

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of October 23, 2023**

Open Meeting:

Call to order 7:00 PM

Roll Call:

Present: Trustees Judith Doherty, Sara Petullo and Amanda Sayut in person; Trustees Al Carlin, Dan Flaherty and Heide Martin via Zoom; Library Director Alex Grebinar, in person.

Recognize Other Attendees:

Dick Maki

Review/Approve September 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Doherty. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Director's Report

Director Grebinar reported that magazine shelves and computer tables were purchased for the main level. She deemed new tables for the lower level to be cost prohibitive at this time.

Building maintenance was carried out under the coordination of both Director Grebinar and the town, including window washing. As a precaution, all staff were apprised of the location of the building's electrical panel and water shutoff.

Director Grebinar applied for and received a grant to take an American Library Association course on cataloguing non-fiction titles with the Dewey Decimal System.

She completed paperwork for state aid and submitted it in advance of the deadline. The target spending for circulating materials was successfully met, which is a requirement to qualify for state aid, and the first installment of state aid funding is expected by January. In FY25, the target for circulating materials spending will increase to \$82,000. Funds from the state, the Friends of the Library and individual donors will supplement funds approved at town meeting to allow the library to meet this target and qualify for further state aid next year. By continuing to meet the circulating materials target and qualify for state aid funding, the library will maximize the number of new books, audiobooks, ebooks, DVDs, puzzles, games and other resources available for checkout by the people of Sterling and other CW MARS towns.

As a guest pancake server at the Sterling Senior Center, Director Grebinar had the chance to meet and greet both existing patrons and people who are not yet familiar with the library's offerings. She and Dick Maki also met with Bob Jumper, the branch manager at Leominster Credit Union in Sterling. LCU is a sponsor of the upcoming craft fair and Mr. Jumper was able to learn more about the library and what craft fair proceeds help to support.

Director Grebinar responded to a public records request from Jeff Raymond of Millbury, who queried 475 towns and school districts in Massachusetts on how many book challenges they have received and which books have been challenged. She noted that these statistics are also now requested as part of state aid reporting.

She also convened individual and group staff meetings, with particular focus on customer service training and program registration policy feedback. She began training Library Associate Jordana Wasylyshyn in collections development so there will be a staff member available to carry out this function in the event of that Director Grebinar is absent for any reason. She reported that one staff member has accepted a new position elsewhere, but will continue to work select Saturday shifts through the end of the year.

Director Grebinar completed training in spending and reporting total material expenditures which, as previously noted, is a metric required on the state aid form.

She and two other staff submitted Local Cultural Council grant applications. The two other staff are first-time applicants to the program.

The Age and Dementia Friendly Committee is currently working on outreach to local churches.

Director Grebinar further noted that most library staff members are now available for one-on-one appointments with patrons to help with library technology, including Libby and Overdrive. E-materials and audiobooks are available to patrons twenty-four hours a day through these applications.

The Friends of the Library are focused on the annual craft fair, which is only weeks away. They have agreed to fund purchase of the two new computer tables for the main level.

Budget

At 25% through the fiscal year, line items are on track.

Director Grebinar noted that the equipment line reflects the entire annual lease for the library's copier so, although this budget line is tracking at 102%, we are now fully paid for the rest of the fiscal year. This change in billing was recently negotiated and will streamline accounting.

Trustees discussed anticipated water and electricity cost increases. Director Grebinar reported that the library is careful to conserve water and energy where possible but acknowledges that increases are probably inevitable. These may outstrip budget lines as the library was only allowed a 1.5% increase when developing the current budget; however, there is some flexibility in other budget lines to reallocate money if necessary.

Circulation

Circulation remains steady, with growth in e-materials balancing a minor drop-off in adult fiction and non-fiction. Program attendance is excellent, and staff reports that the program registration policy is working as intended with mostly positive feedback.

Youth Services

Director Grebinar reported a good turnout for teen volunteer night. The teens stickered 700 candies for distribution at the town Spooky Walk.

The new homeschooling programs have also been a chance to gather good feedback – the library has responded with an upcoming homeschoolers’ art class and is also working on developing educational kits for circulation.

Director Performance Evaluation

Trustees offered feedback on Director Grebinar’s performance during her first year as Library Director, commending her on a job well done. Director Grebinar noted that many of the library’s successes over the past year have been a team effort. Together, trustees and Director Grebinar reviewed her upcoming year’s goals and made some slight edits.

Snow Retention Repairs

Director Grebinar reported that snow guards on the library roof are beginning to fail, and she would like to replace them for the safety of patrons. With the trustees’ full support, Director Grebinar will continue conversations with the town on allocating funds for the repairs.

Budget Discussion for FY25

Director Grebinar noted that her primary recommendation for the capital portion of the library’s FY25 budget is a lighting upgrade to LED technology. A recent energy audit by the Sterling Municipal Light Department recommended this step and projected that it would pay for itself in about five years’ time. (The library currently uses fluorescent bulbs, which are becoming more expensive and difficult to source.) An initial quote has been obtained for reference purposes, and if the project is funded at the next town meeting, additional quotes will be sought.

Along with the lighting upgrade, Director Grebinar proposed that the library’s request for the next town meeting include funds in the wages line for an extra staff member on Saturdays. This would allow for better desk coverage as well as for Saturday programming. If this is marketed as a new, Saturday-only position, it may be most appealing to a responsible high school or college student due to the very limited hours. Trustees inquired whether it would be feasible to upgrade a current part-time position to a benefited position covering the Saturday hours, but Director Grebinar replied that, currently, there isn’t interest among eligible staff in committing to more Saturday hours.

There being no other business to bring before the board, the meeting adjourned.

Next posted meeting date: November 13, 2023

Motion to adjourn: Flaherty. Second: Sayut.

Motion carries unanimously.

Adjournment: 8:10 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary