

**David and Joyce Milne Public Library
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Emergency Meeting: March 13, 2020**

DRAFT

Present: Bridget Spann, Charles Bonenti, Karen Kowitz, Peter Mehlin, Bridget Spann, Pat McLeod, Roslyn (Roz) Broch, Pat Wilk, and (via cell phone) Micah Manary.

Also: Michael Sussman and Ginny Sheldon, of the Friends.

The meeting was called to order by Bridget at 1 p.m.

Bridget explained that she had called the meeting to discuss emergency measures related to the Coronavirus. We began with Pat McLeod's discussion of library closings throughout the region. She mentioned that the Milne is one of the most highly trafficked buildings in town. Further, because much of our population is older, we have a high-risk demographic. Micah had created a four-block graph to help himself understand this issue, which he described to us. In one block the epidemic is very bad, and in another it is mild. In one block we act swiftly, and in another we adopt a wait-and-see policy. He concluded by making the point that if we don't act now, and people are sick, that is a far worse outcome than having the library closed unnecessarily. Many members voiced agreement with this idea. Bridget made the point that it was important for us to take a leadership role.

Bridget explained a model that Pat and the library staff had proposed, in which the library was closed to the public, but staff members were still working, and able to get to all sorts of projects that they did not have time for on a daily basis, such as weeding the collection and working with contractors who are involved in the second renovation. In response to the question people might ask about whether we have any known cases of the virus presently, Bridget said, she believes we already have cases—they just haven't been identified.

Charles made the point that we had already set a precedent for the library being partially closed during the last renovation. That was successful.

Pat McLeod said the plan would allow staff members to keep the book drop open; staff members will quarantine books they receive from the public in the meeting room in the rear of the library. She said she was expecting there would soon be an announcement that interlibrary loans would be discontinued, which would simplify things because they would not have to deal with books that might be contaminated entering the library. However, after a brief discussion we agreed that people who had books on hold already waiting at the library desk could call and make an appointment to come to the door and have a staff member hand them the books. No members of the

public would be allowed inside the library. Trustees and members of the Friends could be admitted with special permission.

Deb wondered whether the library would be a valuable resource to parents who were faced with entertaining children with schools closed. We agreed it would be too great a risk to have them here.

Deb moved to close the library to the public until further notice on Friday, March 13, at 5:30 p.m. Micah seconded. All were in favor. Because one member of our group was not physically present, each of us stated our name and then gave our vote.

Charles talked about the importance of the library as an information source, and said that answering the phones and giving the public updated and correct information was a valuable function that staff members could perform.

Michael Sussman made the point that with many people being isolated as a result of “self quarantine,” reading would be a great comfort. He wondered whether we could approve a policy for people to order books online that are already in the Milne library collection, and then come to the door by appointment during a specified block of time to pick them up. We agreed that we don’t need to decide on this now. Pat and Roz said they would consider some sort of loaning policy for residents that did not involve anyone entering the library building. Everyone agreed that it would be a good idea to put the free books, which should increase as weeding gets underway, out in front of the library for people to claim.

Pat announced that the Celtic music program on March 28th was cancelled.

The Trustees discussed the upcoming annual appeal and decided to postpone it, in light of the more pressing concerns people are now facing, until a later time. We agreed that we could still send our annual appeal letter out as late as September. Charles moved that we delay sending our annual appeal letter out until further notice. Deb seconded. Again we voted individually, stating our names and then giving our vote. All were in favor.

We discussed the financial hardship that part time staff members might face should they need to be absent, because they do not have sick days. We all felt that they should be paid for necessary days off in response to the virus.

Peter moved that until the library resumes regular operations, part time staff members who are out sick or who stay home because of the need to self-quarantine will be paid for their regular hours. Deb seconded. Karen abstained because her daughter is a library staff member. All trustees again stated their vote individually. All were in favor.

Pat McLeod said the library would be closed on Saturdays, and that staff members who usually work on Saturdays will be paid for their time.

Peter encouraged Pat and Roz to find a way for these individuals to use those hours to contribute to ongoing work projects, such as weeding, during the week, and they agreed to try to make that transfer of hours workable.

We talked about how we should decide when to re-open, and Bridget made agreed with the consensus that we all need to be in communication as this issue develops. We have a regular trustees meeting scheduled for the second week of April, and if we need to meet sooner to made a decision regarding this policy, she said, we will. Peter suggested that we meet in two weeks to assess the closing policy. Deb made the point that in light of this crisis, many open meeting laws have been suspended. Pat, who had glanced at her cell phone several times, said that five libraries had announced closures during this meeting. Many of those libraries are closing because they have an elderly—high-risk—population.

Peter moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:45. Deb seconded. All were in favor.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 8, 2020, at 5:30 p.m

Respectfully submitted,
March 13, 2020
Patricia Wilk, Acting Secretary