

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of December 11, 2023**

Open Meeting:

Call to order 7:00 PM

Roll Call:

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

Recognize Other Attendees:

none

Review/Approve November 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Doherty. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Director's Report

Director Grebinar reported that the town facilities manager has made numerous visits to the library, including to change out light bulbs and to deliver a supply of ice melt.

Tucker Interiors will replace the wooden legs on the chairs in the children's room with metal legs; parents often sit with their children to read or play games, and as currently configured with wooden legs the chairs can only accommodate up to 140 pounds of weight. Metal braces have already been added in an attempt to strengthen the chairs, but installing metal legs will be a more reliable solution to the problem. Tucker Interiors will make this repair free of charge.

Director Grebinar completed a six-week supervision and management course. She reported that it reinforced many of her current practices.

A new associate was hired and on-boarded.

An article in the *Item* showcased Conant's "Library of Things" as well as similar collections at other area libraries.

Director Grebinar covered the circulation desk regularly and volunteered at the Friends of the Library craft fair. She reported that the craft fair went smoothly and was well-attended.

At the suggestion of a patron, she researched Grantwatch, a grant funding search engine for nonprofits, businesses and individuals, to see if it would be feasible to add it to the library's database offerings. She concluded that the institutional subscription pricing was prohibitive at this time.

Director Grebinar began drafting the 2023 Annual Report, and will present a version for trustee comment at the January meeting.

She met with roofing professional Robert Eyles to consult on a snow retention system for the roof and will report further on that meeting later on the agenda.

She also wrote annual employee evaluations and will discuss them with staff over the coming month. Employees were offered the chance to review the evaluation form and draft optional self-evaluations.

All-staff meetings covered appropriate thermostat levels, plans for a staff holiday celebration, shelf-reading assignments and scheduling considerations. Director Grebinar noted that staff has shown excellent teamwork in planning for and covering time off.

In response to a patron complaint about cold temperatures in the computer area, one public computer has been relocated to the lower level on a trial basis. The lower level is typically warmer and quieter than the main level.

Director Grebinar further noted that AED and CPR training, as well as active shooter training, are being planned by town fire and police departments. The library will participate in these trainings when they are offered.

The Elizabeth Todorov toy drive is underway through December 14. Toy donations will benefit the UMASS Child Life program, which helps to stock hospital playrooms and provides gifts for children who are hospitalized over the holidays.

Homebound services were added to the library website, and another potential home services patron contacted the library for further information.

Budget

At 42% through the fiscal year, the budget continues to track close to projections. Director Grebinar noted that the annual fee for Assabet Online, the library's online program registration system, was just paid, which explains why the Technology line is currently tracking slightly ahead at 48% spent. With Assabet Online now fully paid for the year, she expects technology spending will re-normalize in the coming months. (She further noted that Assabet Online has been a fantastic investment, saving staff many hours of work administering and tracking program registrations.)

Director Grebinar also reminded the trustees that the Leased Equipment line reflects a once-annual charge to lease the photocopier. Although this budget line is now exhausted, no more Leased Equipment costs are expected during this fiscal year.

In response to a trustee question, she provided detail on the full-time and part-time staff positions reflected in the Wages line.

Circulation

Circulation remains mostly steady, with e-materials and the Library of Things continuing to grow in popularity.

New and novel programs have been helpful in bringing new patrons in to the library. Director Grebinar and her staff continue to seek out unique offerings – for example, a spoon-carving workshop scheduled for February.

Youth Services

Many of the new Library of Things items are geared towards children, including an American Girl doll that has been circulating consistently.

The first homeschool art program was very successful, and another has been planned for January. Family trivia night has also been a popular addition to the library's programming schedule.

Attendance has been low at book clubs across many age groups. Some of these will be phased out in favor of other programs geared towards the same ages, e.g. Explorers' Clubs for elementary school students and Family Paint Nights for intergenerational audiences.

Capital Project Updates

The library has received a set of security cameras which, as discussed at previous meetings, will be installed primarily in the driveway and at the lobby entrance. A server for these cameras still needs to be built.

As noted in her Director's Report, Director Grebinar received a third quote from Eyles Contracting on updating the snow retention system on the library roof. This quote of \$4,850 would cover installation of a third-tier snow fence to reinforce some existing snow fencing that remains in good condition. The contractor is ready to undertake this project as soon as possible to get ahead of the winter weather. The trustees were happy to hear that this issue would be addressed promptly and expressed their willingness to contribute a portion of the costs from library state aid grants. Director Grebinar noted that the snow retention project can now be removed from the capital plan.

Director Grebinar further noted that researching the serial number of the library's hot water heater revealed that it is ten years old, and not twelve years old as had been thought. Trustees agreed that it still makes sense to pursue a replacement in the FY26 capital plan, when it will be 12-13 years old and approaching the end of its useful lifespan.

Regarding the lift and elevator, Director Grebinar noted that the town administrator has done much of the procurement. He is still waiting on an updated quote from Garaventa for the lift, and is planning to contact Otis regarding the early 2024 elevator work that has been on their schedule for about a year.

Bringing the Library Home Study Results

During the spring of 2023, researchers from Worcester State University visited the library and surveyed patrons to learn how library services and resources impact the way children read and play in their homes. The research project supported the idea that libraries foster children's at-home literacy and learning with books, programming and other resources (e.g., craft kits, games and toys for checkout). Director Grebinar noted that this research reinforces many of the library's current efforts, such as the expansion of the Library of Things and the development of take-and-make kits.

Other Business

Director Grebinar asked whether trustees would support the library being closed on Saturday, December 23 to offer staff an extended holiday break. Trustees had no objection to this idea, and were enthusiastic about the chance to reward and recognize library staff following a very busy several weeks.

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

Next posted meeting date: January 8, 2024

Motion to adjourn: Petullo. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Adjournment: 7:35 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary