

**James Blackstone Memorial Library**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m.**  
**Location: Library Auditorium, 758 Main Street**

**Trustees (Present):** Liz Alcorn, Michele Blank, Chad Edgar, Nancy Goldstein, Larry Greenberg, Cheryl Kaiden, Mary-Rita Killelea, Janice Kochanowski, Andy Melnick, Shahida Soomro, Jack Thompson (via Zoom), Sue Wharfe, Lisa Zwack

**Trustees (Absent):** Cristina Cantù, Paul Gavejian

**Friends of the Library:** Barbara Barrett

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

**Yale SOM Fellow:** Brianna Hoelting

**Public:** none

Janice Kochanowski called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. She welcomed returning and new trustees and highlighted agenda events for the upcoming year, including creating balcony enclosures, redesigning the website and establishing committee charters. She noted that the role of trustee is critical to maintaining the mission of the library. She asked trustees to choose a committee or two to serve on and to actively participate in library programs, fundraising projects and Friends events throughout the year.

**Additions to the Agenda – none**

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

**Director's Report –** Katy McNicol reported that the library had a very busy summer and highlighted some of the activities including the completion of the chiller screen rehab project, the initiation of the website development project and the hosting of a film crew for a day. The library ran two successful summer reading programs for adults and children, with hundreds community members participating. The library partnered with Branford Counseling and Community services and their new Harm Reduction Navigator to offer a weekly staffed table provides toiletry kits, water, sanitizer and counseling. The library is also partnering with the League of Women Voters to support voter registration, and the Willoughby Wallace and North Branford library directors to write a press release promoting September as library card sign up month. Finally, Katy announced that she became co-chair of the Connecticut Librarian Consortium New Director's Roundtable.

**Friends of the Library –** Barbara Barrett reported that there are just 15 days left before the Friends big event, their Annual Fall Booksale from September 19-September 22 on the Branford Town Green. She thanked the trustees for being a Silver Sponsor and for volunteering to fill some of the 350 volunteer

slots needed to run this event. She also asked trustees to help with promotion by sharing event flyers and posting lawn signs if their property is suitable.

**Treasurer's Report** – Larry Greenberg reported that the current value of the investment account as of the close of business Tuesday was \$4,288,963, which represents an increase of 2.5% from the July balance of \$4,184,622. This amount includes \$314k invested in a 6-month treasury bill earmarked for the balcony project. The Creative-in-Residence account of \$545,867 represents an increase of 2.6% from the July balance of \$528,601.

Kathy Oxsalida presented the variance report and reported that the July statement is straightforward and will require only minor adjustments when the audit is completed.

### **Committee Reports—**

**Finance Committee**— Larry reported that the finance committee met on August 29. He provided a quick update on the annual financial audit and noted that there was nothing unusual and the committee will await a draft audit sometime in November/December. The committee discussed using the strategic plan initiatives allocation of the sinking fund for the upcoming website upgrade, and voted unanimously to approve such spending. Larry set out the roles and responsibilities of the finance committee and encouraged trustees to consider joining.

The next finance committee meeting is scheduled for September 26 at 4:00 pm.

**Buildings and Grounds Committee** – Michelle Blank asked Katy to review and update trustees on the status of the library's renovation project to enclose the auditorium balcony and divide the space to create two meeting rooms for public use.

Katy reported that in November 2023 the Connecticut State Library approved the Public Library Construction Grant request and in August 2024, with support and encouragement from State Senator Christine Cohen and State Representative Robin Comey, the State Bond Commission approved funding for the grant. In a joint press release announcing the State Bond Commission grant funding approval Katy stated, "The Blackstone Library is thrilled to begin this balcony enclosure project, offering additional meeting space to the community. Our two meeting rooms are constantly in use and our recent strategic plan findings indicated that even more space was needed. The balcony enclosure project was considered during our 2018 renovation but was not able to be funded at that time. We are grateful to the Connecticut State Library for approving our construction grant request and to the state for approving the funding. Our local representatives were wonderful in their support for this project, and we're so pleased that our community will benefit."

Katy also reported that Michelle has made initial contact with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the architects who drafted the preliminary sketches for the grant application. Michelle will work with both to begin the next phase of revising the design and addressing SHPO concerns. Katy has signed the contract and will now complete other forms the state requires before sending it back. Among these forms is a certification signed by the Board Secretary stating that the resolution the board passed in 2023 allowing Katy to sign the contract is still in force. Nancy Goldstein moved that the board certify that the resolution adopted at their meeting on July 12, 2023 remains in full force and effect. Lisa Zwack seconded the motion. The motion carried. Mary-Rita Killelea signed the requisite certification as Board Secretary.

Michelle explained the roles and responsibilities of the buildings and grounds committee and asked trustees to consider joining.

**Development Committee** – Nancy Goldstein reported that the committee reviewed their budget for the year, which reflected higher prices for materials and raised some prices for the upcoming event, An Evening with the Spirits, on October 19, including \$45 for admission and \$10 for private readings. Coastal Wine and Spirits will host the wine and spirits tasting event in the rotunda. Nancy asked trustees to consider volunteering at the event and to donate alcohol and lottery tickets for prize drawings. Finally, Nancy described the roles and responsibilities of the development committee and asked trustees to consider joining.

**Governance Committee** – Sue Wharfe presented an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the governance committee and asked trustees to consider joining.

**Adjournment** – Cheryl Kaiden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Goldstein seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.

Next regular meeting will be held on October 9, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary-Rita Killelea  
Secretary

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