



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES September 22, 2021

In Attendance

Trustees: Robert Ginsberg, Edward Felten, Edwina Hawes, Ruth Miller, Eve Niedergang, Yamile Slebi, Chris Van Buren, Pam Wakefield

Library Staff: Becky Bowers, Janie Hermann, Jennifer Podolsky, Karen Rackley, Sonja Vloeberghs

Others: Andrea Bradley (Friends), David Hill (Foundation), Bernie Hvozdovic, Allison Trimarco, two members of the public

At 6:04 p.m. Ms. Miller called the meeting to order and announced that in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and State regulations governing remote public meetings, adequate and electronic notice of this meeting were provided on Sept. 14 to the Municipal Clerk, Princeton Packet, Town Topics and Trenton Times, posted in the library, on the library's and municipality's websites, on the door of the library's main public entrance, and distributed to the standard distribution list. She stated that because of the state of emergency in NJ regarding COVID-19, the meeting was being held via Zoom and indicated where on the library's website the public could find the meeting agenda, the instructions for accessing the meeting and for making public comment prior to and during the meeting. She included standards of conduct to be followed by members of the public making comments. Ms. Miller explained the audio muting function for those providing public comment via computer, mobile device and telephone.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Mr. Ginsberg moved approval of the Consent Agenda. Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

- July 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Final July Bills
- Final August Bills
- Preliminary September Bills
- Resolution 2021-20: Authorization for Professional Services Agreement for Architectural Services
- Resolution 2021-21: Mechanical Shades Software Replacement

Board Materials

Ms. Podolsky referred the Board to the Director's Report and the Monthly Statistics included in the Board packet. There was no discussion on the included materials.

Friends of the Library Report

Ms. Bradley reported on the Friends events.

Book sale manager, Audrey Smerkanich, leaving the library, taking a full-time position at the Institute for Advanced Study. The Friends are looking for a new book sale manager and hoping to find one soon as they are planning a book sale in November.

Feedback from Evenings with Friends attendees has been that they love these events and are reminded how important the library is to the community. That feedback supported the Friends decision to hold the Beyond Words event in person.

Conversations with the Foundation about the Friends and the Foundation merging continue, Allen Porter, a former Foundation Board member and former Friends Council member, has offered to do pro bono legal work with regard to the merger. Janet Simon, development office consultant and Dawn Frost, development associate, participated in discussion on the post-merger operational changes and how to manage that with a shortage of personnel.

Foundation Report

Mr. Hill noted:

- the Foundation Board would miss Mr. Van Buren, but are glad that he will be on the Board of Trustees.
- The Foundation Board continues to be rewarded by their disciplined approach to their investments, occasionally rebalancing when necessary. The 2020 distributions have been made from the Foundation to the library, leaving the value of the endowment at approximately \$17.5 million.
- The Foundation held its quarterly meeting on Sept. 19 and approved a 2022 distribution to the library from the endowment of \$658,708 in restricted and unrestricted funds. The Planned Giving committee continues to be actively engaged.

Ms. Niedergang asked about the leadership of the merger organizations. Mr. Hill noted that at the end 2021, Ms. Rosalind Muir will be taking the Foundation leadership role. Mr. Hill noted the merger discussions include co-presidents (initially), equal number of members from each organization forming its board and the merged organization being controlled by the library's Board of Trustees (as is the current Foundation Board).

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

President's Report

Ms. Miller appointed the following Trustees to serve on the Nominating Committee for the 2022 Board Officers: Pam Wakefield, Yamile Slebi and Chris Van Buren.

Ms. Miller welcomed new Trustee Christopher Van Buren. She noted that Mr. Van Buren was a member of the library's Foundation Board and on the Foundation Board's Investment Committee; he lives in town, his children have attended local schools, his professional background in finance will be a great asset to the Board and he has already attended a Board of Trustee's Finance Committee meeting.

Ms. Miller noted that she participated in a library trustees' workshop and recommends these online trainings to all Trustees. In the workshop she learned that Seattle Public Library appoints members of the community to serve on several of their committees, stretching the resources of Trustees' committees and providing a leadership path for library supporters that might want to serve on the Board. Ms. Miller noted that other public libraries have also asked former library Trustees to serve on

committees, as well encourage Trustees to serve as advocates for the library wherever appropriate, such as at municipal meetings and in other local contexts.

Ms. Miller encouraged all Trustees to attend the Beyond Words benefit on Saturday, Oct. 9, followed by two book discussion with author on Nov. 12 and on Dec. 3.

She noted that the new teen representatives will be present at the October meeting, and that the Board will resume in-person Trustee meetings when it is safe to do so – by continuing to monitor the state’s progress in limiting COVID and following the advice from Princeton’s health officer.

Ms. Miller thanked Mr. Hvozdovic for attending this evening’s Board meeting.

Nominating Committee Report: Ms. Wakefield noted that the Nominating Committee for 2021 Board Officers has asked Mr. Ginsberg to fill Ms. Jang’s remaining term as Vice President. Mr. Ginsberg agreed to do so.

Finance Committee Report: In the absence of the Treasurer and the Finance Director, Ms. Podolsky noted that the Finance Committee met on Sept. 20 and discussed the budget.

Bylaws and Policies Committee Report: Ms. Hawes noted the committee provided comments regarding the Meeting Room Policy which has been updated with the hope that rentals will resume in October. She noted that revisions were provided by committee members and then forwarded to the attorney.

Director’s Report

Ms. Podolsky noted:

- The library concluded the summer with a full slate of outdoor summer programming, partnering with the Princeton Shopping Center.
- A staff COVID situation caused the library to close during the last week in August. Ms. Podolsky thanked: The Board and community for their support and concern for the staff; Ms. Sprouls, Human Resources Director, for the incredible effort of contacting every staff member, cross checking work schedules and determining their exposure levels; and Melissa Leiva from Lending Services, Karen Rackley and Tim Quinn from Administration, for manning the third floor during the short-staffed evening shift. The library reopened 72 hours later.
- The library also closed for one day due to the flooding situation from Hurricane Ida that made it difficult to get into and around Princeton.
- The fish tank leaked over the weekend. The fish were saved, but the second and third floors needed to be closed briefly for the water leak cleanup. Ms. Podolsky thanked Pat McAvenia and Joe Carsuo on the Building Staff for their swift and immediate response.
- Since Monday, Sept. 20, the library has expanded hours: Monday-Thursday 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and Sunday 1-6 p.m., and closed the contactless holds pickup from the rear entrance to the library which is a fire exit and can no longer be blocked. The library does not have enough staff to expand hours and continue the holds pickup service point; however, accommodations can be may for patrons that cannot come in the building.
- Programming now consists of virtual programing, some outdoor programming as weather permits, and recently resumed indoor programming (on a limited basis).
- Meeting rooms will be available for rent in October with new software for booking rooms that needs to reflect library policies.
- The Children’s Book Festival, Book Jam, is Saturday, Sept. 25 via Crowdcast.

- The library is partnering with the Princeton Shopping Center for Fall Fest on Oct. 16, details are on the library's website.

Fundraising Update

Ms. Podolsky provided a fundraising report from the Development Office. (Through the end of August): Annual Giving \$97,419.60 (\$85K same time last year); Bridge the Digital Divide Campaign, \$5070.

Strategic Planning

Ms. Podolsky introduced Allison Trimarco from Creative Capacity. Ms. Trimarco provided a brief background and explained adaptive strategic planning process will take 6-9 months. The plan relies on high-level planning and vision around key accomplishments and objectives. She noted the plan comes with a structure that allows an implementation plan to keep evolving on a six-month basis as you implement the plan, and that the process is similar and many of the same questions are asked, but the way you think about those questions can be different.

Ms. Trimarco noted that she has interviewed several Trustees and met with senior staff and will begin the community research phase, which will be in multiple languages.

She asked the Board to think about who do we need to hear from, what do we need to learn to make good decisions. Input from Trustees included: teens and young adults, Teen Advisory Board, go into the local schools w/librarians, under represented neighborhoods, notes from Kim Dorman/outreach, parents in different schools, community research (from Foundation, Outreach Coordinator), mental health resources, police department, diversity: LGBTQ, economic, racial and ethnic, partners for fundraising, business community, 1 to 1 district (all students have access to devices) – possibly leverage through library.

2022 Operating Budget – In the absence of the Finance Director and the Treasurer, Ms. Podolsky referred the Board to the proposed Budget in the board packet and presented the following information provided by the Finance Director:

The Finance Committee met to discuss the 2022 budget.

Revenue – the library is asking the municipality for 2% above the reduced 2021 funding request, which was .54% lower than 2020; the Friends allocations are up to \$150k, higher than the previous year, but still below their prior pandemic contributions of \$200k-\$240k; the library is estimating 80% of 2019 levels for in-person fees as the library has less foot traffic, even with expanded hours; anticipated use of \$78k from fund balance is reasonable, with an ongoing effort to reduce that amount throughout 2022.

Expenses – the library has seen a significant increase in costs in the current environment of escalating prices. Vendors previously willing to negotiate are pushing back, seeking increases of 5%-10%. We will continue to attempt to keep annual increases under 3%, but this will be challenging; assume annual 3% increase in health benefits; no significant changes in administrative expenses; programming and professional development - general expenses - are close to the 2019 levels; assume a 5% increase in insurance premiums; in 2022, building cleaning services and third party provider gas utility will be going out for public bidding - assume increases in cost of these services as minimum wage increases \$1/hour in January and higher gas rates since the last contract was negotiated in 2019; library materials remain flat; technology up due to new improved customer programs/licenses/services, system hosting and cataloguing up 3% per year.

Mr. Ginsberg moved to accept the proposed 2022 Operating Budget; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Changes to the Meeting Room Policy – Ms. Podolsky noted that the policy committee made recommendations to the Meeting Room Policy which were consolidated and presented to the library’s attorney who did not recommend any changes.

Ms. Slebi moved to accept the changes to the Meeting Room Policy; Ms. Niedergang seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Ms. Miller moved to enter into closed session at 7:15 p.m. to discuss personnel matters, specifically the performance of the Executive Director; Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A closed session meeting was held to discuss the performance of the Executive Director.

Ms. Wakefield to reconvene in open session at 7:42 p.m. Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Open Session

The Board reconvened in open session. No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment

Mr. Ginsberg motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2021.