

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of January 10, 2022**

Open Meeting:

Call to order 7:00 pm

Roll Call:

Present: Trustees Akerson, Carlin, Petullo and Sayut, in person; Trustees Martin and Scannell, via Zoom; Library Director Betsy Perry, in person

Members of the public present: none

Review/Approve December 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Akerson. Second: Carlin.

Abstaining: Scannell.

Unanimous

Director's Report

Circulation

Director Perry noted that circulation numbers are still strong. Staff saw slightly less foot traffic in the library during the month of December which is reflected in slightly lower circulation. Youth services continue to be well-attended.

FY2022 Budget

Halfway through the fiscal year, spending is right on track. In response to a question from the 12/13/21 board meeting, Director Perry clarified that the dues line in the budget includes association dues for staff (e.g., Massachusetts Library Association). Fees assessed by CW MARS are split between the materials line (to cover e-books) and technology.

Capital Plan

Director Perry reported that a request for \$200,000 in funding for elevator and lift upgrades was submitted to capital budget committee for a January 7 deadline. The amount requested was based on quotes received totaling \$157,182, as well as the understanding that additional work (including a fire recall system, vent work, and electrical upgrades) will be necessary to complete the project. Director Perry noted that window replacements were scheduled to take place in two stages over the next two years, but that the upcoming year's work may be deferred in favor of replacing all of the windows at once in two years' time. This will likely lead to economies of scale and will also avoid needing to pay for two major capital projects (elevator/lift and windows) in a single year.

FY2023 Budget

Director Perry presented a proposed FY23 library budget totaling \$493,050.50. Town guidelines called for a 2% increase in expenses and a similar 2% COLA adjustment for staff. Director Perry reported that the wages line increased by 3% due to a longevity increase for one staffer, but increase for the overall budget was 1.58%, well under the guidelines.

Motion to accept proposed budget: Petullo. Second: Akerson.

Unanimous

Facilities

Director Perry and Trustee Carlin reported on a meeting with the highway department of the DPW regarding the library parking lot. Since some turnover had occurred at the DPW since the last round of parking discussions, new staff were brought up to speed on prior parking proposals. DPW representatives were amenable to revisiting library parking in the interest of preserving an attractive and accessible town center.

Trustee Carlin asked how the library's electric bill has been impacted by the recent shift away from oil heat to an all-electric HVAC system. Director Perry reported that while electricity costs have certainly increased, spending is still well on track with what was budgeted, and state aid and/or reserve funds are available in the event of any unexpected overages.

Director Perry also addressed a previous question regarding whether there is a need for a continuously operating sump pump in the library basement, which might in turn require a generator to be installed in the event of a power outage. Director Perry noted that the water in the basement was caused by a leaking pipe, which has been repaired, fully rectifying the problem. Trustee Scannell added that the library may be considered part of the town center emergency power system, which will soon be backed up by solar power in the event of an outage. He further commented that when downtown power lines are placed underground, an effort planned for the spring, outages will be even rarer than they are now. Trustee Martin spoke in support of the library being included in the emergency power system, noting that citizens may rely on us for access to IT and technology in the event of an outage.

Director activities

Director Perry reported a variety of activities, including serving coffee at the Senior Center's pancake breakfast, performing staff reviews and Position Analysis Questionnaires for the upcoming compensation study, and attending meetings with town committees and professional associations.

Operations

The new library website went live on December 28, with added functionality allowing patrons to register themselves for events. Director Perry thanked all the library staff for their work on this project, particularly Ian Brodrick, whose tech and design skills were invaluable. She reported positive feedback so far from the public, along with some suggested changes that have been implemented when possible.

Strategic Plan

Director Perry reported that the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC) now consists of 10 members:

4 staff, 2 trustees and 4 community members. SPAC meeting dates are January 24, February 28 and June 27, all at 6:30 and all via Zoom. On February 7, Trustees and Friends will participate with the strategic planning consultant on SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) exercises, and staff will participate in their SOAR analysis on February 11. A community survey will be open from February 8-22, online and in print, with focus groups to be held after survey results are synthesized. Trustees will be called on to help recruit participants for focus groups, which will take place on March 7 at 6PM, March 10 at 1PM and March 16 at 6PM.

Director Search Committee/Director Evaluation Committee

The Director Search Subcommittee, consisting of Trustees Akerson, Carlin and Petullo, noted that they would like to change the subcommittee's name to signal the fact that the library is no longer seeking a new director. They proposed disbanding, and immediately reforming under a new name. In order to close out the existing Director Search Committee, the final meeting minutes were reviewed.

Motion to accept Director Search Committee minutes of December 15, 2021: Akerson. Second: Carlin. Non-committee members Martin, Sayut and Scannell abstained. Unanimous among committee members.

Motion to disband Director Search Committee: Akerson. Second: Carlin. Unanimous.

Trustees Martin, Sayut and Scannell were offered the opportunity to join the new committee, but declined, expressing full confidence in the work of the existing team.

Motion to form Director Evaluation Committee consisting of Trustees Akerson, Carlin and Petullo: Akerson. Second: Carlin. Unanimous.

Disaster planning

Both Chairperson Petullo and Director Perry reported on their research into library disaster planning. Chairperson Petullo suggested that the trustees review Chapter 5 Subsection 3 of the MBLC Trustees Manual on disaster planning. Director Perry noted that dPlan, an online disaster planning tool for cultural and civic institutions, would be launching a new version on March 1, and advised holding off until then to begin any planning through the site. Regarding other libraries' policies, she noted that they contained a number of related but disparate elements – pandemic policies, procedures vs. policies, “inside” vs. “outside” emergencies, continuity of operations. She will continue to work on formulating these elements and more into a cohesive plan for the Conant Library.

On the subject of pandemic policy, it was noted that the Select Board have decided not to institute any COVID-related closures of municipal buildings at this time; however, due to the rise in rates of the Omicron variant, a mask mandate for municipal buildings has been adopted. (Since the Board of Trustees had already instituted a mask mandate for the library building at its November 15 meeting, this new policy does not change existing library operations.) There is currently no stated threshold for

closing municipal buildings due to limited staff availability, but Chairperson Petullo urged Director Perry to think about what staff minimums would be required for safe operation of the library.

Bulletin Board policy

Trustees edited part of the proposed policy for clarity. The final version read, in part: "All exhibit spaces within the library are open to adults and children of all ages, and exhibits should therefore be appropriate in scale, material, form and content for every patron."

Motion to accept updated bulletin board policy: Sayut. Second: Akerson.
Unanimous.

The trustees also agreed that posting materials on window glass interferes with sightlines and should preferably be avoided. This is particularly true with doors, where inset windows allow patrons to see if anyone is approaching on the other side of the door before opening it. Especially at the children's room door, which swings out onto the small landing at the top of the staircase, impaired visibility could pose a significant safety hazard.

Next posted meeting date: February 14, 2022

Motion to adjourn: Carlin. Second: Akerson.

Unanimous

Adjournment: 8:02 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary