

Hingham Public Library
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
September 21, 2022

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., remotely via Zoom teleconference and in person in the Fearing Room. Chair David Mehegan read the text of the authorization of a remote meeting, pursuant to Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022. Those present were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

PRESENT: Trustees Charles B. Abbott, Aylene Calnan, Thomas J. Carey, Jr., Elizabeth Eldredge, Arthur T. Garrity, Jr., Meredith Hollander, Alyson Molloy Hussey, Mirela Izmirlic, David Janey, JoAnn Mitchell, Jeremy Parker, Mona Pohl, Superintendent of Schools and Trustee Ex Officio Dr. Margaret Adams, Town Treasurer and Trustee Ex Officio Lori Magner, Select Board Chair and Trustee Ex Officio William Ramsey; Director Linda Harper, Assistant Director Anna Byrne, Business Administrator Dina Johnson, Citizen guest Adam Bosnian. ABSENT: Trustee Eric Haskell.

Approval of Minutes

On motion made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of May 18, 2022, as amended and corrected.

Chair Mehegan reminded the Board that the next regular meeting will be held November 16, 2022.

Introduction of New Trustee and Welcome to Ex Officio Trustees

Chair Mehegan welcomed Superintendent of Schools Dr. Margaret Adams and Hingham Town Treasurer Lori Magner to their first meeting as ex officio members of the Board of Trustees. He then introduced Trustee David Janey, newly appointed by the Select Board. Mr. Mehegan noted that Mr. Janey, Associate Director of Financial Assistance at Boston University, was a lifelong Hingham resident and had prior connections with several Trustees. His late parents had also had deep roots in the Town. Mr. Mehegan expressed certainty that Mr. Janey, with his experience with finance and education, would be an able and dedicated Trustee.

Finance Committee

Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer Jeremy Parker reviewed key elements of the FY 2023 Trustee budget, which had been presented at the May Finance Committee meeting, and subsequently recommended to and voted by the Board at the annual meeting May 18. The highlights were, first, that we had approximately the same bottom line as the FY 2022 budget in terms of net operating deficit (see Treasurer's report, below). Second, the special events line was budgeted at \$20,000, a \$5,000 increase from the previous year. Third, bookstore income was also budgeted at \$5,000 higher than the prior year. Fourth, the Annual Appeal was budgeted at \$1,000 higher than in FY 2022. That's an offset against an expected \$11,000 reduction in state aid in FY 2023.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Parker summarized the written report provided to the meeting. At the close of Fiscal Year 2022, June 30, the total in the investment account was \$2,715,623, a month-over-month decrease of \$210,785 and a year-over-year decrease of \$428,831. After adjusting for a cash distribution of \$60,000, plus management and custodial fees, the market value decline was 10.84% for the year. The S&P 500 Index, our benchmark, decreased by 8.6%. Interest and dividends from the portfolio are estimated to total \$32,322, or 1.19%. Nearly 21% of the portfolio is in fixed income and cash.

While the market decline does not impact any operating or liquidity needs, it's important to note that in terms of preservation of capital, it's a meaningful decline over the previous year. At the close of the year we had \$23,000 in cash, after the \$60,000 distribution to meet cash needs. On the Trustee side of the budget, separate from the Town side, we finished the year with \$232,000 in revenue with total expenses of \$296,000 – a net loss of \$64,000, almost \$65,000, versus the budgeted \$62,000. We've had three consecutive years of a budgeted loss of about \$60,000. It's not where we want to be, long term, but where we have been, given our production in fund-raising. It's a big number that we have tried to whittle away at to break even or to be positive.

In subsequent discussion, Trustee Hollander asked where that \$62,000 comes from, and Treasurer Parker answered that it comes from the endowment portfolio.

Director's Report

Director Harper began by saying that it was a pleasure to see so many familiar faces in person. Beginning with personnel matters, she introduced Dina Johnson, the Library's new

Business Administrator. Dina started in July and she has been up and running already to an amazing degree. She has worked diligently to create the annual ARIS statistical report, which is required in order for us to qualify for state aid. She has been working on reports and budgets and closing the year in her very first month. Treasurer Parker expressed his appreciation for her work. Ms. Harper noted that Ms. Johnson came to us from the Commonwealth Financial Group. She is highly organized and we are fortunate to have her.

Director Harper told the meeting that a new children's position had recently been posted. Longtime staff member Janice MacDonald has retired, and it was decided to beef up the children's department by creating a new part-time position to help with running the story times and other programming.

Turning to capital projects, Ms. Harper noted that the roof connector, built about 20 years ago, is worn out and leaking, and that it is necessary to replace it. Town Engineer J.R. Frey and Procurement Officer Kathleen Reilly are helping with moving the project forward. On the planned expansion of the parking lot, we have hired CHA Integrated Solutions of Norwell to carry out a feasibility study and schematic designs, including replacing the front walkway, which currently has a temporary fix.

Ms. Harper reported that the budget season for the Old Colony Library Network (OCLN) is under way. OCLN will be preparing its FY 2024 budget and be voting on it in the next month. That will affect our assessment -- what it will cost Hingham to be a part of the network. She said she was happy to report that we will have a modest increase: only 2-3%.

Ms. Harper said that she has been elected Treasurer of the Executive Board of OCLN for another year. As noted, the HPL senior staff has finished recording the statistics for the ARIS report, and signed and submitted it, which is obligatory for the granting of state aid. In reviewing the report, she reported that all the Library services and uses that had slowed down with the pandemic, and in its aftermath, are now going right back up, which is gratifying to see. This phenomenon is consistent with other libraries. "We're saying in the Library that things feel like they used to be," she said. Demand for eBooks is high, the lists are long and there's a long wait. Still, we're able to meet demand and be responsive regarding our purchasing.

In fund-raising, she said that we are gearing up for the Annual Appeal letter, to go out around Thanksgiving.

The Town is conducting a study of compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Assistant Town Administrator Art Robert is preparing a study of all Town buildings; accordingly, a company hired by the Town came in to study the Library. She pointed out that the building was renovated in 2000, more than twenty years ago, and she expects that there will be recommendations for updating, with some small fixes and some requiring capital

expenditures. We will look forward to remaining in compliance in terms of providing accessibility to all patrons.

Nominating Committee

Chair Mehegan called on Trustee Calnan for the report of the Nominating Committee. Trustee Calnan reported that the committee had met Sept. 1 to nominate a new member for election to the position of Member of the Corporation. The committee had discussed candidates and voted unanimously to nominate Tom Carey to the position. Mr. Mehegan asked if there were any other nominations from the floor for this position. There was none.

Chair Mehegan reminded the newer Trustees of the three segments of the Board of Trustees: the member Trustees, who must number at least nine and no more than eleven; the appointive Trustees, three by the Select Board and two by the Moderator, and the three ex officio Trustees. He explained that by long-established practice, there had been ten members, with one slot left open, and that with the recent resignation of former Chair Lucy Hancock, the current number of Members had diminished to nine. Mr. Mehegan noted that Mr. Carey was not a new face; he had been a member for many years, and after an interlude away from the Board, was reappointed by the Select Board and now is the nominee for Member. He is extremely experienced and able, Mr. Mehegan said, and we look forward to his continuing service to the Library and the Town. Mr. Mehegan invited Mr. Carey to comment, and Mr. Carey said that if elected he will serve to the best of his ability.

On motion made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Thomas J. Carey, Jr. to the position of Member of the Hingham Public Library Corporation.

Operations Committee

Mr. Mehegan called on Trustee Izmirliric for the report of the Operations Committee. Pointing out that the committee had not met since the May meeting, Ms. Izmirliric reviewed the busy season that the committee had had in the past year, including the completion of the new Library floor, the writing of a policy with regard to storage of nonlibrary materials at the Library, and the continuing work on the parking lot project. She said the committee looks forward to a busy year.

Development Committee

Chair Mehegan recognized Trustee Hussey for the Development Committee report. Ms. Hussey told the Board that she had had an excellent meeting with Director Harper over the summer, and that she had learned much that she had not known, though she had been a resident and used the Library for many years. She said that recent upward trends with regard to ebooks and audio books is fascinating. She recommended that any Trustee likewise meet with Ms. Harper. And she expressed thanks to Linda for being a great resource to the Library.

The committee had had its kickoff meeting, Ms. Hussey said, noted the presence of Mr. Bosnian at that meeting as well as at tonight's meeting, and said she is thankful to have more people from the Town showing interest in the Library. Turning to fund-raising, she noted that we had a successful event in May, Beyond the Books, as well as the successful Annual Appeal. "Let me ask," she then said, "is anyone else beside me concerned that we take \$60,000 a year out of the endowment?" She said that she works on fund-raising for nonprofit organization throughout the Commonwealth, and rarely has seen one with a \$64,000 annual deficit, said she was "floored by that number," and stated as her goal as chair of the Development Committee the elimination of that pattern.

Ms. Hussey said that she and Trustee Pohl will meet soon to address the Annual Drive, in hopes of "kicking it up a notch, get more excitement and energy into it." She observed that many people came to Beyond the Books wanting to make a donation, wanting to do something for the Library, and left not knowing how they could help, not having made a contribution. She had been interested to learn from Ms. Harper that some of the most generous donors to the Library are not regular users, yet they recognize it as an essential resource for the Town.

One of her goals, she said, is to create a development plan and strategy to bring to the committee, and the Board, and to "reach for the stars." Specifically, her hope is that we seek the budgeted \$76,000 for the Annual Appeal, the budgeted \$20,000 for the special event, and add to that the \$62,000 deficit, for a goal of at least \$150,000. She urged all Trustees to contribute to the Annual Appeal, which makes it easier for them to call others and ask them to "join me" in contributing. She said, "I'm very comfortable asking people to give to wonderful organizations like this, if you happen to be like me, we would be happy to have more people doing more outreach for the Library and spreading the word."

On planning a special fund-raising event, Ms. Hussey said that we need to be creative, and also need to hire an event planner, not to try to have staff do fund-raising for us. Being an all-volunteer group, as the Trustees are, we need extra resources. She would do investigation of available talent, and added that if anyone knows of a gifted event planner, please pass the name on to her.

Chair Mehegan thanked Trustee Hussey for her excellent report, and noted, for the record, that no one should suppose that the deficits are the result of profligate spending or mismanagement. An excellent library is costly, he said, noting that Director Harper and her team always put together a tight budget, which is carefully reviewed and questioned by the Finance Committee.

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion made and seconded, at 8:10 p.m. it was

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fetsko for
Eric Haskell
Secretary of the Board

Documents:

A complete packet of supporting documents is on file for public view in the Library Administrator's office.