

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 5:30pm
Milne Public Library, 1095 Main Street, Williamstown

Trustees Present: Alexander Carlisle, Timothy Cherubini (treasurer), Katy Evans (secretary), Anna Halpin-Healy, Robin Lenz, Micah Manary (chair), Bridget Spann (vice-chair)

Staff Present: Pat McLeod (library director)

Others Present: Elizabeth Whitney (representing the Friends)

The meeting was called to order by Micah at 5:32pm.

Reports

Approval of August 9th Meeting Minutes (Katy)

Timothy moved to approve and Micah seconded. All voted in favor, except Katy and Anna, who abstained.

Introductions (Filling Trustees Vacancy) (Bridget)

We welcomed Anna Halpin-Healy as a new Library Trustee.

Treasurer's Report (Timothy)

Timothy presented the Treasurer's report. Micah moved to approve and Robin seconded. All voted in favor, except Timothy and Anna, who abstained.

Balances as of August 31, 2023:

Annual Fund: \$14,814.62
Carpenter: \$10,468.88
Conway Glick: \$0.30
Craig: \$12,972.33
Botsford: \$75,526.94
Tenney Osborne: \$24,629.35
McFarland: \$300,000.00
150th Anniversary: \$5,093.75
Trustee, Friends allocation for renovation fund: \$2,361.44
Total: \$445,867.61

Timothy noted that this was the first month that the janitor's salary was not taken from the Trustees' budget.

Last month the Trustees approved up to \$3,500 in spending to support the library's ESL classes. This is still in the works and we are waiting on the organization teaching these classes to move ahead.

The Annual Fund mailing is at the Print Shop right now and we will have materials to send out in two weeks. For those who agreed to personalize letters, Timothy will send out the final lists of contacts next week.

Timothy also noted a difference in understanding with the Town Manager over the recent library salary increases. Although some Trustees remember a verbal commitment from the Town to cover the entirety of these increases, the Town Manager asserts he only agreed to cover up to \$50,000. Timothy will continue discussions with the town to determine and agree on an accurate figure for the unbudgeted salary increases that may need to be covered by other than the Town Manager contribution and will report back so Trustees can determine appropriate action.

The Trustees briefly brainstormed ideas that could rectify any discrepancy. These include managing the library budget to account for any unbudgeted amount, covering that amount through Trustee funds, and advocating to Fin Com for assistance. The first of these ideas (managing the library budget) may be possible given the frequency with which the library has come in under budget in recent years. Care would need to be taken however that any changes would not impact eligibility for state aid. Adopting the strategy of advocating to Fin Com would necessitate beginning preparations immediately.

Director's Report (Pat)

Pat presented the Director's Report. There continued to be great programming and also a lot of Williams students signing up for library cards.

There will be a new entry system installed on the library building on September 28-29. New keys will be made available for the Trustees, for those who need one. It was decided that Alex Carlisle, as representative of the Buildings and Grounds committee, will receive one.

The library is working with CET to possibly replace the 5 old mini-splits that were installed in 2003. The new ones would be heat pumps as well and would be energy efficient. We are getting an estimate for this work from Ashley Swift.

[Disruption by program outside the meeting room. We closed the door a bit, but left it ajar with a note on the door]

Friends' Report (Elizabeth)

Sales at Chapter 2 Books continue to be very good. Donations continue to be strong and the displays are well done. On November 8th (4-5:30pm), there will be a 5th Anniversary Celebration and the Trustees are invited.

There will be a book sale at the library on September 22-23, focusing on vintage & antique books

The Friends held their strategic planning meeting in July and it went well. John Wiley has stepped down from the board and Ray Hiley has stepped up. Jen Bayliss has come back on the board as Treasurer.

Other issues discussed at the meeting are plans to start a newsletter, the long-term sustainability of the organization with special consideration to the business they are running, and how to support the Library and partner in using the space effectively.

Building and Grounds Report (Alex)

Alex gave an update on the work to get a new library sign. There is still no response from Neathawk Designs and it was decided that we should move on to other companies.

Pat noted that this sign is the first step and that we will also need to update the signs inside the library next. Alex commented that Williamstown does not have a consistent sign design across town buildings and that it would be best to consult a graphic designer for a design.

Alex and Robin met with Laura Bentz, independent garden designer, yesterday. She has come up with a pollinator-friendly and low-maintenance design for the library's front gardens. She is ready to move ahead with the work on September 25. We discussed the issue of where to source the plants: larger plants will often have been treated with neonicotinoids (insecticides) and will not be pollinator-friendly. It was agreed that we have a preference for smaller plants from a trusted source, even if the garden is not fully grown in time for the 150th Anniversary.

It was also discussed that the plants that attract the most pollinators should be placed farther from the entrance due to concerns over bees and the desire to create a space welcoming for all visitors.

Robin and Alex noted that Laura's budget is \$65, which is very low. The Trustees have approved up to \$5,000 for work on the gardens so it was discussed that the Buildings and Ground Committee and Laura can continue to explore additional projects.

Robin has been doing great work on the grounds. She will be meeting with Bee Friendly Williamstown in 2 weeks.

Pat noted that the gristmill stone will be returning to the museum at Five Corners this month.

Heat pump update: Rickert Electric estimates around \$3,000 for the cost of upgrading the electrical system for the mini-splits. The total installation cost will be approximately \$20,000. Micah met with Pam of the Friends to discuss and she wants to gather input from other members before approving the expenditure. Elizabeth will follow up with Pam tomorrow.

MassSave cannot confirm what rebates may be available for this work. They instructed us to complete the work and submit an application for the rebate.

Gazebo update: Pat reports that Sheds 'n Stuff could install it in September or October. Pat has sent the proposal to Pam and the Friends to consider for their budget. It's unlikely that the Friends will vote on this until October or November, which may change the installation timeline. The Buildings and Ground committee supports the gazebo and is seeking full Trustees support.

Elizabeth asked about where the gazebo fits into a wider, comprehensive grounds plan, which is part of the strategic plan. Alex noted that the B&G committee will continue to work on this plan and that the gazebo will not interfere with any further development of the grounds.

Bridget makes a motion to confirm the Trustees' support of the idea of a gazebo being installed on the grounds and that it has gone through the B&G committee. Alex seconded the motion. All voted in favor, except Micah who abstained.

Alex noted that the windows in the Friends' sorting area are good-quality windows, but are metal, which conducts cold easily. He recommends replacing the gaskets.

The B&G committee is also in the process of getting estimates for repairing the ceiling in the basement. So far we've gotten an estimate from Fortin Finishing; Alex is seeking additional estimates.

Alex will also connect with Ryan Donovan of Energy Source for possible grants and a free assessment for improving the sustainability of building and grounds. Possible topics could include adding insulation, installing an EV charger, the replacement of the 5 mini-splits, and more.

Old Business

Get Loud! Banned Books Event (Robin)

October 1, 2023 at 3pm on the Williams College campus, in collaboration with the League of Women Voters.

Robin shared the posters for the event with all of the speakers listed. It is up on the library website and they will be posted around town. Elizabeth will post to Destination Williamstown.

Event organizers are committed to a diversity of voices and will be providing accommodations for the speakers and paying honoraria. The Trustees will donate \$2,000 to the League of Women Voters for the event.

New Business

Staff Appreciation (Bridget)

Staff appreciation events will be coordinated with the October and November library staff meetings (these happen the second Friday of every month).

Bridget is in the planning stages and asking the Trustees for up to \$1,500 as a budget. The leading idea is for chair massages, lunch, and gift cards. Pat noted that the staff prefers individually-wrapped foods.

Micah moves to approve a budget of up to \$1,500 for staff appreciation. Timothy seconds. All voted in favor.

Personnel Committee (Micah)

The Personnel Committee met in August and September to discuss how to address the time between when Pat will leave the office (beginning of January) and when she will officially be off the payroll (end of March or beginning of April). Pat confirmed that she will be taking 6-7 weeks of vacation after her last day of January 5.

The town has indicated that they do not want to also pay the new director's salary during this time. The Personnel Committee has identified three options for proceeding:

1. Outside interim director, located through a employment service like BiblioTemps (would cost approximately \$20,000)
2. Internal interim director, drawn from the current library staff (would involve a 5-10% salary increase for the interim director, or approximately \$1,000-\$3,000)
3. New permanent director to begin in early January (would cost approximately \$30,000)

While the third is the most expensive, the Personnel Committee is advocating for this option because it would allow us to launch a search and have the new director start as soon as possible after Pat's departure, ensuring the library is fully staffed and minimizing the number of transitions in leadership. The money for this option would come from the Trustees budget.

Bridget asked if we could hire additional temporary administrative help to assist, if we were to go with option 2 (internal interim director).

For a new hire, the search process would need to start now and may not yield a hire in the first attempt. We could then shift to one of the other two options, if necessary, and relaunch the search in the new year.

The Trustees are responsible for creating a Director job description and this will be one of the tasks of the search committee. The Director's job description was last updated in April 2022, but may need further updating.

Pat had the idea of announcing her retirement and posting the job description on professional listservs at the same time. She proposed doing so on October 1, but the job description may not be ready by that time. Instead, the announcement could indicate that the Trustees are forming a search committee for a new director.

The search committee will include 7 members: 3 Trustees, 1 library staff, 1 Friend (who they will decide on), 2 community members.

Bridget moves to support the Personnel Committee in forming a search committee to hire a permanent new director as soon as possible. Robin seconded and all voted in favor.

Personnel committee should form the search committee with the above structure, advertise the search committee widely, and bring a slate to the October meeting.

Library staff will be involved in the search through their 1 member on the search committee, general solicitation of input, and something like a lunch with the candidate during the interview process.

Friends' Budget Proposal (Pat)

There is discussion about moving the Friends budget proposal process to align with the calendar or fiscal year cycle.

Pat will send the proposal to the Friends to review and discuss in October. Trustees should also look at the proposal and discuss at October meeting.

Bridget made a motion to adjourn, Micah seconded. All voted in favor. Micah adjourned at 7:33pm.