



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES December 15, 2021

In Attendance

Trustees: Barak Bar-Cohen, Robert Ginsberg, Edwina Hawes, Ruth Miller, Eve Niedergang, Chris Van Buren, Pam Wakefield

Library Staff: Lisa Belshaw, Erica Bess, Becky Bowers, Susan Chernik, Susan Conlon, Jennifer Podolsky, Tim Quinn, Karen Rackley, Bonnie Sprouls, Dana Treichler, Sonja Vloeberghs

Others: Andrea Bradley (Friends), Emily Saunders (Teen Rep)

At 6:00 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 Dec. 7 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.

Consent Agenda

- Nov. 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Final November Bills
- Preliminary December Bills
- Resolution 2021-23: 2021 Operating Budget Amendment

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

Board Materials

Ms. Podolsky mentioned the Board Materials (Monthly Director's Report, Monthly Statistics, and Quotes for Products and Services – 4Q 2021) included in the Board packet. There was no discussion on the included materials.

Friends of the Library Report

Ms. Bradley noted the final meeting of the Friends was on Tuesday. The Friends and Foundation are moving ahead with logistical and operational items as they relate to the merger. The Book Lovers Luncheon is planned for May 12 with the hope that it can be held at Jasna Polana.

Staff Spotlight

Ms. Miller introduced Dana Treichler, this month's staff spotlight. Ms. Treichler spoke about her work at PPL and noted that everyone works together as a team and learns from one another; she loves working with her team at the library. Ms. Niedergang asked Ms. Treichler about her interest in history. Ms. Treichler said her love for history, sports and sports history comes mainly from her father. She is part of the library's local history committee. She answers Princeton research questions, works with the Princeton Room collection, projects and programming and is currently working on a digital exhibit of the tiles in the Princeton Room, as well as sorting through and cleaning up the vertical files. Ms. Treichler noted there is myriad information in the Princeton Room about Princeton history, genealogy, the university, the town, the library; a collection that has been carefully curated over the years. If someone can't find and discover the information they are looking for, they just need to ask their friendly librarian.

Ms. Miller thanked Ms. Treichler and said that she loved her favorite quote: "With mirth and laughter the old wrinkles come."

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Teen Representatives

Ms. Saunders noted TAB: will begin a passive program in the Teen Center in January, Make and Take – craft kits that are available to take work on in the Teen Center or at home. The kits contain all the material necessary for the craft and TAB members have been working to assemble these kits; began planning for the Best of 2020 bracket which is an elimination bracket. Last year it was on their Instagram – people voted for their favorite book of 2020 or cast a vote in the ballot box at the library; plans to partner with high school clubs and by partnering with these clubs, develop ideas on how to create possible programs; continues to post regularly on Instagram about Teen Book Tuesday – a program whereby teens talk about a book they've read and enjoyed.

President's Report

Ms. Miller noted:

This is my last President's Report and I want to devote most of it to paying tribute to three people who have been so important to me in my two years as president. First, is Barack Bar-Cohen who is stepping down from the board owing to family concerns and a new business. Barack has been Treasurer to the board and has played a remarkable part in ensuring the financial health of the library. To participate in a Finance Committee with Barack is to experience a force of nature. His insights into the financial statements are extraordinary and he has pushed us (and the library staff) to think creatively about how to make best use of the resources we have. When Covid struck, he asked Susan to come up with various scenarios where we might have zero income for a period of time, or where conditions might fluctuate in unpredictable ways. Outside of the Finance Committee, Barack has also encouraged the board to think creatively about the future of the library, including considering a green roof, a library-sponsored radio station, and even a future with no books! There is no doubt that he will be missed, but I hope he will continue to be active in the library community to lend us his insights and his energy. For now, I salute you, Barack. If we were meeting in person, I'd ask the Board to give you a standing ovation. As it is, god speed, good luck and keep sharing your undoubted gifts with us and with the wider world.

Second is Jennifer Podolsky. As part of the initial search committee, I was sure that Jennifer was the right person for our library as soon as I met her. Little did we know, however, when we made her an offer, that the library would have to close three weeks after she started work. Jennifer and her superb staff were nothing short of heroic, developing protocols to keep the library open as much as possible and ensuring

the safety of staff and patrons. It has been a rough couple of years but Jennifer has come through it with grace and hard work and I am full of admiration for her ability, her sense and her knowledge of how best to proceed. She has come to be a good friend, and I hope that she won't mind my continued occasional visits to her office to see how things are going.

Third is Pam Wakefield. I couldn't have got through my two years as president without Pam. She has been in my corner whenever I've needed advice, balance and the occasional glass of wine. I have depended on her to keep me centered and always to have the best for the library at the top of her list. Thank you, my dear friend.

I can't count the years that I have been actively involved in this Princeton treasure, the Princeton Public Library. I have loved playing an active part in the life of the library, with its remarkable staff and with its Executive Director, Jennifer. It has been a joy and in spite of the ups and downs of the past two years, it has been an honor to work for its success. It's not for nothing that this community values and loves its library.

In addition, I want to thank the trustees and hope that I will be forgiven for occasional lapses, such as forgetting my script, losing my copy of the agenda, forgetting to call for votes and generally being rather too casual.

I know that I am leaving the board in good hands and be sure that I will continue to support it however I can. This library is truly the heartbeat of our community and I plan to advocate for it in town, at Council and in the world at large. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to sit at its head for two years.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee Report

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Chernik noted that Finance Committee met last night, looked at the year end balances, and discussed several options to end the year positive and in the most responsible way.

Mr. Bar-Cohen noted that after 9 years on the board and the last few on the finance committee, the library is an exceptional organization with exceptional people in an exceptional town. He noted that the challenges the library face are formidable, but that Ms. Podolsky and her team are up for the task. Mr Bar-Cohen recognized Ms. Chernik as having exceeding expectations with her intelligence, commitment and acumen for every challenge the library faced; she enables the library to be the heartbeat of the community.

Director's Report

Ms. Podolsky thanked Mr. Bar-Cohen and Ms. Miller from everyone at the library (and the patrons) – for your continued support and for always putting the staff's safety first.

Ms. Podolsky pointed out a few highlights from the Director's Report: indoor storytime returned on Dec. 2, once again cardholders can borrow nature explorer backpacks, 1st edition of the Kids, Teens and Families newsletter went out this morning, the Access Navigator program with Jeff Bolmeyer from NJLA will be visiting the library weekly to offer building digital literacy skills and job seekers looking for support, launching The Library of Things in January –circulating non-traditional items: Press and Play kits, emergency preparedness kits and binoculars.

She noted: meeting room rentals will resume shortly - there are still some issues to work out; the café reopened in November, the hours are Tues.-Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; strategic planning is still underway with our consultant compiling the 75 completed surveys by staff and Trustees; and a reminder for new officers, Ms. Chernik will contact you to sign the bank signature cards before year end.

Fundraising Update

Ms. Miller welcomed back Ms. Belshaw. Ms. Belshaw noted that it is wonderful to be back; a lot has been accomplished in her absence. The Annual Appeal letter is just about to go out; they have been receiving a steady stream of donations.

New Business

2022 Board Meeting Dates: Mr. Ginsberg moved approval of the 2022 Board Meeting Dates that were presented at the November meeting; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion; Ms. Niedergang abstained. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bar-Cohen left the meeting.

Recommendation of Board Officers for 2022: Representing the Nominating Committee, Ms. Wakefield recommended Mr. Ginsberg as President, Mr. Felten as Vice President and Mr. Van Buren as Treasurer

Nomination of Friends and Foundation Board Members and Officers for 2022: Ms. Bradley noted that the Friends and Foundation bylaws include a 20-member board (9 from the Foundation Board, 9 from the Friends Council, the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees President or their designee as the liaison.); terms are for three years; initially the terms are staggered and members are permitted to serve two consecutive three-year terms. Terms are effective Jan. 1, 2022. The organizational meeting will be held Jan. 18.

Mr. Ginsberg moved approval of the 2022 Friends and Foundation Board of Directors as presented; Mr. Van Buren seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Children's Materials - Fines and Fees: Ms. Miller recommended that the library remove, if possible, fines and fees for children's materials. Ms. Podolsky noted the Friends have decided to give a dedicated gift to the library to eliminate fines and fees for the children's collection over the next two years. Mr. Ginsberg asked the amount of the fines and fees collected for children's materials per year. Ms. Chernik estimated that is was approximately \$26,000.

Ms. Niedergang asked to hear more about the rationale. Ms. Podolsky noted that many libraries are moving towards eliminating fines and fees and that it has been identified by the American Library Association as a barrier to access. Cardholders would still be responsible if they lost a book.

Ms. Bradley noted that the Friends gift to the library over the last two years, due to the pandemic, was reduced to \$75,000. This year has been better than expected, receiving money from the book sales, from the Book Lovers Luncheon and the benefit. At the Friends meeting, the Council approved an additional \$60,000 gift to the library. Ms. Podolsky noted this is a wonderful parting gift from the Friends.

Mr. Ginsberg moved approval for the library to move forward with the process for eliminating fines and fees for the children's collection. Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment

Mr. Ginsberg motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Van Buren seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2022.