

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Board of Library Trustees

Meeting Date: June 21st, 2023

Meeting Location: Lecture Hall and Zoom

Trustees Present: Jeff Quinn, Chris Barrett, Susan Wetmore, Adam Rodgers, Aimee Lominac, Jackie Natale, Paul Gordon.

Staff: Catherine McDonald, Jackie Powers

Public Participation:

Town Council Liaison: Mike McLane

Stephen Ingalls (40 Richardson St)

Quinn Called the meeting to order at 7:05pm

Acceptance of Secretary's Report:

Lominac moved to accept the secretary's report; Wetmore seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

Staff Reports:

Lominac moved to accept the staff reports; Gordon seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

Discussion:

- Veteran's board made excellent use of the Wakefield Daily Item Digitization for the Memorial Day event. Good use case for the digitized records. Expecting full digitization in July.
- Discussion of the library's animal policies, emotional support animals vs. service animals. Library complies with ADA and legal requirements.
- Plaza Jazz: Three so far. Two outside, one indoor. Most recent was excellent and very well attended (over 100 patrons).

Public Participation:

- Stephen Ingalls spoke about the library's flag policy. He asked that the trustees consider expanding the flag policy, specifically to expand the second flagpole to include less represented communities, cultures, and functions. He expressed that the library is part

of the culture of the community, and that he appreciates the level of inclusion that exists within the library; and that to not extend that to the exterior of the library building does not sync with that. He believes that the policy should be opened up to reflect the spirit of the community that the library is part of. He believes that in addition to the legal and policy arguments, the trustees should consider the impact of the flag policy to the spirit of the community.

Correspondence:

- Joint statement on Intellectual Freedom and Censorship from Mass library Commissioners.
- Thank you not from a patron to the reference desk

Committee Reports:

Budget:

- State Aid will cover overages in materials. Goal is to spend to zero and have State Aid cover overage.
- \$14,000 under spending will go back to town under Personal Services.
- Contract Services TBD because of utilities.

Building and Grounds:

- Roof repairs will start as soon after July 1st as possible.
- Stairs and Plaza Repointing along with other capital needs will be reassessed in September.

Friends:

- Natale reported on previous Friend's meeting.
 - Friend's held elections and updated their bylaws. New President: Karen Williams, Andrea Ahearne Vice President, Keith LaGraves Treasurer.
 - Invested \$30,000 in a 6 month CD (Term Deposit)
 - Book Sale made approximately \$11,000; needs younger volunteers to haul books and set up for book sale. Still discussion site options.
 - Next meeting is September.

Gift Funds:

- Creedon gift will be dedicated to Professional Development.

Legislative Advocacy

- No impact of potential state shortfall as of yet.

Personnel

- Reference Librarian and Custodian positions open.
- Maureen has retired. Reference Librarian Amanda has taken over duck duties.

New Business

Committee Assignments:

- Barrett motioned to accept committee assignment slate as presented; Wetmore seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.
- Lominac motioned to accept check signer slate as presented; Gordon seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.
- Discussion of how and where Trustee contact information is posted and what contact information is posted. Emails are linked on the website, contact sheet available at reference desk.

Schedules

- December meeting moved to 20th. Lominac moved to accept the meeting schedule as amended; Gordon seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.
- Holiday schedule for library closures presented for approval. Amended Columbus day listing to "Columbus Day / Indigenous People's Day". Gordon motioned to accept holiday schedule as amended; Lominac seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

Employment Agreement

- McDonald presented amendments to Library Director's contract as discussed and approved in previous trustees meeting. Changes to compensation and adding annual review.
- Quinn appreciation expressed to the personnel subcommittee for their work on the issue.
- Wetmore expressed that the annual review will help keep Trustees informed on the contract.
- Lominac moved to accept the Director's contract amendments as presented; Barrett seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

Flag Policy Review

- McDonald reviewed the recent history of flag flying at the library and around town. The Trustees had previously approved a request by Town Council to fly the Pride and Juneteenth flags on the second flagpole at the library. Trustees then began to review and consider the flag policy. McDonald reached out to Town Council Mullen and reviewed recent cases in Boston where flag flying policies were challenged in court. Reviewed concept of Government Speech versus Public Forum.
- Town Council policy does not apply to Library flag poles. Trustees have jurisdiction.
- McDonald presented that Town Council's policy is government speech and expressed that she believed that the Library should not go in the direction of government speech, as it is not the library's role and it may put us in a position of contradiction with the Town Council.

- McDonald expressed that the library operates as a “limited public forum”. Can make reasonable rules and regulations that allow everyone access and enjoyment of the building. Policies must be content neutral and consistent.
- McDonald discussed the difficulty of creating a content neutral policy that would allow the Trustees to only fly the flags they want to fly.
- McDonald expressed that as the library’s mission is to build knowledge and promote understanding. She believes that can better be accomplished through programs, displays, and materials inside the building than by symbols on a flag pole.
- Gordon expressed that by definition flying a flag isn’t a content neutral act. He asked if there was a way to create a policy that fell within the limited public forum concept.
- Wetmore expressed that the staff at the library do a great job of presenting material in a content neutral way and that the amount of care, research, and time that goes into those would have to be put into each flag request, which she believes is beyond what we should be doing. We would be taking a stand by denying anything. She believes that it would be difficult for the trustees to manage.
- A discussion was had about whether the library’s flag poles could be considered as “Government Speech”. McDonald believed that legally, an argument could possibly be made, but that as we aren’t the municipality, she wouldn’t advise it. Lominac expressed that she believed that the Trustees could represent the library on their flagpoles and if that conflicted with the Town Council, she was okay with that.
- A discussion was had about the current policy including banners as a way to address bringing the library’s values outdoors.
- There was a discussion of the nature of “Content Neutral” policies and whether the trustees could create a policy which gives the trustees sole discretion over the flags to fly. Contrast was made to the meeting room policy which is open to any petitioner.
- Lominac expressed that the number of requests for flags would not be as many as seemed to be expected and that it could be manageable. Rodgers expressed that the only way to write a policy would be to not allow for any petitioning of the trustees to place a flag on the flagpole. Only the trustees should be able to bring up a flag for placement.
- McDonald expressed that flying flags doesn’t solve the problems the library is trying to solve and it takes time away from everyone with little gain. If there is something the library wants to do to educate, they want to do it in a meaningful way, and flying flags doesn’t get us in that direction.
- Lominac expressed that as elected officials, we are representing the community, and it’s ok for the Trustees to have challenging discussions, possibly challenging votes, and to not agree with other elected boards on occasion if the trustees are voting with their conscience.
- Wetmore expressed that as the library we have to be inclusive of the entire community, and that we shouldn’t be representing our personal opinions. Barrett commented that just the library collection is inclusive of works that we personally disagree with in the interest of content neutrality, and that it would be hard to defend content neutrality inside the building if it wasn’t reflected outside the building.

- A discussion was had of how the “Collections Development Policy” is applied by the librarians to requests by the public for displays or materials to appear in the library. Lominac asked if that could extend to the flagpole. McDonald stated that a flag is a symbol and not a material, and that makes it difficult to apply the same standards.
- McDonald expressed that she believes library can be much better served by continuing to be a place where discussions, programs, speakers, and materials help to educate and inform the public about issues than by promoting symbols.
- Quinn expressed that he believed we needed further clarification from Town Counsel. He also expressed that he didn’t want to enact anything that hinders the staff at the library from doing their jobs, and that he believed that changing the current policy would do that. He expressed that if the goal was to support Pride month and other worthwhile causes, the provision for outside signage and banners could and should be used for that purpose.
- A discussion was had about the use of flag images on a banner and how that would be different than flying a flag because it would add context and content to the symbol.
- A discussion was had about the impact of the Library Trustee decisions on the perception of the Library in regards to content neutrality.
- Rodgers expressed that while he agreed that flying a flag is not the right way to create positive discourse, symbols are important, and that he believed the library should be still outwardly demonstrating that it is an inclusive and safe space.
- Barrett expressed that the current flag policy with the banner provision is a good solution to this issue and that he did not believe it needed to be changed.
- Rodgers requested an official legal opinion from Town Counsel on where the library falls within the current legal framework for flag flying. Quinn and Lominac agreed and asked for the Town Counsel to clarify the options available to the trustees. Lominac expressed that she felt there was some discrepancy to what she had heard from Town Counsel at the Town Council meeting and what we had heard previously.
- A discussion was had about the importance of the library as a welcoming place and making sure we are still expressing that outwardly. McDonald expressed that the library is here for everyone, even the people who others don’t want to include. She believes that the library is inclusive and welcoming every day regardless of what flags are flown. Lominac believed that in the context of flying the flag one year and not the next, we may send a mixed message to the community.

Next Trustees Meeting: September 27th 2023

Rodgers made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Gordon seconded. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm