

Hingham Public Library
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
January 19, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. remotely, via Zoom teleconference, due to Covid-19.

Present: Trustees Charles B. Abbott, Aylene Calnan, Thomas J. Carey, Jr., Elizabeth Eldredge, Lucy Hancock, Eric Haskell, Meredith Hollander, Alyson Hussey, Mirela Izmirlis, David Mehegan, JoAnn Mitchell, Jeremy Parker; Town Treasurer and Trustee Ex Officio Jean Montgomery, Select Board Chair and Trustee Ex Officio Joseph Fisher, Library Business Administrator Joan Allen, Director Linda Harper, Assistant Director Anna Byrne, Assistant to the Secretary Laura Arsenault.
Absent: Trustees Arthur T. Garrity, Jr. and Interim Superintendent of Schools and Trustee Ex Officio Gary Maestas.

On motion made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of November 17, 2021.

Chair Hancock noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on March 16, 2022, likely via Zoom teleconference due to COVID-19.

Chair Hancock acknowledged Ed Siegfried's resignation from the Board, where he was a Trustee for 21 years. He also served as Treasurer and CFO. Trustee Mehegan spoke of Ed's collegial and capable nature and of the many superb contributions he made during his tenure, recounting that "his wisdom and humane goodness proved to be priceless" to the Board. Trustee Abbott, who served as chair for eight years of Ed's tenure, added that Ed was a wise, prudent and thoughtful person who was the perfect fiduciary. The Board unanimously expressed its thanks to Trustee Siegfried for his many years of service to the Library.

Finance Committee

Jeremy Parker introduced Ali Walsh and Robert Bruch from Middleton & Company to present the annual review of the Library's portfolio, based on key points of the Finance Committee's in-depth discussion last week with Middleton regarding performance and policy guidelines.

Ms. Walsh explained that the Library's financial portfolio continued to grow in 2021, and that it currently holds \$430,000 in cash and fixed income to provide several years of liquidity needs. The equity allocation is on the higher end, with it compounding and growing over time. From 2019 through the end of 2021, the broadly diverse portfolio grew 79.67%. Middleton & Company are cautiously optimistic about future growth and will continue the current portfolio positions, while also ready to adjust if necessary. COVID-19, expected interest rate increases and inflation are the unknowns going into the new year.

The updated FY23 Town budget was presented to the Select Board and the Advisory Committee last week, and no issues arose. Jeremy Parker updated the

Trustees about the Library's tax ID. The current ID number used by the Library is currently inactive, although it is on file with Rockland Trust and Middleton & Company. Jeremy and Joan Allen are investigating the process of applying for a new Tax ID. Jeremy will contact Rockland Trust and Middleton to confirm that this will not disrupt the Library's accounts. It may be best to wait until the end of the current tax cycle before taking action on a new Tax ID. Jeremy spoke with Danielle Nihil at Clifton Larson Allen (Town auditors) regarding the Tax ID situation. She confirmed that the Library's current practice of accepting charitable donations as an instrumentality of the Town, using the Town Tax ID, is appropriate and qualifies the donations as tax exempt for the donors. Her research further showed that the Library Corporation would likely qualify as a 501(c)(3), but that it is not necessary to become one in order to continue the current practice of receiving donations. To establish the Library as a 501(c)(3), there would be governance and financial requirements which we deem as unnecessary at this time.

Joe Fisher asked to see the letters from the accounting firms. Joan Allen will send electronic copies to him and Eric Haskell. Mr. Fisher suggested that if we are considering a new Tax ID, we should check with the Town to make sure there are no issues. Treasurer Parker posed this to Jean Montgomery, who said she will communicate with Joan and Linda and that she would like to be kept in the loop and will look into whether it will have any effect on the Town side. Trustee Haskell asked if any of the recent information from Clifton Larson Allen was received in writing and Jeremy responded no, it was a verbal conversation. Chair Hancock asked about matching gifts and whether corporations will be able to find the Library on the list of charitable organizations. Mr. Parker said that will still be an issue with the matching gift donors, but that the hope and intent of a new Tax ID filing is that the Library will become more searchable in the database for those companies who do corporate matching. He reiterated that it does not change our structure; the Library will remain an instrumentality of the Town.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Parker stated that the income statement represents the Library halfway through the fiscal year, with a net loss of about \$2,606. As compared to same period last year, performance is a bit better. On the revenue side, the Annual Fund, once again, performed very well, ahead of the same period last year, with \$62,466 from 417 donors. This equates to an average gift of about \$150, significantly up from last years' average of \$117. The second ask letter resulted in about \$8,500 last year and will be sent out in mid-February. The budget calls for about \$100,000 more in revenue this fiscal year, including Annual Fund, State aid, and special event income. Special events and bookstore revenue are a challenge, with the book store currently closed due to renovations and the fundraising event put off until spring because of COVID-19. This is the first year with no late fees or rental income, so a loss was expected. The budgeted net loss for the year is \$62,000. The Library does not wish to see this deficit escalate over upcoming years, so the focus needs to shift to bookstore revenue and fundraising efforts. Joe Fisher asked if these stated financials are for the Corporation or Library in total. Treasurer Parker clarified that the focus here is just on the Library Corporation. In the income statement, both the Corporation and Town are reflected.

Director's Report

Director Harper stated that Susan Sarni from the Board of Health is asking that residents remain vigilant, with the Town's mask mandate still in effect in all municipal facilities. The Town is looking to host another vaccination booster clinic in the near future. The Town received a grant to purchase at-home rapid test kits which will be distributed at municipal buildings to employees. The Town has opened a drive-through PCR testing site on Lincoln Street, by appointment only. Test result turnaround has been delayed, but the Town is looking to improve it. Priority appointments are available to residents from Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate and Hull. Infections have been on the rise, resulting in some absences among staff. KN95 masks have been distributed to all Library staff. The Town is working on an updated sick leave policy to deal with absences related to COVID-19.

Director Harper spoke of the need to obtain active shooter training through Police Chief Jones for the Library's staff. The date is to be determined, but the hope is to have this completed by the spring. Recertification for CPR and AED training also needs to be done. The Library may add more AED units, which was recommended by the Fire Chief, due to the large layout of the building. The date for Town Meeting has not yet been set but is going to be delayed so that it can be outdoors, due to COVID-19.

The Library's bookstore, led by Adrienne Richardson and Marcia Sinclair, had a very successful holiday book sale. The bookstore is being renovated, with new shelving units, painting and carpeting and will be opening once the lobby floor replacement project is complete. Director Harper showed images of the tile work being done on the second floor, which will be complete in the upcoming weeks. Demolition has not yet been scheduled for the first floor because it was found that three boxes of the tiles were damaged in shipping. It needs to be determined if there are enough tiles to complete the job in its entirety. The first floor will not be started until the second floor work is complete. In a separate project, electric outlet boxes in Reference area are to be moved from under the tables to the walls which will give us more flexibility with seating and make them more visible.

Janice MacDonald, a Senior Library Technician, has retired after 15 years of service. As of today, 17 other Old Colony Library Network (OCLN) libraries out of 28 have decided to go fine-free. It will soon become the norm throughout the network. Weymouth Library is looking at possibly installing solar panels on their roof. OCLN will be adding foreign language ebooks in Chinese and Portuguese to the collection of available ebooks.

Director Harper said that she had presented the FY23 Library budget to the Select Board and Advisory Committee, and all went well with a positive reception. The Capital Outlay presentation is coming up next week.

Upcoming Library programs are all virtual due to the flooring renovation and COVID-19. They include chess classes, American Sign Language instruction, virtual book groups, tech classes, meditation classes and author talks. Trustee Alyson Hussey asked if there will be a grand opening of the bookstore once it reopens. Director Harper said that, due to COVID-19, it would likely be a soft opening to settle the volunteers back into the building, with many of them still

nervous about COVID-19. At a minimum, it will be advertised on the Library website. The new three-year union contract has been settled, with a number of equity adjustments to staff pay, especially the custodian pay rate which is now more in line with the norm. There were also adjustments to the sick leave policy to make it more in line with the Town policies.

Operations Committee

Trustee Izmirlie said the Committee approved the FY23 five-year capital outlay plan, with the parking lot expansion moved to FY24 and with roof repairs being done in FY23. Director Harper would like to get the feasibility study and the bid process for the parking lot done in order to get a solid number in FY23, as the cost of labor and goods are currently at all-time highs. The connector portion of the roof that joins the old building with the new one needs replacement, as it is 22 years old. A quote of \$88,000 has been obtained, which would include some repair to rotted areas, some slate roof tile replacement on the old side of the building, and a new rubber membrane and roof in the connector section. The contractor said that materials are readily available for this project and should not be impacted by current supply chain issues.

Resident Brad Carr, a member of one of the Hingham Energy Action Committee, inquired via email about the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in the Library parking lot. Director Harper intends to have the feasibility study include this as an option. Brad Carr said that he will look into any possible grant money that the Town might be able to obtain. The cost and maintenance related to this would have to be analyzed before a decision is made.

Trustee Izmirlie said the Operations Committee discussed event hosting and file storage for community organizations. This was prompted by the Garden Club's request to host a fundraising event at the Library. The Committee came to consensus that the Library Director has the authority to deny requests for fundraising events that do not directly benefit the Library or provide value to the Library's patrons or that may interfere with normal Library operations. This affirms a long-standing practice at the Library. It was also decided that providing storage for files that cannot be accessed by the public is not in the Library's best interest.

Joe Fisher suggested that the Operations Committee speak to the Town regarding the hosting of fundraising events, as he believes that the Library falls under the Town property policy. Director Harper said her understanding is that while we communicate with the Town to share information, the management and use of the building are under the control of the Trustees. Trustee Abbott recollected that the State statute makes it clear that the Library Corporation is in control of its property with no reference to conforming to other Town property. Joe Fisher urged further study since the Library acts as an instrumentality of the Town with regard to fundraising. Chair Hancock asked if we could get consensus from the Board on the intent and analysis of the issue as presented by Trustee Izmirlie. Trustee Mehegan acknowledged that the Library needs to be consistent and consult as much as possible with the Town to make sure we are all on the same page. Trustee Eldredge believes that the Trustees need to know what they can or cannot do. Joe Fisher offered to put a request in to get an opinion from Town Counsel. Trustee Haskell asked for clarification on what we are asking of Town Counsel with regard to legal

stature of the Library and its building. Joe Fisher used the mask mandate as an example. Are the Trustees required to comply with the mandate? Director Harper asked if the 1872 Act of Incorporation, as amended, delineates the authority of the Trustees. Trustee Abbott said that the Special Acts, in conjunction with the Articles of Incorporation, spell it out, but that the opinion of Town Counsel may conflict with the Trustees' position. Trustees agreed that, if this issue arises in the future and needs clarification, then that will be the time to bring this to Town Counsel, and that the current discussion does not justify a request for the opinion of Town Counsel. This discussion made clear the Board's position that the Director operates under the guidance of the Board of Trustees and its committees and uses his/her discretion to make such decisions. Chair Hancock encouraged those with further thoughts on this subject to please email the Operations Committee and copy her on the communication.

Included below are the guidelines agreed upon by the Trustees. (Note that the complete statements distributed for the meeting will be on file with the minutes.)

Use of the Library building and grounds for non-Library events:

Fundraising events that do not raise funds for or otherwise benefit the Library are not in the best interests of the Library and its patrons, and the Library Director is authorized to deny such requests. At the same time, the Library Director has discretion to permit use of the Library building and/or its grounds for non-commercial activity by charitable, private, or community organizations when such activity (1) advances the interests of the Library, (2) appears to provide a valuable service to the Library's patrons, and (3) is held at a time and in such fashion that the activity does not interfere with regular Library business and operations.

Storage of non-Library records at the Library:

The Library will not hold or store private items or files that do not meet the criteria for a Library holding or to which public and staff access is not available. Giving current owners of files six months to remove them is an appropriate way to bring current practices in line with this updated guidance. The Library Director has discretion to hold files or records that are of historical or civic value to its patrons, the Town of Hingham or the Library, provided that access to these materials is assured.

Development Committee Update

The second ask letter will be mailed by mid-February. Business Administrator Allen had a list of 111 names of donors who gave \$150 or more. They were eligible to win a \$200 gift card to a Hingham business of their choosing. The list was randomly sorted. Trustee Eldredge picked a number and James Heffernan and Anita Barry were the winners.

The next meeting of the Beyond the Books Committee is January 28th. Another fundraising event called Maddie's Promise is also planned for May 13th, and the organizers have already sent out a save-the-date notice. Because of the overlap, we may decide to change the date of the Beyond the Books Event to May 6th. The

risks of COVID-19 may present a challenge to hosting a large event in May, especially if the Town mask mandate is still in effect.

Remembering Kate Mahony

Chair Hancock spoke of Kate Mahony, who passed away on December 31, 2021. She was a Library Trustee for 22 years, a Select Board member and Chair and an active Advisory Committee member. Trustees David Mehegan and Charles Abbott gave wonderful remarks which will be attached to these minutes. They recounted Kate's many years of dedicated and exceptional service to the Town of Hingham and its people.

Housekeeping Items

Chair Hancock asked Joe Fisher if the Select Board had appointed a new Trustee at its recent meeting; he said they had not. State Representative Joan Meschino is due to be present at the March Board of Trustees meeting.

The agenda being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Arsenault for
Arthur T. Garrity, Jr.
Secretary of the Board

Documents:

A complete meeting packet of supporting documents is on file and available for public review in the Library Business Administrator's office.