



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES October 20, 2021

In Attendance

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

Library Staff: Erica Bess, Becky Bowers, Susan Chernik, Susan Conlon, Kim Dorman, Kristin Friberg, Addie Gordon, JiHae Ju, Andre Levie, Jennifer Podolsky, Tim Quinn, Karen Rackley, Bonnie Sprouls, Sonja Vloeberghs, Marissa Warren

Others: Andrea Bradley (Friends), Mitalee Pasricha (Teen Rep), Emily Saunders (Teen Rep), Eleni Staikos (Teen Rep), Gavin Yang (Teen Rep), 1 member of the public

At 6:02 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 Oct. 12, 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: Ms. Wakefield moved approval of the Consent Agenda; Mr. Van Buren seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

- Sept. 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Sept. 22, 2021 Closed Session Meeting Minutes
- Final September Bills
- Preliminary October Bills
- Resolution 2021-22: Q3 Restricted Gifts
- Revised 2021 Holidays and Closings Schedule
- 2022 Holidays and Closings Schedule

Board Materials

There was no discussion on the included materials: Monthly Report, Monthly Statistics, Quotes for Products and Services - 3rd Qtr, 2021, Budget vs Actual - 3Q 2021.

Staff Spotlight

Ms. Miller welcomed Ms. Ju who noted that she has been with the library for 18 years, starting as a reference librarian taking on collection responsibilities over the years and became the Head of Access Services in April 2020. The Board asked Ms. Ju questions about the collection.

Collections Audit

Ms. Ju presented a summary of the diversity audit of the library's collection that Ingram Content Group performed for the library in August. 80,000 titles from the adult, young adult and children's book collections were analyzed. Titles were sorted into "inclusive" groupings: Asian Interest, Black Interest, Indigenous Interest, Jewish Interest, LatinX Interest, LGBTQIA+ Interest, Middle Eastern Interest, Muslim Interest, Multicultural, Neuro and Physical Diversity and Mental Health. and into fiction, graphic novels and non-fiction categories. The findings indicate that PPL's print collections exceed the public library average in terms of inclusivity. Areas of strength included fiction and graphic novels across all diverse interest categories and audiences. Identified areas of growth opportunities include more diverse titles in Adult Nonfiction subject areas such as health & wellness, history and current events and more children's and young adult books featuring neuro and physical diversity and mental health.

Friends of the Library Report

Ms. Bradley noted:

- the in-person kickoff event to the three-part Beyond Words benefit was a success. The event was held on Hinds Plaza on Saturday, Oct. 9 with approximately 125 attending, good food and drink, speaker David Bellos, and entertainment by the Princeton High School Jazz Ensemble and After Eight a capella group.
- The next two Beyond Words events will be virtual: Omar El Akkad on Nov. 12 and Jean Hanff Korelitz on Dec. 3.
- The Friends are busy planning the Book Lovers Luncheon.
- Addie Gordon, the new Friends administrator, started on Oct. 4.
- Claire Bertrand will be back in her former position as book sale manager on Nov. 1 as Audrey Smerkanich leaves the library for a full-time position at the Institute for Advanced Studies.
- The annual book sale will be held Nov. 12 and Nov. 13 and will be chaired by former book sale manager Helen Heintz.

Friends and Foundation Consolidation - Ms. Bradley discussed the ongoing efforts of the Friends and the Foundation as they continue the process of consolidating the two organizations. The bylaws are being reviewed and revised and will be presented to the Trustees, possibly, in November. The new board is expected to consist of nine members of the current Friends council and nine members of the current Foundation Board, each serving three-year terms with initial staggered terms of one, two and three years. Ms. Bradley and Ms. Rosalind Muir have agreed to co-preside over the consolidated organization – all with the approval of the library's Board of Trustees. The expectation is the consolidated organization will have standing committees, consisting of board members and non-board members, whose action will be taken by a majority of board members.

Mr. Ginsburg asked that Leslie Burger, former Executive Director, be contacted to provide historical knowledge on the attempt to merge the organizations in 2012. Ms. Bradley noted she believed it was due to the Friends IRS status at that time. Janet Simon, former Development Director, and Dawn Frost, Development Associate, have been involved in discussing the operational impact of the consolidation

The Trustees discussed the anticipated consolidated organization and asked several questions.

Mr. Van Buren left the meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Teen Representatives

Ms. Wakefield, Board liaison to the Teen Representatives, gave a shout out to library staff members, Amanda Chuong and Marissa Warren for supporting the teens. Ms. Wakefeld introduced Eleni Staikos, returning Teen Rep, who is a senior at Princeton High School, loves reading and hanging out at the library and finds it rewarding to be able to contribute directly. The teens, in turn, introduced themselves: Emily Saunders - a senior at Princeton High School who has been coming to the library since she was little, enjoys creating programs through the Teen Advisory Board to help engage kids and teens; Gavin Yang – a junior at Princeton Day School, likes that the library is always there for you and always has a lot of great resources; Mitalee Pasricha – a junior at Princeton High School, used to visit the library before she moved to Princeton, visiting the fish tank and then reading – she enjoys coming to the library and is grateful to be able to make it fun for the little kids that come to the library.

The teens presented their report:

Eleni: TAB started off their year with a kickoff event in the Community Room with 22 members from different schools, some who had previously participated in the Go Between Club, a middle school club. The teens are excited for the start of the new year and amended their goals to reflect a more current version of their ideas for programming, less emphasis was put on virtual programming and more onto collaboration with high school clubs.

Emily: TAB ended their kickoff with the first activity of the year: Monster Book Drops, just in time for Halloween. Members were split up into random teams and assigned a book drop (or window) to create a construction paper monster design for. The activity was a creative way to get to know each other and decorate the library. TAB gathered in person for a regular meeting for the first time since March 2020, only one person Zoomed in). They planned their first big event of the year, Trunk or Treat, with “Pirates of the Caribbean” theme.

Gavin: After the graduation of our previous Podcast host, Sophie is the new Podcast host with goals to make connections with YA authors and those involved in the reading/writing community. Sophie hopes to expand into the publishing industry.

Mitalee: As of September, 2021, TAB’s Instagram account had 376 followers and reached 295 accounts through postings and stories for that month. Their “accounts reached” totals have increased due to more frequent postings. Teen Book Tuesday, continued from last year - every Tuesday a different TAB member records themselves talking about one of their favorite books that the library has in its collection and it shared via social media. TAB’s Instagram account is: princetonlibrarytab.

President’s Report

Ms. Miller gave the following report:

I would like to welcome the board representatives of the Teen Advisory Board to our meeting and look forward to hearing about what they have planned for the coming school year.

The Library celebrated in style last week with a Beyond Words party on Hinds Plaza. There was a sizable crowd of library supporters eating, drinking, listening to a terrific lecture by Princeton professor David Bellos, and enjoying music by the high school jazz band and a cappella singing

group. I was disappointed that only three trustees attended this event, because I do think it's important that people see trustees supporting the library in this way. I know we all have lives outside of the library, but we had considerable advance notice of this event and I hope that we can show our support for the library in this visible way in greater numbers.

I'm looking forward to a presentation by the Friends and the Foundation about their possible merger and I hope we can have a vigorous debate about the ways in which we believe such a merger can benefit the library for which we have a fiduciary responsibility.

And I'm also looking forward to moving forward with our Strategic Plan which I believe will shape the library's return to a post-pandemic regimen. As the crucial institution at the center of our town, we will have an increasing role in the town's continuing vibrancy and we as trustees will have an important role to play.

Finance Committee Report – Susan Chernik noted the committee met on Oct. 18 to review the 3rd quarter Budget vs Actual that shows net revenue excess of \$1.2M, which includes the \$1M 4Q municipal allocation. Without the allocation, the library is still in a positive position of approx. \$237k due, primarily, to a significant savings in salary & fringe due to the turnover of 13 staff members in 2021 and an anticipated higher than budgeted 2021 Annual Appeal giving. Onsite related revenue and expenses are lower than budgeted due to reduced hours, library closings and less onsite staff and visitors. The library is trending towards a positive year end.

Director's Report

Ms. Podolsky commented that it was nice to see some of the Trustees at the Beyond Words benefit. She noted the library continues its return to normal with most operating hours restored, more in-person programs scheduled while continuing to offer virtual programs, meeting rooms will be available for rent in the near future and the café is expected to open on Nov. 16.

Ms. Podolsky referred the Board to the Director's Report and Youth Services report and noted these upcoming events: Nature Walks at Herrowntown Woods and Knit for Others – drop off knitted winter items or pick up a knitting kit. Outdoor storytimes continue to be popular and have been extended through November, and the Youth Services department is planning several in-person programs throughout the fall and winter.

She noted that several weeks ago, the fish tank leaked causing damage. The plan is for the fish tank to be removed. The library will consider the fish tank as they begin thinking about renovating the third floor in the future. She noted the Youth Services department is thinking of what to put in that space and encouraged the Trustees to think of innovative ideas, exhibits, possibly something new, interactive and fun.

PEFF

Ms. Conlon gave a report on the Princeton Environmental Film Festival:

- There was one in-person film at the library, "The Truffle Hunters."
- 513 unique attendees with 1,265 tickets scanned of 2,000 issued. Attendance is assumed greater than the number of tickets scanned since viewing at home may include several people watching the film together.
- The festival ran two weeks.
- There were several local films – those made in NJ and some directly from Princeton.
- The library has been working with High Meadows from Princeton University. In the past they arranged screenings on campus and connected with the university and student population.
- Ms. Conlon highly recommends "Bring Your Own Brigade" by Lucy Walker.

Development Office Update - Ms. Podolsky noted that Ms. Belshaw's medical leave is extended into December. She also noted that Addie Gordon joined the development office as the Friends administrator, Janet Simon has been helping out in Ms. Belshaw's absence. The library is looking forward to Ms. Belshaw's return.

2022 Capital Budget Request Draft – Ms. Chernik noted that the capital budget request wasn't submitted in September as the library was waiting for a cost estimation. The library tried to minimize requests for 2022 since there are a few significant replacement projects for end of life equipment: cooling tower, circular motors for air handlers and restroom exhaust fans. The total capital request for 2022 is \$525,000.

2020 Audit Final Draft – Ms. Chernik noted that at the June 16 board meeting, the auditors presented the 2020 audit, reviewed the financial statements and answered questions. The board was satisfied with the audit, but a vote could not be held because information was still missing for Footnote #5 OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) liability and references the health benefits paid to retirees. The information for this footnote is based on reporting from the State, which still has not released 2020 data. The State has approved using the most current information available since the timing of the release of 2020 data is still undetermined. WithumSmith+Brown revised Footnote #5 with 2019 data and completed the reporting in the Footnote. This information has no impact on the library's finances reported in the audit and presented in June. Ms. Chernik noted the audit is now complete and requires a vote by the Trustees so it can be published.

Ms. Slebi motioned approval to publish the audit; Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment

Ms. Wakefield motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Nov. 17, 2021 at 6 p.m.