appear in this report.

### **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**— Larry reported that the account manager gave the committee an update on their thinking about the portfolio, the economy and markets in general and everything is good. The committee approved the cost for tree pruning and also approved rolling the 6 month treasury bill dedicated to the balcony project into another 6 month treasury bill. The committee discussed the bequest from the Susan Cosgrove Barnes estate of \$100,000 and approved placing these funds into the main account, recognizing that at some point they will go through the process of evaluating naming opportunities to honor the gift. The next meeting will be November 21 at 4:00 pm.

Katy took a moment to acknowledge Susan Cosgrove Barnes and her gift. Susan served as a Trustee, was a life time supporter of the library in many capacities and continues to support the library through her bequest. On behalf of the staff Katy expressed her deepest gratitude to Susan.

**Buildings and Grounds Committee** – Michele Blank held the first meeting on October 30 and the committee went through a list of all ongoing maintenance issues. They are scheduling a 90-minute walk through to become familiar with these issues and to also identify naming opportunities for different aspects of the building. Michele reported that the committee is ready to move forward with the balcony project and engage an architect to develop a request for proposal. This proposal will present all the drawings and detail specifications needed to fine tune the cost estimates in order to proceed. Katy and Michele plan to meet with the town engineer John Hoefflerle who is also on the committee and will assist them as they work through the next phase of the project. The committee anticipates that the final cost estimate will be more than the original application and will work with the finance committee to find areas for some additional funds. The next meeting will be December 12.

**Development Committee** – Nancy Goldstein reported that the Evening with the Spirits fundraisers was a success and thanked all the Trustees that donated their time, effort and resources. The goal was to raise \$7,000 and the event in fact netted over \$9,000. The raffle, primarily supported by the board, raised \$1,800. The next fundraiser is the annual appeal and Trustees were encouraged to write personal notes on the appeal letters and return these unstamped letters to the library by November 20 for mailing. The next meeting will be November 14.

**Governance Committee** – Sue Wharfe thanked Trustees who have joined a committee and reported that the committee is currently looking for 1 new member. The development committee is looking for 1 outside member.

**Adjournment** –Paul Gavejian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:44 pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on December 4, 2024, with a Holiday Reception to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea  
Secretary

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