

BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 12, 2021 4:45 PM

MINUTES

Present: Jane Southworth, Jennifer Rowe, John Woodward, Gabriel Sistare, Leo Schiff, Karen Tyler, Sirkka Kauffman, Howard Burrows, Starr Latronica, Courtney Carey (BML Circulation Manager), Kevin O'Brien (AmeriCorps Service Member), Stephen Dotson (Town Sustainability Coordinator), Sarah Vincent-Hoag (notes)

Call to Order / 4:45 PM - Leo

Agenda/Changes or additions - none

Public Comments – Stephen Dotson: Has had the pleasure of working with the library staff and wanted the Trustees to know that there hasn't been a department in town that's been more supportive, enthusiastic and more enabling of so much good work than this group here. Introduced himself as the Sustainability Coordinator and Kevin O'Brien as the AmeriCorps service member who is working with his office.

Minutes of December 8, 2020 - Jane moved to approve, Jennifer seconded. All in favor. None opposed or abstaining

New Business agenda item:

Possible cooperative projects: Stephen Dotson Town of Brattleboro Sustainability Coordinator

Stephen: Gave a little background on the idea of a Tool Library. During his time working with BML resource librarian and connection with the Foundation Center, saw grants going to tool libraries and work done in our community that was in need of those tools. He has researched it and was a past member of a tool library. Repair cafes: wanted to see people reuse and repair things rather than buy new things. Would like to partner with the library with Kevin as the lead on creating a tool library.

Kevin: Introduced himself and gave a summary of tool libraries and shared his experience with Tool library "Mud" in Missoula and gave a screen share presentation with many details about the topic.

Stephen: emphasized the community interaction benefit of a tool library

There was a discussion of the location: Room 101 of the Municipal building, accessed through the back door and available for free before Muni building renovations start. And after possibly a rental space in the Midtown Mall building

He mentioned that thematic thinking about what might be needed based on a survey of the needs of the community may be of help when applying for grants.

Tools could be donated by the community/hardware store, etc. as well as purchased

Kevin shared the sign-out system used at "Mud"

Stephen: Re: staffing, the AmeriCorps person would be the key staff person and AmeriCorps would fund \$7400 for a full-time person per year.

Insurance- They would look at the cheapest option, may fall under existing policies of the town/library.

Gabriel: had questions about staffing and circulation process/communications

Jennifer: had questions about the role of the main library in relation to the tool library. Suggested the Friends may be able to assist as a non-profit umbrella.

Jane: Devil's in the details. Would need a plan/budget and etc. Suggested to go to Vermont State Library Website to learn the difference between town libraries and separate libraries and the role of the Trustees, available money, etc. She suggested that he research and come back with details.

Starr: This was a good opportunity to meet Stephen and Kevin and to hear about the Tool Library idea for the first time. Starr had spoken to Leslie about cataloguing/would not expect her to handle a Tool Library on top of what she already does. But Leslie would still like to borrow tools!

Leo: Thank you for introducing the topic. We will talk about it more next month. Stephen and Kevin will have an offline conversation with Starr, Jeanne and Courtney. Kevin will send the presentation and resources to Starr and she will forward it to the Trustees.

COMMITTEE UPDATES/ DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Friends of the Library

Starr: Joyce has said the Annual appeal topped 14K and almost every donation complimented the staff on the great job they are doing

Courtney is working with Betsy on the book sale (Books will be on display in the front window and sales/money will be handled via curbside service). We will be moving books out and bringing money in, but not accepting more book donations for awhile

B. Finance/Asset Development Committee—Jennifer Rowe, Chair

Met yesterday, minutes were sent. Met with Prentiss Smith and pleased with everything/considered performance - as done annually – and not inclined to make changes to investment manager.

Set amount to pull from the endowment to make up the budget for the next fiscal year: money that will be spent starting in July. Traditionally this is 4% of what is in the endowment as of the last day of the calendar year which is \$96,870.75. Asked for comments on this.

Jane: We should note (for the benefit of meeting visitors) this money is used for specific library related activities. The budget for the town pays for staff and that building.

Leo: Asked for a motion to support the finance committee's recommendation. Jane moved to support the finance committee's recommendation of the draws described by Jenny and in the minutes. Sirkka seconded. All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion passed.

C. Technology Committee—Leo Schiff, Chair

Starr: Still working really hard on the website. Met daily via Zoom for last 2 weeks. Determined to launch by February. Many details, a complex website with a lot of resources on it. Devoting a lot of time to it.

D. Buildings and Grounds—Gabriel Sistare

Library needs a new water heater \$700 (Starr: we already got it).

-No photo yet of the elusive yew tree, Gabriel will reach out to Gordon Hayward (gardener) to prune to maintain in a way that permits better access to the garden. Starr or Courtney will take a picture of the camera-shy yew tree.

-Gabriel will make a schedule with Starr to paint areas of the library.

-Town maintenance people- Starr will put them to work on special projects, stripping tile, moving furniture from library to muni building etc.

E. Advocacy and liaison to library organizations—Howard Burrows

Annual Mid-Winter meeting – Starr too busy now to attend.

Howard recommended Braver Angels meetings. Braver Angels is trying to find ways to come up with common ground between different groups/communities. A number of people in the Brattleboro community have joined. When asked to explain this group's connection with library work: Howard sent Jeanne Walsh info some of the ways that literacy is involved in softening gaps. He sees a lot of

connections.

VLA is not doing much now.

F. Department Reports: Director; Reference, Youth Services

Starr: Asked Jeanne and Lindsay to prepare the annual report (overview of the year) for the town meeting book. Starr will send to the Trustees so can see it before it gets printed in book. Courtney did the statistics.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Update on current services/staffing

Starr: Recent issue of American Libraries had the most recent results of the REALM study that examines the length of the virus survival on various materials and virus still survives for 6 days on stacked hard surfaces. So we are staying with the 7 day quarantine for library materials. Helps alleviate anxiety for staff and public. We field a lot of communications from Patrons about materials. Everyone (the patrons) is a bit raw and frayed at the edges and staff is being affected by it. Two employees came to Starr today with stories of issues with difficult patrons. Starr thanks the staff for keeping cool and coping with it. Starr will try and take some of the phone calls. Starr thanked the Trustees for their support in keeping the doors closed. Reiterated that everyone must wear a mask in the presence of others.

Gabe: regarding the 2 employees and stress, will Starr let the Trustees know if it escalates so the Trustees can offer support?

Starr: Reminder that we have access to EAP. EAP might be engaged to do a presentation re: reasonable behavior toward staff in a public service setting. Starr will look into this

Jane: Three cheers for staff and Starr

Further discussion of process of preparing for new strategic plan. Tentative meeting: 1/19/21 at 4:30

Leo: Tuesday, Jan 19 meeting set. Jane can't attend so Leo and Jane will talk offline to come up with a meeting date when she can attend. If you would like to attend let Leo know now. Meeting will be to map out the process, timeline and key tasks. Karen, Howard, John, Jane, Gabriel and Sirkka would like to attend. Sarah will email Leo list of names. Leo will try to set the meeting for next week.

NEW BUSINESS

Leo: The tool library should go into continuing business for the next meeting. Where does the TL fit within our committee structure? Buildings and grounds, strategic plan, finance, community etc. suggested. Leo: Looking at how other libraries of similar size have done this successfully would be useful.

Trustee recruitment for remainder of unfinished term due to expire in 2022. Appoint nominating committee.

We are looking for one trustee to fill a one-year position (can be reappointed to a 3-year position next year). Beth has indicated her intention to resign as a trustee, but would like to participate as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. This time of year we solicit nominations and publicly ask if anyone would want to come forward to be a trustee. A committee interviews applicants, then recommends candidates to Town Meeting. Nominating committee is Leo, Jenny, Howard (and Starr). Welcome others who would like to be on committee, welcome trustees to suggest to people they know who may be interested.

Starr will put out solicitation re: press release and next couple of weekly newsletters.

Interviews are on a Saturday early/mid Feb, weekday evening time (30 – 45 minutes) Leo will arrange

meetings. People will send their letters of interest to Starr who will share them with the committee and then they decide who to interview.

Howard: suggested someone who is a contact to the Roots Social Justice. Opportunity to connect with community.

Starr can make announcement at the Select board meeting “announcement time”

AmeriCorps position?

We could apply to under: Bridge the digital divide. Leo suggested we could get an AmeriCorps person to do outreach and help Matt to train people on how to use technology. It would be a \$6000 per year cost to the library. Jeanne and Matt thought it would be a good idea. Starr was on a panel for rural development, the Council on Aging was talking about program for training seniors on devices, accessing tech and electronic resources and thinks this would be a great area/demographic to focus on. The letter of interest is due Feb 6. Endowment money can be used to support this effort.

Leo: Does everyone feel comfortable with Starr going forward with this? All yes.

6:16 Leo: motion to adjourn. Howard moved, Jane seconded. All in favor.