

James Blackstone Memorial Library
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
December 2, 2020

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

Trustees (Present): Maryann Amore, Michelle Blank, Liz Ferguson, Don Gentile, Mary-Rita Killelea, Cheryl Kaiden, Ed Kirk, Janice Kochanowski, Beth Law, Ed Prete, Matt Roth, Pat Sanders, Adam Spilka, Jack Thompson, Jeff Vailette

Trustees (Absent): Norman Dahl, Heather Nolin

Friends of the Library: Al Bertoline

Staff: Karen Jensen, Library Director, Katy McNicol, Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach, Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager

Guests: Eloise Owens, Yale SOM,

Public: Wayne Cooke, Todd Petrowski

Beth Law called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- 1) **Additions to the Agenda** – none
- 2) **Appointment of RTM Ex-Officio Ed Prete** – Beth Law explained that Ed Prete has been elected chairman of the RTM Education Committee and will replace Rep. Frank Twohill as the RTM Ex Officio member on the board. Beth acknowledged Frank’s contributions to the Library and welcomed Ed. Adam Spilka made a motion to approve the appointment, Ed Kirk seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
- 3) **Approval of Minutes (November)**—Don Gentile made a motion to approve the minutes of November 4, 2020; Pat Sanders seconded the motion and all voted in favor, with Liz Ferguson abstaining.
- 4) **Director’s Report** – Karen Jensen circulated a written report in advance of the meeting. She noted that all is well even with COVID cases rising in recent weeks. There has been some increased activity in the computer lab, but attendance is still well within the sector guidelines for libraries. As of December 1, approximately 66% of libraries in the state remained open, with others rolling back to curbside service only. Karen also thanked Eloise Owens and Michelle Blank for their excellent work on an LSTA planning grant application that will be submitted to the State Library.
- 5) **Friends of the Library** – Friends President Al Bertoline reported that online sales had reached record levels in November. The virtual book cart is also doing well. The book sale is scheduled for the Town Green in September 2021, and he offered use of the tent to the Trustees for the weekend prior to the sale – date TBD.
- 6) **Treasurer’s Report** – Adam Spilka reported that the approximate value of the investment account is \$3,071,000. Kathy Oxsalida presented the October variance statement, noting that income for the planned Road Race had been budgeted at \$5,000 and will not be realized as it has been cancelled. Income reflected in the grants line has been contributed by the Friends and is offset by correlating expenditures. On the expense side, salaries, taxes and benefits are normalizing as an employee returned to full-time. A full-time employee is retiring in December which will result in a savings. Materials expenditures are over budget as some larger expenses for databases were made at the

beginning of the year. Repairs and Maintenance will be over budget due to some necessary repairs at the beginning of the year. Kathy noted that the accountants have filed an extension for the tax return and have not billed the library yet. Repairs have been made to the auditorium kitchen and that expense will be billed.

7) **Committee Reports—**

Finance Committee—

- PPP Loan – Adam Spilka reported that the Library is still awaiting the final decision from the SBA. Adam described Jim Finch’s presentation to the Board of Finance regarding the sustainability of the Library’s investment account. In response to a question from Ed Kirk, Adam noted that he had worked with Jim Finch and the Library’s investment advisor, The Andriole Group, to develop a “Monte Carlo” simulation which analyzes the sustainability of the account given various withdrawal and investment return assumptions. Adam and Jim plan to present further information at the December 7 Board of Finance meeting. In response to a question from Maryann Amore, Adam noted that the Board of Finance was not being asked to make a decision at this time, but seemed generally sympathetic to the approach.

Project Planning Committee—

- Roof Repair Update –The building committee met on November 5, 19 and 25. The steel supporting structure has been installed and work on the copper coating has begun. The ceiling is being painted and the project should be complete by end of the month.

Development Committee—

- Fall Appeal – The appeal has been mailed and approximately \$11,000 received to date. Katy is planning an email appeal at the end of the month.
- Spring Fundraiser – Katy reported that the Development Committee met this month and is working on an event that will include an auction of “Experience Baskets”. There was a lot of enthusiasm and discussion of various examples – Katy will send information about a similar fundraiser conducted by another CT library. All trustees were asked to come up with ideas for experiences before the next meeting.

Governance Committee—

Pat Sanders explained that Adam Spilka and Janice Kochanowski had agreed to switch their roles as officers of the board, with the intent that Adam would expand the Assistant Treasurer role to include more advocacy. Maryann Amore made a motion to elect Janice Kochanowski to fill the role of Treasurer for FY 2021. Don Gentile seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Pat Sanders made a motion to elect Adam Spilka to fill the role of Assistant Treasurer for FY 2021. Maryann Amore seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Strategic Planning – presentation of consultant to work on community needs analysis – Michelle Blank gave an overview of the strategic planning process. Michelle is donating her services for a portion of the work; she reported that the ad hoc committee appointed to select a consultant had reviewed the qualifications of 3 consultants and unanimously recommended Jeanine Esposito of Innovation Builders. Jeanine’s approach to train staff in the skills needed to conduct a community needs analysis was unmatched by the other two consultants, thus she met the requirement of the Library’s Procurement Policy as a single source provider. Jeanine then gave the Trustees a presentation of her services. There followed a discussion of the funding available – the Library has restricted \$36,000 toward strategic planning, and the Library will apply for a planning grant from the State Library which will provide \$5,000 if received. Participants noted

that implementation costs would be subject to further fundraising. It was also noted that Innovation Builders provides a unique service not offered by other planning consultants. Michelle Blank made a motion to enter into a contract with Innovation Builders as a unique service provider to work with the library to conduct a community needs analysis. Mary-Rita Killelea seconded the motion and the motion carried, with Liz Ferguson opposed and Ed Kirk abstaining.

The vote was followed by a discussion regarding the status of a Strategic Planning Committee, which had not been formed. Maryann Amore made a motion to appoint a **Strategic Planning Committee** to include herself, Michelle Blank, Mary-Rita Killelea, Pat Sanders, Cheryl Kaiden and Beth Law. Ed Kirk seconded the motion and the motion carried, with Liz Ferguson abstaining.

- 8) **Sunday Hours** – Karen reported that activity has not picked up significantly and she recommended waiting at least another month to open on Sundays. There was no objection.
- 9) **Public Comments** (10 minutes) – Wayne Cooke repeated questions posed at previous meetings about the timing of the library’s reopening in response to the COVID pandemic, and library finances. He stated his opinion that the RTM should establish a committee to oversee the Library. Beth Law thanked him for his comments.
- 10) **Adjournment** – Don Gentile made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Michelle Blank seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.
- 11) Next regular meeting—January 6, 2020—Location TBD

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Jensen

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