

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of August 14, 2023**

Open Meeting:

Call to order 7:00 PM

Roll Call:

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

Recognize Other Attendees:

None

Review/Approve July 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Martin. Second: Flaherty.

Motion carries unanimously, with Trustee Carlin abstaining.

Director's Report

Director Grebinar reported that Access Elevator and Lift had visited the library to view the pending lift project and possibly provide a quote.

She also noted that plans are underway to add low-maintenance native perennial plants to the mulched area in front of the library.

Following a meeting between Director Grebinar and a reporter from the Sterling Meetinghouse News, an article on programming (including the summer reading program and the growing Library of Things) appeared in the paper's August 9 edition. The reporter also took photos of new staff that may appear in a future follow-up article.

In preparation to present a draft policy to trustees (discussed later in the agenda), Director Grebinar researched public participation guidelines and best practices, including materials from Massachusetts General Law, the Massachusetts Library Association, the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association, the Sterling DPW and the Sterling Select Board.

She also submitted the required Annual Report Information Survey data to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Of note in her report was a marked increase in over-the-desk circulations to non-residents, from 9,185 to 12,149. This translates to an increase in state funding awarded to the library, of up to 25 cents per transaction. Director Grebinar speculated that the summer reading program and the 100 Books of Summer may have helped boost these numbers, as they generally attract participants from many area towns.

The library's recent escape room program was challenging and fun for families. A new break-in bag is in the works to join the pirate- and spy-themed break-in bags already available for circulation.

Director Grebinar and Assistant Director Orr began developing ideas for capital projects, including replacing fluorescent lights with LEDs per a recent Sterling Municipal Light Department energy audit. Window washing is also on the list of potential projects, with an eye on window replacement in the future – although the windows are not failing, there has been an increase in fogging.

AM and PM staff meetings were held on July 24, along with a programming-specific meeting. Program registration opened for the months of September and October, and registrations were brisk as usual.

The adult summer reading program began on August 1. Assistant Director Orr did a great job soliciting a number of prize donations from local businesses.

The Mayo Clinic newsletter and the Saturday Evening Post were added to the periodicals collection. Other periodical titles were removed based on low circulation or because a donated subscription expired.

Director Grebinar reported that she purchased three wireless hotspot devices for the library's collection. This was done in response to a patron request, but is also in line with the offerings of other area libraries. An in-depth discussion of hotspot policies was slated to take place later in the agenda.

The library's first-ever "Murder Mystery at the Theater" program was a huge success, and another is in the works. Staff were commended for their effort and creativity.

The Friends of the Library are selling tote bags for \$20. Their latest donation is a museum pass for the Butterfly Place in Westford.

Budget

Director Grebinar drew trustees' attention to the technology line in the budget which, at 9% through the year, is running at 43%. She noted that this is not a cause for concern, since it reflects an annual subscription to CWMARS. The CWMARS subscription provides access to resources at dozens of libraries across Central and Western Massachusetts, along with administrative and IT support.

A Cultural Council grant has been received and will be used for programming.

Circulation

Director Grebinar noted that physical book circulation has dipped, but circulation of e-books is up. She speculated that people may be on vacation and checking out electronic resources remotely. She reported that in-person visits to the library are running above last July's levels.

Youth services

The summer reading program was very well-received by local youth and families. By end of the program, 238 readers had logged a total of 7,500 hours of reading, and 51 had completed the 100 Books of Summer challenge. All summer reading program participants who logged hours received a new book

donated by the Friends of the Library, and everyone who completed the 100 Books of Summer received a Rota Springs gift certificate.

Nineteen young people entered the library's first-ever writing contest, and entries are currently being reviewed by judges.

New Business

Program Policy

Following extensive discussion at the July meeting on a new program policy, Director Grebinar presented a draft for board approval. Trustees requested some very minor edits.

Motion to approve Program Policy as amended: Sayut. Second: Doherty.

Motion carries unanimously.

Library Materials Collection Policy

Also in light of July discussion, Director Grebinar presented a draft update to the Library Materials Collection Development Policy.

Motion to approve updated Library Materials Collections Development Policy: Flaherty. Second: Martin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Patron's Request for Review of Library Material

An updated draft of the Patron's Request for Review of Library Material form was also presented by Director Grebinar. (Alterations to this form were discussed in depth at the July meeting.) Trustees made some minor edits to the document.

Motion to approve Patron's Request for Review of Library Material form as amended: Petullo. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Public Participation Policy

Director Grebinar presented a draft policy for public participation in Board of Library Trustees meetings, derived from consultation of Massachusetts General Law for public sessions; the MIIA; and policies developed by Sterling's DPW and Select Board.

The draft included on an overall 30 minute time limit on a meeting's public session, and trustees discussed at length whether to add a time limit on individual speakers as well. While trustees agreed that setting specific individual time limits could help ensure meeting efficiency in some circumstances, they ultimately coalesced around allowing flexibility in time limits, depending on how many people may wish to speak during a 30-minute public session.

The section on recording meetings was edited for clarity and to reduce redundancy.

Motion to approve Public Participation Policy as amended: Petullo. Second: Flaherty.

Motion carries unanimously.

Due to a previous commitment, Trustee Doherty exited the meeting at 8:40 PM.

Wireless Hotspot Borrowing Agreement

Director Grebinar reviewed a proposed borrowing agreement for wireless hotspots, which itemizes the replacement cost for lost or damaged components. Hotspots will circulate to patrons 18 years of age and older, including patrons of other libraries (provided the devices are picked up and returned in person at the Sterling Conant Library).

Trustees inquired whether other libraries have experienced problems with attrition of hotspots, but Director Grebinar pointed out that the wireless service can easily be turned off to a particular unit, at which point it is no longer functional. (The itemized replacement cost includes 28 days of wireless service.)

Since this is a new initiative, trustees suggested revisiting in six month's time and making any necessary changes to the policy or borrowing agreement.

Motion to approve Hotspot Borrowing Agreement: Sayut. Second: Martin.

Motion carries unanimously among trustees present.

Review Annual Calendar of Activities

Trustees reviewed an updated calendar of annual activities and deadlines. This version incorporated adjustments to the Director's evaluation timeline as well as some new timelines from town administration.

Senate and House Bills

Trustees briefly discussed two pending Bills in the Massachusetts Congress impacting library operations. House Bill 4005, An Act Ensuring Freedom to Read in the Commonwealth, aims to create a statewide system to extend and protect library access, including in underserved areas. A related bill in the Senate (An Act Protecting Against Attempts to Ban, Remove or Restrict Library Access) would withhold state aid from libraries that remove materials from their collections or restrict access to them due to subject matter.

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

Next posted meeting date: September 11, 2023

Motion to adjourn: Petullo. Second: Flaherty.

Motion carries unanimously among trustees present.

Adjournment: 8:47 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary