



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES November 18, 2020

In Attendance

- Trustees: Barak Bar-Cohen, Robert Ginsberg (5:09 p.m.), Edward Felten, Edwina Hawes, Jennifer Jang, Mayor Liz Lempert, Ruth Miller, Pam Wakefield
- Not Present: Yamile Slebi
- Library Staff: Erica Bess, Becky Bowers, Susan Chernik, Susan Conlon, Lisa Ham, Janie Hermann, Janice Painter, Jennifer Podolsky, Karen Rackley, Hannah Schmidl, Bonnie Sprouls, Morgan Taylor, Sonja Vloeberghs
- Others: Andrea Bradley (Friends), David Hill (Foundation), Chiara Goldenstern (Teen Rep), Elizabeth Leonard (Teen Rep), Eleni Staikos (Teen Rep)

At 5:03 p.m. Ms. Miller called the meeting to order and noted that proper notice of the meeting, as required by the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S. 10:4-6 et seq), was posted in the library, published on the library's website, sent to the municipal clerk, the Princeton Packet, Town Topics, the Trenton Times and to the standard distribution list.

Consent Agenda

- Oct. 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- Final October Bills
- Preliminary November Bills
- Resolution 2020-18: Award HVAC Maintenance Services Contract
- Resolution 2020-19: COLA 2020

Approval of Consent Agenda: Ms. Wakefield moved approval of the Consent Agenda; Ms. Jang seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously; Mr. Ginsberg was not present for the vote.

Friends Report

Ms. Bradley noted:

- The first event of Beyond Words, with David Remnick, Henry Finder, and Elizabeth Kolbert was a great event, and that a planned after event was canceled so that the audience could watch the Presidential election news.
- The Friends are close to budget for Beyond Words. There are two more events; Bakari Sellars in conversation with Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman on Dec. 5, and Kate Andersen Brower in conversation with Kevin M. Kruse on Jan. 9.
- Bookstore is open and sales are going well.

- The Friends welcome recommendations for new Friends Council members.
- Audrey Smerkanich was hired as the Friends book sale manager. Ms. Smerkanich was the Assistant Treasurer on the Friends Council, and an active volunteer in the Book Store.
- There are several upcoming Friends Evenings in January, February and March.
- The Friends are planning to accept donations in the near future; the exact process is being worked on. There is limited space on the fourth floor for book storage; the Friends are looking for temporary storage for book donations that have been quarantined in the Community Room.

Foundation Report

Mr. Hill reported the endowment was doing well with a value, as of Nov. 17, 2020 of approximately \$15.5 million. He noted the Foundation Board met on Nov. 17, 2020 and approximately \$622,000 distributions were approved. He noted that the Planned Giving committee and the Development committee have been busy working with the Development Office.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Teen Representatives

Ms. Leonard noted the Teen Advisory Board is excited about their new program, Chapter a Day; they will be reading a chapter per day of a book. Their first book will be The BFG by Roald Dahl and be on their YouTube Channel.

Ms. Goldenstern noted they are planning a podcast episode with former Princeton Public Library librarian Jocelyn Jimenez. They will also be coordinating a best of 2020 competition tracking the most voted on podcasts, movies, TV shows, books and albums.

Ms. Staikos noted TAB is working on bringing a capella night to life – the very popular annual event which brings in a capella groups from high schools in Princeton. She noted they are deciding whether a livestream event is possible or whether they need to postpone the event to the spring.

President's Report

Ms. Miller encouraged the Trustees to participate in events hosted by the library, including events hosted by the Friends. She reminded them that only by supporting these events will the Trustees be able to give the library the financial support that it needs, providing a “seal of approval” for community members and thus generating attendance.

Ms. Miller noted that she attended the first virtual event in a series of three for the Beyond Words benefit. The event featured David Remnick, editor of The New Yorker, with Elizabeth Colbert and Henry Finder, talking about Climate Change, which the New Yorker has highlighted as one of the most important issues facing our country. She encouraged the Trustees to attend the next two Beyond Words events: Bakari Sellars on December 5 and Kate Brower Anderson on Jan. 9.

On her to-do list, Ms. Miller noted, are reshaping the Finance Committee and forming a “Blue Skies” committee charged with thinking about directions the library might take when the town and the economy open up.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Chernik noted there have been no significant changes to the budget numbers presented at the October Board meeting. Mr. Bar-Cohen thanked Ms. Chernik, Ms. Podolsky and the staff for the exceptional efforts they've made navigating during these challenging times.

Director's Report

Ms. Podolsky referred the Board to the Board Report in their meeting packet. She noted that she is continually impressed and amazed at the work the staff has been doing prior to and during the pandemic, constantly reinventing and finding new ways to reach out to the community safely.

The library has been fully open for nearly one month with approximately 200 visitors inside the building and about 50 curbside pickups per day. Ms. Podolsky noted that although the number of COVID cases is rising, the library will remain open as she continues to follow guidance from the Governor and local health officials and the monitor the practices of other libraries.

Mayor Lempert noted that the COVID numbers in Princeton are similar to those in the spring, and shared local COVID statistics as well as her recommendations, based on national and local guidelines, for celebrating Thanksgiving safely.

Fundraising Update

Ms. Ham noted the fall annual appeal is underway with a letter that was sent on Monday, and the launch of a virtual campaign next week. She noted that this year donors are being asked to contribute just an amount above what they normally give that will be directed to the lending of hotspots and Chromebooks. Ms. Chernik noted that in October 2019, donations were approximately \$150,000, and the donations received thus far in 2020 are approximately \$129,000. Additional donations are expected from the annual appeal and from Giving Tuesday on Dec. 1 noted Ms. Ham.

Ms. Ham noted that a group of Mary Wisnovsky's friends are establishing an endowment fund in her memory to support the library collections. Ms. Wisnovsky was big lover of the library and helped the Friends for many years.

Nominating Committee

Ms. Wakefield noted the Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers to the Trustees at the December Board of Trustees meeting.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment

Mr. Ginsberg motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2020 at 5 p.m.