

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees  
Conant Public Library  
Sterling, MA  
Minutes of July 10, 2023**

**Open Meeting:**

Call to order 7:02 PM

**Roll Call:**

Present: Trustees Judith Doherty, Heide Martin, Sara Petullo and Amanda Sayut in person; Library Director Alex Grebinar, in person.

Trustee Dan Flaherty was not in attendance for roll call but arrived via Zoom at 7:05.

Absent: Trustee Al Carlin.

**Recognize Other Attendees:**

Richard Maki

As there was not yet a quorum of trustees to approve the minutes of the June meeting as of the call to order at 7:02, Chairperson Petullo suggested that Director Grebinar deliver her report first.

**Director's Report**

Director Grebinar reported that FY23 financials are complete. She noted that, while materials costs ran over budget, the overage was readily covered through other lines that ran low.

Circulation numbers have been very strong across many categories, including the growing Library of Things. Library cards are being issued at an increased rate compared to last year.

The library's annual CWMARS membership cost has been assessed for FY24 at \$9,829. This represents a minimal increase over last year, which is due in part to the switch to Aspen as a new patron-side catalog system. This assessment was very close to Director Grebinar's initial estimate and is reflected in the FY24 budget.

Staff continues to look for ways to reconfigure the library's layout for increased functionality and better sightlines. Computer tables on the main level and study tables on the lower level will be replaced, as well as new end panels installed on the reorganized lower level bookshelves. On the main floor, periodical shelves will be reworked. At some point, Director Grebinar envisions that the existing periodical shelves will house the Library of Things, as periodicals become more readily available on Overdrive and less available in print format. New furniture will be paid for through Friends funding or state aid.

Director Grebinar reported that Sterling's new facilities manager, who is shared with West Boylston, took a tour of the library and returned several times to further familiarize himself with the building.

She also noted that she submitted a letter to the Select Board and addressed a recent Select Board meeting sharing the library's breadth of activities and advocating for its parking needs. Several trustees also attended the meeting, and commented that the Select Board was impressed with the variety of activities taking place at the library.

The Age and Dementia Friendly Sterling working group is not meeting over the summer, but Director Grebinar reports that outreach continues to local business.

Director Grebinar reported a number of meetings with staff, especially to bring newer staff members up to speed on the Beanstack system used for the summer reading program. All-staff meetings covered ALA's code of ethics and the Library Bill of Rights. Along with two trustees, she met with the Town Administrator to discuss ways to improve library parking. She also attended a virtual class on Documentation for the Supervisor. At the latest CWMARS Users' Council meeting, Aspen was adopted as the new patron-side catalog, as previously noted – this is expected to improve ease-of-use for patrons.

Director Grebinar also attended a class on Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) reporting, which is required by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to receive state aid and meet the minimum standards of public library service. Circulations and collections data will be reported in August, with financial information to follow later in the year.

The summer reading kick-off event, a magic show at the First Church Parish Hall, was attended by 137 people. Many came to the library before or after to register for summer reading and check out books. Director Grebinar reported that, to date, 270 children have registered, a number that will likely continue to rise. Community and library staff have provided a wide variety of prizes for the associated raffle and kids are enthusiastic about earning raffle tickets through reading books and writing book reviews.

The policy of allowing Sterling residents first priority in registering for popular programs has been implemented, and has gone relatively smoothly. The registration system has been updated so that people have to register individually and state their town as part of the registration process. (A formalized program policy is discussed later in the meeting.)

Director Grebinar reported that she had looked for examples of security camera policies in other town departments, and found that most did not have one. (The requirement to have a stated security camera policy originates with the American Library Association and is library-specific.) To bring newer trustees up to speed, the rationale behind the security cameras was briefly discussed, including the strict patron privacy considerations and the distribution of cameras to focus mainly on the building's exterior.

Youth services was mostly focused on the summer reading program in June. New this year is a Friends-sponsored writing contest and a Bingo challenge. (Director Grebinar noted that a Bingo challenge for adults is coming in January.)

With a quorum present for approval of June meeting minutes, trustees turned to this agenda item. Thanks went out to Trustee Doherty for acting as secretary at the June meeting while Trustee Sayut acted as Chair in the absence of Chairperson Petullo.

### **Review/Approve June 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Motion to accept: Sayut. Second: Martin.

Motion carries unanimously, with Chairperson Petullo abstaining.

### **Program Policy Update**

In response to the patron input at the June board meeting, trustees reviewed a new program policy draft incorporating specific language about Sterling residents having first priority to register for select programs.

Trustees also discussed how to address the ongoing problem of patrons not attending programs they have registered for without notifying the library that they cannot attend. This prevents waitlisted patrons from being offered program seats and can also result in the library purchasing materials and resources that then go unused.

Trustees suggested opening the program policy document with the rationale for addressing the problem, and identified language in other libraries' policies that was particularly clear and compelling. They discussed requesting that registrants who cannot attend a program notify the library by 9AM on the morning of the event; after three instances of not attending a program without notifying the library ahead of time, an individual could be prohibited from registering for programs for a period of up to 60 days. All of these elements were consistent with other libraries' program attendance policies that Director Grebinar provided for review.

In the interest of maximizing library access for young patrons, trustees were not inclined to apply the attendance policy to children's programming, particularly since some unexpected absenteeism is unavoidable with babies and young kids. Director Grebinar confirmed that the attendance issues are confined mainly to adult programs and that children and their parents would continue to receive extra leeway with regards to attendance.

As the program policy remains in draft form, no vote was taken.

### **Collections Policy Update**

Under the existing collections policy, major criteria for acquiring new materials include popular demand, consideration of existing library holdings, readability, reviews, awards, credentials of the author and price point. Trustees reviewed the policy, and made some minor copyedits, including rearranging some text for clarity's sake.

Trustees suggested stating in the policy that, since popular demand is a factor in the selection of materials, there are bound to be items in the library's collection that are controversial or even offensive to some patrons. The goal of the policy is a well-rounded collection that encompasses different viewpoints and appeals to a variety of interests.

As the updated collections policy remains in draft form, no vote was taken, and the existing collection policy remains in effect.

### **Citizen's Request for Review Form Update**

Trustees discussed updates to the Citizen's Request for Review of Materials form. This is the form a patron would submit to the Director if they felt an item did not merit inclusion in, or was inappropriate for, the library's collection.

Several largely redundant questions were condensed down, and other questions were added based on sample forms gleaned from other area libraries. Trustees coalesced around three main questions, in addition to an initial section asking for basic identifying information.

Question 1 would ask if the patron has reviewed the library's collections policy, which would be attached for convenience. This question would emphasize that items would only be removed if they were found to be in violation of the collections policy.

Question 2 would ask patrons to describe their specific objections to the materials under review.

Question 3 would ask if the patron has read/viewed/listened to the entire work, and if not, how much and which parts.

Trustees also wished to add a date at the bottom specifying when the form itself was last amended.

As the new Citizens Request for Review form remains in draft form, no vote was taken.

### **Public Participation Policy**

Trustees held a brief discussion on creating a policy for public participation in library board meetings, informed by the recent ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court in the case of Barron v. Kolenda. This ruling found that the Southborough Select Board's public comment policy, which included the provision that individuals could be removed from the meeting if their comments were not "respectful and courteous," was unconstitutional.

Mr. Maki noted that the Sterling Department of Public Works has a public comment policy in place that the library could review (although, depending on when it was last amended, it may be superseded by the SJC ruling).

Trustees advocated for a policy that would allow public comments to take place early in the agenda. Chairperson Petullo said that she would create a summary for review at a future meeting.

Next posted meeting date: August 14, 2023  
Motion to adjourn: Doherty. Second: Martin.  
Motion carries unanimously.  
Adjournment: 8:40 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary