

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Milne Public Library, 1095 Main Street, Williamstown
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 5:30pm

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

Staff Present: Kirsten Rose (interim library director)

Others Present: Elizabeth Whitney (representing the Friends)

The meeting was called to order by Micah at 5:30pm.

Reports

I. Approval of Minutes from December Meeting (Katy)

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

II. Treasurer's Report (Timothy)

Timothy presented December 2023 and January 2024 reports. Elements to note from the December report:

- Donations and expenses related to the annual appeal - we may need to buy more envelopes for next year's appeal.
- Final amount from MacFarland deposited; Kirsten received final documents that the trust fund is now closed
- Expenses from posting the library director position
- Staff end-of-year bonuses hit the budget too

Fund Balances as of November 30, 2023:

Annual Fund	\$19,085.22
Botsford	\$75,912.38
Carpenter	\$10,522.30
Conway Glick	\$0.30
Craig	\$12,972.33
McFarland	\$303,575.28
Tenney Osborne	\$24,629.35
Trustee, Friends allocation for renovation fund	\$2,361.44
150th Anniversary	\$5,093.75

TOTAL \$454,152.35

Micah moved to accept the December Treasurer's Report. Robin seconded. All voted in favor, except Timothy, who abstained.

Micah moved to accept January Treasurer's Report. Katy seconded. All voted in favor, except Timothy, who abstained.

Timothy shared highlights from the Annual Appeal Report:

- 2023 YTD donations: 216 donations for a total of **\$29,206**. This is on par with last year's total (\$29,378) and our 6-year average (\$29,180).
- Donors over \$100, who did not receive personalized thank you letters, should receive a call from a Trustee. Trustees interested in making these calls should let Timothy know.
- We had a high rate of return from personalized appeal letters, especially new donors added to the list.

Library is preparing the budget proposal to submit to Fin Com this spring. In addition to the proposal, we need to submit another document that identifies other sources of funding for the library (e.g. Friends' contributions, state aid, etc.). Timothy is working on updating this document and will share with the Trustees.

[5:40pm - Anna arrived]

III. Interim Director's Report (Kirsten)

Kirsten presented the interim director's report. Highlights included:

- Pat's official last day at the library was Friday January 5th. The farewell party was held on Wednesday January 3rd, and was well-attended and a great success.
- The Town will be getting new phones in January or February - the handsets have been delivered, and will be switching systems over the third or fourth week of January.
- Narcan - library has it in the first aid kit and a few staff are interested in training. It was suggested that we open up the training to others (Trustees? The public?). Kirsten will talk with Kira about adding this to the programming.
- Leg Break (Legislative Breakfast) to be held on Friday, January 26 at Milne. Berkshire elected officials and representatives from MBLC, other libraries and other trustees will attend. There will be talks about legislative priorities, library services, and avenues for advocacy in state government.

This event is a good way to get a sense of the big picture of the conversation around public libraries in the state. Bridget, Micah, and Alex may attend.

Discussion ensued about the role of Director's Reports and whether we should ask for additional information. In the past, the reports have tended to be informational and about specific programming. Timothy suggested we get more analysis of trends for programs, along with broader context of library services.

Micah suggested moving to a quarterly report structure (or every 2 months) so we can look at the stats and get comparison to stats in other years.

Elizabeth suggested reports could also address vision and planning, and how we're doing on the strategic plan.

Robin asked for information on how programs are determined and planned. Kirsten responded that librarians in charge of each area plan programming, following trends in library services.

Elizabeth invited Kirsten to attend the Friends meeting.

Micah suggested we revisit the topic of Director's Reports at the February meeting and create a task force to determine what the reports should include and how they relate to work on the strategic plan.

IV. Friends' Report (Elizabeth)

The Friends haven't met since December, but Elizabeth reports that it has been a good period at Chapter Two books. The store is cutting back on hours for the winter.

The Friends are also currently looking at financial policies and ensuring finances are in a good place. They will have a better sense of how their membership drive is going later in the month.

V. Buildings and Grounds Report (Alex & Robin)

Alex and Robin presented the B&G Report. Highlights include:

- Meeting with DPW and Town to discuss building and grounds upkeep went well.

- Meeting with library neighbors to discuss plants for screening went well. Kirsten found a document from 1995, outlining necessary requirements for screening. B&G committee is working on a plan for these plantings.
- No new sign designs yet - Alex hopes to have more designs to share soon
- Gazebo: Alex contacted Sheds n Stuff about providing the necessary info to the town to receive the permit. Town inspector says that the pavilion (base of the gazebo) should go on piers, which may mean an additional cost of \$1500.

Discussion about the gazebo ensued. The Friends are contributing to the cost, but would prefer not to pay the contractors directly. Timothy has checked with the town and the Friends can funnel their contribution through the Trustees.

Micah made the point that we should closely document monies coming in and going out from the Friends for transparency about how we are using their money.

Since the B&G committee of the Trustees is coordinating this project, it makes sense that the payments are coming from the Trustees so we can decide when to pay what invoices from the contractors.

- The roof over the men's bathroom was found to be leaking in December. Ashley Swift came to remove the compressor and Alex Charron repaired the roof today.
- Potential new members to add to the B&G committee include Tim Kaiser (former head of DPW) and Kenny McAlpine (Pownal). Pat asked Tim before her retirement, but Trustees should follow up.
- Laura Bentz, Diane Van Kampen, garden designers, are suggesting a pergola as part of the front bed planting. There's also the possibility of putting a roof on the pergola to create a protected spot for people who are waiting for rides.
- Established no mow areas of library grounds. Micah suggested signage about the beds and no mow areas to educate library visitors and passersby.

Old Business

VI. Director Search Committee (Micah)

The search committee will be conducting 3 additional Zoom interviews.

So far, the committee has selected two candidates to bring for in-person interviews. Micah emphasized the need for trustees to be at the Trustee Interview (1:15) portion of the day and also invited everyone to the presentation at 10. Interviews will be open to the public since there will be a quorum of trustees present. Also, final interviews (which these will be) have to be open to the public. The presentations are also open to the public.

Since these count as Trustee meetings (public sessions), we need to take minutes; Katy will do so.

Micah provided several topics to the candidates as options for their presentations. We hope to have titles in time to go into the library's e-newsletter prior to candidate visits.

Micah will be emailing the candidates with questions and overall structure of their visit. The sub-committee of the Search Committee determining questions will be meeting on Saturday.

Micah has offered hotel lodging to candidates visiting from out of town. Timothy will look into making reservations and reimbursing candidates for travel expenses.

The trustees will be taking candidates to lunch on Spring Street. Micah will be emailing trustees to see who wants to attend (no more than 3). Robin's in charge of snacks (tea and pastries) for the tea break in the morning.

Micah moved to authorize Timothy to reimburse candidates at federal reimbursement rate, as well as to approve expenses for snacks and lunch up to a total of \$3,000. Bridget seconded. All voted in favor.

Candidates will need laptops and projectors for presentations. No disability accommodations are needed.

VII. Interim Director Support (Bridget & Anna)

Bridget and Anna will serve on the support committee and pull in other trustees for support, as needed.

Staff Appreciation event for Valentine's Day - this will be an important recognition of their work during this time of transition.

Planning to meet with Kirsten again in a couple weeks, but can cancel if not needed.

VIII. FY 25 Budget (Micah and Timothy)

Met recently to go through the budget line by line and think about how to present to Fin Com.

The library budget is increasing significantly due to staff wage increases (additional \$72K). It is important that the library submit a budget that is a genuine reflection of what the library costs to run. However, the Town has asked departments for “level funding” budgets (only increase by 2 1/2%) and Fin Com may reply that we need to adjust the budget in other areas to account for staff wage increase.

Micah inquired with MBLC about the rule that 19% of the library budget needs to go towards materials to maintain state funding. With the increase in staff salaries (and overall budget), do we need to increase appropriations for materials? Micah learned that materials purchased by other entities (including Friends), as well as programming costs, count towards this materials percentage.

Micah also learned that the materials percentage is calculated based on what bracket your library falls into, based on number of patrons and number of hours open. Because we’re open several hours more than is required for our size (>40 hours), we could petition to go into a different bracket - the 16% bracket. Which is helpful because we’re far short of the 19% materials budget needed due to the staff salary increases.

New Business

IX. New B&G Spending Protocol (Alex)

B&G committee wants to clarify the process for communicating with the library director around what upkeep and b&g projects are necessary.

For smaller projects, typically the library director identifies the need and works with Alex Charron, B&G superintendent for the library, on what should be done. For larger projects, there is some confusion about who takes the lead, who brings in the contractors, and who keeps the project going. This sometimes falls to the B&G committee.

Alex Charron could potentially take on more responsibility. He has the time and expertise to continue to chip away at the list in the Centerline Report. But we want to be sure we're assigning responsibilities to a certain position, not a certain person.

Discussion ensued about who should take primary responsibility for project management. Suggestions included that we use a case-by-case model (identify who should take the lead based on the project itself) or that the library director be the primary driver, consulting with trustees as needed.

It was noted that the building could take up an intense amount of time and that the library director may then not have time to devote to their other responsibilities. It's also important to remember that the library building may undergo substantial renovations or we may be working towards a new building in the coming years.

We also discussed whether to invite Alex Charron to the B&G committee meetings. The trustees would like his input on building maintenance, but need to determine the best way for him to share this information, whether in a written or oral report, and whether to the interim director or to the B&G committee directly. Kirsten will talk with Alex Charron and ask for a monthly report. If he prefers a verbal report, it may make sense for him to come to the B&G committee meetings.

We can keep this conversation going with the new director, but would like to offer some guidance on their arrival. Micah proposed a scenario where the director provides a B&G report to the B&G committee each month and then discusses at the meeting. If she/he/they determines that it would be helpful to have the B&G superintendent (Alex Charron) in attendance, the director then invites them to join too.

Although it's important to recognize that library staff do not report to trustees, trustees should also not be afraid to talk with staff when needed.

X. Next Meeting Date (Micah)

Micah proposed moving the next Trustees meeting from 2/14 to 2/7 to avoid Valentine's Day. Bridget seconded. All voted in favor.

XI. Other Business

We noted the incident in Great Barrington when a resident called the police for “pornographic material” in the school’s library (the graphic memoir *Gender Queer*). The police entered the school to investigate, which was upsetting to many. We would like to clarify with Williamstown PD what their response would be in a similar situation.

Micah and Kirsten will meet with Chief Ziemba to discuss and Micah will report back to the trustees. Bridget suggested including Timothy (because of his background as a librarian) and a Williamstown school librarian. If any other trustee would like to be involved in this conversation, contact Micah.

Bridget requested up to \$500 for staff appreciation lunch on 2/14. Micah seconded. All voted in favor.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned by Micah at 7:31pm.

Next meeting: February 7, 2024 at 5:30pm