

BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 9, 2021 4:45 PM

MINUTES

Present: Sirkka Kauffman, Leo Schiff, Gabriel Sistare, Howard Burrows, Jennifer Rowe, John Woodward, Jane Southworth, Starr Latronica, Chloe Liotta-Jones (Teen Services Specialist), Diana Whitney (Poet Laureate position) Sarah Vincent-Hoag (notes)

Absent: Karen Tyler

Call to Order / 4:48 PM - Leo

Agenda/Changes or additions – Leo would like to add Tool Library to continuing business

Public Comments - none

Minutes of January 12, 2021 Under Finance Committee re: vote on draws, will need to put the actual amount in the minutes. Jenny will send to Sarah to include. Jenny moved to approve the minutes, Jane seconded. Unanimous.

COMMITTEE UPDATES/ DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Friends of the Library

Starr: Friends Annual Appeal is over \$14500 and doing very well.

- The library display in honor of Friends' gifts in the Chamber of Commerce Window will be up for two weeks
- John Komar has resigned from the Board. There are two prospective new Friends members
- Kate Wiley passed away a few weeks ago.

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

• Treasurer's Report and Update

-Please refer to the minutes from last week's finance committee meeting that were sent out in the Trustees meeting packet. Prentiss Smith was asked why only five instead of six statements (because of small interest amount on the sixth). Next month will be back to the normal six.

C. Technology Committee—Leo Schiff, Chair

Leo: The Tech committee did not meet in January but talked to Starr re Website. We have a "beta" version.

Jane: It is very clean looking but needs help to understand/navigate

Starr: Welcomed input as far as fine-tuning details (e.g: if links work, typos, inserting Friends logo etc.)

Kudos were given to Chloe, Matt and Jeanne for all their hard work on the Website

Leo: Praise re: accomplishment of the staff without the benefit of extra resources/a project manager

Starr will send the Website link to Jane and offered to do a phone call with screen share and work together on it

Leo: Question of tech committee engaging with Tool Library will be discussed in continuing business

D. Buildings and Grounds—Gabriel Sistare

-No updates beyond last month's meeting

-Starr: Replacement carpets for upstairs hallway – the library has them, but waiting till COVID restrictions are relaxed before bringing in the carpet layer

E. Advocacy and liaison to library organizations—Howard Burrows

NELA – Meeting on topic of Discourse or Discord sign up by Feb 24

ALA Midwinter- no news

Recommended a new book "Seven Next Steps for Reinventing your Library" addresses some of the stresses and

issues in libraries at this time

Starr: had a meeting on Monday with the Catamount Library Network Board. Tomorrow is a big meeting with all Catamount libraries. There will be a demo and Q&A with a rep for the Aspen interface, which will work together with and enhance Koha. Starr will have more to report when she has seen it. It is more user friendly for patrons. Brook's share of the cost for it would be \$1600 per year. The current catalogue costs in the ballpark of \$3500 or so per year (Starr will provide exact figure later on) and gives access to 20+ library catalogues. Absorbing the \$1600 shouldn't be an issue.

F. Department Reports: Director; Reference, Youth Services

Youth Services report

Chloe: Mostly focusing on the Winter Carnival which starts Feb 20.

-The Childrens' Room has done a lot of craft bags to offer a break from all the Zoom the kids are on.

The Valentine's Day bags are very cute! And they will be doing a massive bag for the Winter Carnival including crafts, activities and hot chocolate.

-There will be two stories per day read and recorded by staff for each day of the WC (18 total) including a Spanish language offering.

Teens – Teen advisory group meets 2x monthly 2-hour meetings and events. There was a writing workshop done entirely by a teen. They are starting a book club on March 2 (1x a month, kid organized!). They are exploring new tech, online gaming, etc. It's a very busy time and going very well.

Jane: Very impressed with how the staff keeps on inventing and reinventing.

Director's Report

Starr: Would like to talk about the Tool Library later.

Diana Whitney will be coming to the meeting a little later to discuss a plan to create a town Poet Laureate position.

Reference

Jeanne has been struggling with a problem with NYT access for patrons, but is getting close to resolving it. She is compiling year-end stats for the State Annual Report

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Update on current services/staffing

Starr: 75% of Catamount libraries are closed to the public. Rutland is completely closed. Fletcher Free is open for 5-minute appointments and no browsing, they are also doing contact tracing. In some, patrons can enter but no browsing. North Bennington is allowing one appointment per day/expanding to 3 per day. Starr is listening to the Governor's press conferences and keeping an eye on things. She has been in conversation with library supervisors regarding easing restrictions re: appointments and possibly expanding to evening hours. The library is still printing and copying and printing tax forms for patrons.

Leo: wanted to follow up re: letter from unhappy patron

Starr: Most people she has spoken to are very supportive of things as they are. She spoke to the letter writer and shared with the Trustees a bit about that conversation: about how much she would have wanted the library open, very hard to close, how important browsing is, for people to come in, very sorry, but that she feels a sense of responsibility to the community to keep everyone safe.

Starr: Mostly hearing that people are happy we are providing books and materials and keeping everyone safe.

Town meeting

Starr: will take place at the library (will stay closed that day), expects that it will be a small group of maybe 6 plus someone to help with tech.

Courtney and Starr are working on Adult activities and materials for Winter Carnival

Further discussion of process of preparing for new strategic plan.

Starr: Trustees meeting with staff. Starr has gotten availability from staff, they are working on presentations by department. This is in process. Trustees: Please let Starr know if you have specific questions about the library. Starr will organize meeting times during the first and second week of March. Morning works better for staff.

Leo: Email Starr with blackout mornings or afternoons during those two weeks so she can set up meetings.

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

Gabriel will be stepping down from Board effective immediately

Leo: There are currently 2 applicants for 2 openings. (a one-year term and a three year term)

Interview: Jenny, Howard and Starr have been involved in past. If anyone else wants to do interviews please let Starr or Leo know in the next week or so. Leo will contact Starr, Jenny and Howard to arrange back to back interview time.

Leo: If you know someone who might be interested please let Leo know with name and contact info. It would be great if applicant could be younger and or in a BIPOC group and asked Chloe if a teen might like to apply. She said she would pitch it to them. Leo: offered to answer their questions if needed

Tool Library

Leo: Any thoughts?

Jane: Lots of details that need to be worked out ie: staffing, budget etc. Concerned about burdening library

John: Philosophically “all in” but concerned it would take away from the Library core mission. Cautious.

Jane: Need more info from proponents.

Starr: They are working on that (staffing and space). Starr thought starting small with gardening tools was a great idea. She reassured that they know they can’t use our staff.

John: What, then, is the role of the library in this?

Starr: They would be using the library brand and model, and our catalogue for their circulation needs

Sirkka: Agrees that it sounds great, but who will do it?

Stephen Dotson would design it and would require extra staff (not library) but those might be under the auspices of our staff to supervise. They need to work out funding for staff

Jenny: The library could potentially buy some tools for it

Howard: Sees Community Building as a major purpose for it wrt videos, books, groups, educational

Leo: Would the Tech committee be a place/group for this to be worked out?

Jane: Needs structure

Leo: Howard and John (and Leo) on tech committee, to work with Stephen Dotson to flesh out the idea of the relationship between the tool library and the library

John: This is too important a thing to do poorly. If it’s not done properly (ie project managed etc), it’s not worth doing.

Leo: We are in the tool business. Books are tools.

Jenny: Tools need the support people to go with them. The library is set up with the support people for books, not other things.

Leo: Starr and Leo will reach out to Stephen Dotson and share the thoughts from the Trustees. Whether there might be a more finely grained proposal – re: work with the Board to flesh out the idea more.

John: We need to get back info from Stephen. He has a lot to do in his job. Wondering whether this is where he (SD) wants to put his resources.

Jenny: What is Stephen Dotson’s position on this?

NEW BUSINESS

Possible participation on Town Poet Laureate position

Diana Whitney

A discussion regarding the possible participation of BML in Town Poet Laureate position—info distributed in the board packet.

Diana introduced the concept of a city or town Poet Laureate. States have Poet Laureates but more towns are naming them. There is an opportunity for the PL to do projects in and with the community and the PL can apply for grants for projects. Diana gave the example of “Poem City” in Montpelier with city-wide events and displays.

Starr: Process of selection would be through a town committee.

Jenny: Trustees could support/contribute (to the cost of the honorarium), the PL could possibly collaborate with schools, there are many possibilities.

Leo: re possible problems. Words can sometimes be divisive/controversial. How can these problems be avoided?

Diana: By being judicious in the selection of the PL, look at their past work as a way to vet. A community committee would be involved in this process.

Leo: Could it be someone from the area, not necessarily Brattleboro.

Diana: Example of Karen Scofield, PL for Northampton who lives in Amherst. But a poet from Brattleboro could "put Brattleboro on the map" so to speak.

Starr: It would support the creative economy. Met with BCTV several years ago to discuss how to get Poetry into the community.

Leo to Board: Do we want to keep exploring and figure out how to participate in this?

Next step: Starr will talk to Peter Elwell, the Windham Arts Council and the Town Arts Committee.

Leo: Is there a way to tie the Poet Laureate into the Literary Fest? A coming out for the PL in October?

Diana: That sounds like a great goal

Starr: Would want to include the PL in the literary fest

Jane: Can we agree that when Starr talks to Peter Elwell to let him know that the board likes the idea and some members would be interested in being on a committee. Jane would like to serve on this.

Starr: Criteria- committee or council would fine-tune. Poet Laureate can be led by town or library but should dovetail the two.

Diana: Thanked the Trustees. Let Diane and Shanta know if more info is needed

Starr: David Cohen re: Electric Bikes are Available! He has funding and volunteers to help people use them/sanitize etc. Has all his ducks in a row for electric bikes thru the library.

6:24 Motion to adjourn- Leo. Jane seconded it. All in favor.

Thanks!