

**BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**Special Meeting**  
**Tuesday, August, 24 2021 5:00 PM**  
**Meeting held onsite at 224 Main St., Brattleboro**

Present: Howard Burrows, Leo Schiff (Chair), Ann Varilly, Kate O'Connor, Jenny Rowe, Karen Tyler, Jane Southworth, Starr LaTronica (Library Director), Guest Steven Dotson (Town Sustainability Coordinator). Absent: John Woodward, Sirkka Kauffman.  
Minutes by Jenny Rowe.

**MINUTES**

Called to Order by Leo at 5:00 PM. Adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Agenda/Changes or additions: Leo noted the Friends' garden party fundraiser is this coming weekend and encouraged Board members to attend.

Public Comments - none.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Grant proposal for tool lending collection, staffing and storage.

*The Board voted to give its full support to the Field to Fork Community Equipment Shed proposal.*

Discussion preceding the vote:

Steven spoke about the grant proposal for the Field to Fork Community Equipment Shed and took questions. He needs Board approval before taking the proposal to the Selectboard.

The amount sought is the initial funding to get the project launched: \$20,000. Thereafter, there would be an annual cost of \$7,700, which would need to be raised each year.

The proposal makes the Library the fiscal sponsor and host site. Collaborating partners are Edible Brattleboro, Retreat Farm, FoodConnects, and Brattleboro Time Trade.

Kate and Jane asked whether the Library staff has capacity to take on this activity, which was the overriding issue when Steven first made a tool library proposal to the Board. Starr answered that the initial grant would pay for a person to cover the first year of

staffing, with limited hours, and that the staff is enthusiastic about the project. Steven added that this could be one possible task for an Americorps or Vista worker, although he noted there is a cost for hosting a worker. Time Trade volunteers have already offered to work on setting up the equipment shed, and might also contribute volunteer staffing time. Other volunteers could also staff.

Jenny and Kate asked about sustainability of the project given the recurring need for fundraising. Steven explained the portion of his proposal dealing with annual funding: there are a handful of grant-givers focused on this region which could be relied on for about \$5,000 per year. Business and individual sponsors, and volunteers, are expected to fill the gap. Steven will be the fundraising lead. Leo added that he mentioned the project to the Friends at their last meeting and got a positive response. Starr commented that she feels this is a manageable, focused project that won't get ahead of us. She is comfortable taking on the additional fund-raising responsibility.

Ann asked what evidence we have that there is demand, now and in the future. Steven answered that tool libraries are popular in many communities, including Keene, already. The equipment shed would grow the Library's role in the local sharing economy. Karen added that increasing the library's connections with the community is what our strategic plan calls for, and a very positive development.

Jenny asked whether tool borrowers would get Library cards, which would mean some new patrons for the Library. Starr said yes, they probably would. Uncertain as yet about juvenile card holders.

Jane and Kate asked about the possibility of competing with other demands on the Library's budget, such as the staffing problems the Board has discussed recently. Kate recommended against increasing the Library's request to Town Meeting if the increase would be spent on the tool project. Leo answered that tools have been added to the Library's collection in the past (telescope, snowshoes) without increasing the budget, and that it is possible volunteers could make this project budget neutral.

Kate asked if town zoning allows for the equipment shed behind the Library. Steven said yes. He has checked with Brian Bannon.

Leo commented that the unique part of this proposal is its intentional collaboration with other, well established organizations in town. In response to a question from Howard, he added that the Library would own the tools and shed. If the project doesn't work out, the Library might, for instance, give the entire collection to Time Trade.

Ann asked about liability. Starr commented that she checked with the town attorney, Bob Fisher, who said waivers would be required for borrowers and otherwise approved the idea. The Library is insured as part of the Town, and the Town has insurance through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Steven added that model waivers are available from functioning tool libraries.

Howard asked about the impact on local businesses. Steven answered that businesses would have a sponsorship opportunity which should be attractive to them. Businesses in related areas such as Brown & Roberts might find new customers after people have a chance to borrow and try out tools. Leo added that the e-bike program has this same effect: it helps local bike shops to have people try out the bike. Steven added that the borrowing benefit is geared to those without capital and resources to work with, so generally businesses would probably not want to be borrowers, but one example might be a caterer just starting out who needs some food equipment for a big job.

Howard commented that cataloging the collection using new software created for the purpose might lead to the Library some day dropping the Dewey Decimal system.

Jane commented that having multiple collaborators creates the potential for confusion and loss of control. It will be necessary to pay attention to those relationships. Leo answered that having the Selectboard review the proposal means the town and Library will both be behind the project if it goes forward and the interests of both should be well represented. The town's Sustainability Coordinator will be at the table throughout. Steven added that he thinks of the project as belonging to the Library. His role will be to offer new ideas for the Library to consider as the project advances.

Howard moved, and Karen seconded the motion, that the Board should give full support to the Field to Fork Community Equipment Shed proposal. The Board passed the motion unanimously, 7-0.