

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of November 13, 2023**

Open Meeting:

Call to order 7:02 PM

Roll Call:

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

Recognize Other Attendees:

Dick Maki

Review/Approve October 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Flaherty. Second: Doherty.

Motion carries unanimously.

Director's Report

Director Grebinar reported that routine maintenance and inspections had been carried out on sprinklers, emergency lights and fire extinguishers, and that no issues were found.

She noted that there has been no decision to date by the town on replacing/repairing the snow retention system on the library roof. As a fallback option, she has developed a capital request that could be included in the budget request at the next town meeting.

Director Grebinar participated in a number of meetings, including with the Insurance Advisory Board, a local library directors' group, and the town Finance Committee liaison to the library. She held individual and group staff meetings, with an emphasis on holiday scheduling; conducted an exit interview with a departing staffer; and advertised and interviewed to fill the open position. She also communicated with a reporter from The Item who was working on an article on local libraries' "Library of Things" collections.

Director Grebinar began a supervision and management course through Library Juice Academy. The course is expected to take about 15 hours over four weeks.

Programming over the past month has been successful overall, including more than 70 people attending a lecture on King Philip's War at the Senior Center.

At last month's Spooky Walk, staff distributed 692 pieces of candy to trick-or-treaters. The candies were stickered with Conant Library information by teen volunteers.

The Friends of the Library Craft Fair is set for November 18. Lunch and baked goods will be sold, thanks to the hard work of the Friends and other volunteers. The next Friends meeting will take place on December 14.

Budget

The current year budget (FY24) is running on track. Director Grebinar reminded trustees that the materials line will continue to appear high because of additional materials spending covered by the Friends of the Library, state aid, trust funds and other gifts.

The FY25 budgeting process is underway. The library's Finance Committee liaison has received the library's paperwork and has provided feedback throughout the budget development process. A final budget request is due to the town in early January.

Director Grebinar reported that Sterling Conant Library will be part of the first round of state aid disbursements, expected early in 2024. The first installment of funding will total about \$10,000, which represents an increase of about \$2,000 compared to last year. The extra funds are partially due to a 3% increase in circulation to non-Sterling residents. Director Grebinar speculated that being open on Mondays when many other local libraries are closed has helped the Sterling Conant Library attract out-of-towners, along with an active and well-regarded summer reading program with lots of associated activities and incentives.

Circulation

Circulation is up, including in the categories of adult fiction and non-fiction. E-materials continue to be popular, as does the Library of Things. Director Grebinar reported that a large shipment of new items for the Library of Things was just received today and is being processed for circulation; new items include an American Girl doll, fraction toys and a murder mystery game kit. A new "adventure satchel" break-in bag is also ready for circulation.

Youth services

Among the most popular and well-received youth programs are Paint Nights and Music Time. A new "Meet the Ukulele" program was also well-attended.

Director Grebinar noted that, if last year is any indication, the teen volunteer program might experience a lull during November and December. She would expect numbers to rebound in the New Year.

FY25 Budget

Director Grebinar discussed the details of the draft FY25 budget. She noted that these choices were made with the support of the library's Finance Committee liaison.

In the wages line, a 3% COLA was added, per the town's guidelines. Director Grebinar noted, however, that even with this increase and the addition of a new Saturday-only position, the wages line remains well under last year's amount. This is due to some long-term staff retirements and transitions, and new staff joining at a lower rate of pay.

The draft FY25 budget also requests a 6% increase in other library expenses (e.g., circulating materials, electricity, cleaning, repair and maintenance). Although this is above the standard 2% recommendation, Director Grebinar emphasized that the Finance Committee liaison is supportive, and that the overall library budget (incorporating the lower wages line) will increase less than 1% over last year. She shared

a narrative she prepared for the Finance and Capital committees explaining that a 6% increase will help meet the minimum circulating material expenditures for state aid funding. (There will still be a gap between the budget and the minimum expenditures that will be met through gifts, grants, and Friends fundraising.)

As noted, the final budget will be due in early January

Motion to approve the draft FY25 library budget for presentation to the town Capital and Finance Committees: Martin. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Capital Projects

Director Grebinar reviewed a number of capital project request forms she had prepared for an upcoming meeting of town department heads. Snow retention system repairs were added as the highest priority, in the event funds cannot be committed from the town before winter.

Also high on the priority list are LED lighting upgrades, which are expected to increase efficiency and pay for themselves within several years. In the longer term, the hot water heater and roof will need repair or replacement. There was a brief discussion on the costs and lifespan of various roofing materials.

Strategic Plan Goals and Progress

Director Grebinar and the trustees revisited the list of goals developed during the recent strategic planning exercise to ensure that appropriate steps were being taken to achieve them.

Progress has been made toward nearly all the goals. Highlights include increased library attendance, a thriving Library of Things, and a variety of new programming. Director Grebinar noted that, although some programs with less participation are being winnowed, other programs meeting the same strategic goals (e.g., intergenerational audiences) are being piloted in their place.

Other Business

Director Grebinar did not yet know the hours Town Hall would hold on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, but she was hoping to keep the library on the same schedule. This would simplify timesheets and eliminate the need for coordination of comp time after the holiday. Trustees had no objection to the library closing early on the day before Thanksgiving to be in accordance with the schedule of Town Hall.

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

Next posted meeting date: December 11, 2023

Motion to adjourn: Carlin. Second: Martin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Adjournment: 7:50 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary