

**Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Conant Public Library
Sterling, MA
Minutes of March 11, 2024**

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:

Mr. Richard Maki

Review/Approve February 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Doherty. Second: Flaherty.

Motion carries unanimously.

Director's Report

Director Grebinar reported that the lift at the library entrance is out of order. As the malfunction occurred the day after a brief town-wide power outage, Otis Elevator has speculated that a power surge may have contributed. A necessary part for the repair is on order. A sign has been posted on the entrance to the lift offering to bring materials out to the curb or otherwise assist patrons who cannot access the library at this time.

Ballasts in two light fixtures were replaced. The fire alarm panel upgrade was completed on February 15, paving the way for the planned elevator updates to move forward. On February 21, main level computer tables purchased by the Friends of the Library were installed. New shelving was also added to the main level, along with end caps on the lower level. Upstairs, the small children's room chairs were updated with metal legs to bear more weight and allow for adults and children to sit at the tables together.

DVDs were weeded to make space for new acquisitions.

The town Select Board approved the use of about \$39,000 in ARPA funds to carry out the library's LED lighting upgrades. This project will no longer be presented as part of the capital projects budget at May's Town Meeting. Two project quotes have already been obtained.

Director Grebinar's activities included researching trustee bylaws and administering surveys to program participants. She met with other town department heads, as well as the Finance Committee and the Capital Committee; there were no questions about the library's proposed budget in the lead-up to Town Meeting. She held meetings with individual staff as well as two group staff meetings, where summer hours and the new seed library were discussed.

Trustees asked whether the library was able to accept donated seeds; Director Grebinar said at this time there was no capacity to reliably identify and store donated seeds, but noted that the seed library has been popular and may be expanded in the future. Trustees suggested she consider increasing local and heirloom varieties available and offering accompanying workshops on seed saving and related topics.

Director Grebinar met with a representative of the Wachusett Rotary to discuss placing a plastic bag/film recycling bin in the library. The bin has since been placed. Director Grebinar notes that if enough plastic film is collected, the library will receive a recycled Trex outdoor bench.

The Head of Youth Services has given her notice, but is planning to stay on until late June to help get the summer reading program underway. Director Grebinar plans to post this Grade IV benefited position internally at first, and will do so closer to its projected start date.

The Town Administrator had no new updates on the elevator and lift projects. The elevator is still expected to be out of commission for about four weeks in the early summer. The current issues with the lift may help accelerate additional work related to the planned upgrades.

Aspen, the new patron-side catalog, rolled out on March 4. Staff have been trained to assist patrons in its use. Some minor issues were reported with Aspen's integration with the CW MARS app, but in most cases allowing the software to update resolved the problem.

Library staff continue to pursue professional education. In particular, Ms. Wasylyshyn completed a Basic Library Techniques course in cataloging, as well as a Library Juice Academy course on Machine Readable Cataloging, or MARC, the standard format for bibliographic information in library catalogs. She has also applied for a grant to take a course on incorporating STEAM concepts into story times.

New England UFOs, the library's first program to be co-sponsored with the Senior Center, attracted 49 attendees. The program was funded through a grant from the Sterling Cultural Council.

One patron was added to the home delivery service.

Budget

At 67% through the fiscal year, the budget is on track.

Director Grebinar noted that she is still offering extra hours to staff to help spend down an excess in the wages line. This is helping to improve coverage on evenings and Saturdays. Due to the relatively mild winter, electricity costs have been manageable. The repair line includes \$800 for a repair to the elevator button; additional costs associated with the lift repair will be included in next month's budget.

In light of the lift malfunction, trustees inquired whether a residential surge protector of the kind sold by Sterling Municipal Light Department would have helped in this situation. Director Grebinar said she would ask SMLD for advice.

Trustees briefly discussed whether the library should consider investing in a generator. Director Grebinar noted that the senior center has one and it does require regular maintenance. Since the library

is centrally located on Main Street, it is very rare to have power outages of any significant length. Trustees suggested tracking power outages to create a record that would not rely on the memory of individual directors and trustees.

Trustee Carlin recalled the investment made in heating updates about six years ago. He asked whether it would be possible to review prior budgets to determine if the updates were effective at reducing costs.

Director Grebinar noted that the cost of shelving was deducted from the State Aid line. The Cultural Recovery grant was not drawn down this month, as Sterling Cultural Council funds were used instead.

Circulation

Director Grebinar reported a very busy month for library visits. She credited the Blind Date with a Book program with helping to increase attendance during what is traditionally a quiet month.

Youth Services

This month in the children's room the craft table was very popular, as were Family Trivia Nights, Paint Times, and Story Times. Book clubs and Write Nights were less well-attended, and some may be phased out. At this time of year volunteers often taper off, but a few young people do remain active.

Date for May Meeting

Since the town election conflicts with the May trustees meeting as scheduled, the meeting was rescheduled to the following Monday, May 20, at 7 PM in the Baker Room.

Review of Bylaws

Trustees discussed some updates to the existing Board of Library Trustees bylaws.

Section 1, MEETINGS, was edited slightly to reflect the fact that trustees' meetings may need to be rescheduled not only to accommodate holidays, but also for other extenuating circumstances such as a conflict with the town election.

In Section 4, DUTIES OF THE CHAIR, the line was removed specifying that "When the Chair is absent, the Secretary shall appoint an acting Chair for that meeting." Trustees found this redundant, as it is also included word for word in Section 5, SECRETARY.

Section 7, AGENDA, outlined a procedure for members of the public to add items to meeting agendas. This was removed, since every trustees' meeting is held at least partly in public session for the express purpose of hearing from members of the public. (This change also brings Section 7 closer in line with the policies at other town departments and local libraries.)

Motion to approve Conant Free Public Library Board of Trustees By-Laws as amended: Carlin. Second: Martin.

Motion carries unanimously.

Program Survey Responses

Director Grebinar noted that the recent strategic planning process called for the library to gather

feedback on its programs – accordingly, surveys have been distributed to a random selection of program participants. Trustees reviewed a compilation of survey responses.

Feedback was positive overall, and some specific suggestions have already been addressed or can be easily addressed in future program iterations. A preference is emerging for STEAM-based children’s programming as opposed to book clubs. Among adult programs, crafts and the Classic Book Club continue to be well-received.

Update Circulation Policy

Director Grebinar presented the existing circulation policy, last updated in April 2023. She asked trustees to consider whether library card holders under 12 years old should be required to have a parent or guardian opt them in to be able to borrow from the Library of Things. She noted that some of the Library of Things items have a significant replacement cost, which parents/guardians would ultimately be responsible for in the event of loss or breakage.

There is a currently a similar opt-in policy in place for DVDs and Blu-ray discs – since the library does not restrict circulation of these by rating, parents/guardians are able to stipulate that their children 12 and under are not permitted to check them out at all.

Trustees asked whether the two items would be addressed separately when a new card is issued to a child under 12, since there are distinct rationales for the two different restrictions. Director Grebinar confirmed that they would. She also noted that existing library cards for under-12s would be updated with the new opt-in information as they are used. Trustees were amenable to this change in policy.

Trustees made some minor edits to the section on museum passes to emphasize the importance of prompt return of passes to the book drop or circulation desk. Often passes are booked back-to-back and must be turned around very quickly by library staff.

Director Grebinar also proposed adding memory kits to the list of items on 3-week loan. As a relatively new addition to the library collection, these were not reflected at all in the latest circulation policy.

Motion to approve Circulation Policy as amended: Flaherty. Second: Carlin.

Motion carries unanimously.

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

Next posted meeting date: April 8, 2024

Motion to adjourn: Doherty. Second: Sayut.

Motion carries unanimously.

Adjournment: 8:05 pm

Amanda Sayut, Secretary