



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2023-06-12

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Public Library

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Meeting

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Monique Pillow-Gnanaratnam, Chair; Andrew Grimes, Secretary;
Cherrie Dubois; Patrick Egan; Cappy Popp

Members - Not Present:

Monette Verrier, Vice-Chair

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director; Michelle Filleul, Assistant Director; Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant; Genady Pilyavsky, Library Landscape Committee Chair; Jake Soucy, Library Landscape Committee Secretary; Elaine Stone, Library Landscape Committee Member; Walter Talbot, Library Landscape Committee Member; Desirée Zicko, Library Landscape Committee Member; Joseph McDonagh, Financial Committee Liaison to Reading Public Library; Karen Janowski, Resident

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew Grimes, Secretary

Topics of Discussion:

I. Call to Order at 7:03 p.m.

II. Public Comment

Resident Karen Janowski introduced herself and expressed her concerns about access restrictions in the Library surrounding the recent Pride Storytime event. Ms. Janowski was curious to see what the event was about but was surprised to see the curtains drawn and a police presence on the day of the event. Ms. Janowski suggested improving inclusivity and accessibility by using high school volunteers. Ms. Janowski believes this could provide potential fundraising and community service opportunities for students in the community.

III. Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee

a. Presentation

Mr. Pilyavsky introduced himself as the Chair of the Library Landscape Committee and thanked the Board for the opportunity to present. The Committee is made up entirely of Reading residents. Some members are Library employees, while others are involved with other local organizations such as the Climate Advisory Committee, Reading Community Garden, and Conservation Commission.

Mr. Pilyavsky highlighted the Committee's objective to complete the original exterior landscape vision developed during the Library building project but never realized due to budget constraints. The Committee seeks to engage with the community and Library stakeholders to conceptualize an educational outdoor learning environment that improves upon learning activities and aesthetics. The Committee hopes to raise funding for this effort and work with landscape architectural firms to guide future development plans.

Mr. Pilyavsky noted that a dedicated stage and power source could be established to promote outdoor events and avoid using extension cords. Currently, seating options are limited to a single picnic table and three granite blocks. Residents often bring their chairs and blankets to outdoor events on the Library lawn. However, a steep slope limits accessibility and the property requires maintenance. Dedicated outdoor seating options may be an option to improve the space.

Mr. Pilyavsky called the Ad-Hoc Library Landscape Committee to order at 7:12 p.m.

In support of the Library's core mission, the Committee hopes to help develop a dedicated outdoor space for learning and engagement. A larger group space for educational programs and events about nature, gardening, outdoor storytimes, and other subjects for all ages is essential. Smaller areas benefit study sessions, book clubs, and discussions. Improving overall accessibility and usability is critical.

The Committee seeks to undertake this project without increasing the residents' tax burden. The Committee will explore outside funding through nonprofits, grants, and plaques. An "adopt an island" program may provide opportunities for local companies to advertise through signage, noting that the area is "maintained by" them. Low maintenance, native plants will also improve sustainability. Establishing an endowment fund for ongoing long-term maintenance is also a possibility.

The Committee will focus on exploring funding opportunities and soliciting free presentations from landscape architectural firms, including firms that have submitted proposals for other Town projects. Funding will also be allocated for studies and surveys to understand residents' needs better. Results will define possibilities and the overall scope of the project.

Mr. Egan acknowledged the importance of funding and inquired about the estimated cost of a community engagement survey. Mr. Pilyavsky spoke about the Birch Meadow project, which is much larger. Mr. Pilyavsky noted that there are opportunities to outsource a survey to a private company and the possibility of the Committee formulating a survey for public distribution. Ms. Lannon estimated the initial feasibility study for the Birch Meadow project to be approximately \$25,000. This includes various information such as pictures, surveys, focus groups, and recommendations. The Committee is still exploring rough estimates and options.

Ms. Janowski spoke about her personal experience as Council on Aging Appointee to the Symonds Way Exploratory Committee. Ms. Janowski recommended working with the Town to develop a survey to gauge community input to reduce costs. Mr. Grimes noted that the Town has engaged in multiple surveys in the past.

Ms. Lannon thanked Mr. Pilyavsky for the presentation and recognized the contributions of Ms. Dubois, Ms. Stone, Ms. Zicko, Mr. Soucy, and Mr. Talbot, who were in attendance. Ms. Andrea Hogan, who could not attend tonight's meeting, was also recognized.

b. Discussion of Scope and Expectations

Mr. Egan spoke about past outdoor Library events and noted the importance of serving the Town, especially active library users. Increasing engagement through outdoor children's programs and learning opportunities for the senior community is critical. Numerous sponsorship opportunities for local organizations and small businesses may help with the issue of funding and ongoing maintenance. Funding is an essential factor in establishing a budget and goals for the project.

Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam expressed appreciation for the Committee's progress and hard work. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam recommended reviewing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance requirements to promote accessibility, enjoyment, and participation for all community stakeholders. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam suggested soliciting insight from children when generating thoughts and ideas for the space. Ms. Janowski agreed that a youth design contest might provide critical feedback on how young people envision the space.

c. Trustee Vacancy

Ms. Lannon noted an open vacancy on the Library Landscape Committee for a Trustee to participate and acknowledged that Ms. Verrier had previously expressed some interest. The Trustee Vacancy will remain a future agenda item to be considered and addressed. Mr. Pilyavsky thanked the Board for the opportunity to present and hear feedback.

Ad-Hoc Library Landscape Committee Adjournment at 7:28 p.m.

Motion: To Adjourn (Pilyavsky / Soucy)

Vote: Approved 6-0

IV. Election of Officers (VOTE)

Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam noted that the Board must vote to elect officers and review the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Mr. Grimes recommended that Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam remains as chair. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam appreciates this vote of confidence and acknowledges the positive behind-the-scenes learning experience of the position. Ms. Dubois clarified that Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam is not interested in continuing as chair.

Motion: To nominate Mr. Patrick Egan as Chair of the Trustees.

(Pillow-Gnanaratnam / Grimes)

Vote: Approved 5-0

Motion: To nominate Mr. Andrew Grimes as Secretary of the Trustees.

(Dubois / Egan)

Vote: Approved 5-0

Motion: To nominate Ms. Monette Verrier as Vice-Chair of the Trustees.

(Popp / Egan)

Vote: Approved 5-0

V. FY24 Meeting Schedule (VOTE)

Monthly Trustee meetings are scheduled for 7 p.m. on the second Monday of the month, with some alternate dates due to holidays and Town Meeting conflicts.

*Motion: To approve the FY24 Trustee Meeting dates.
(Dubois / Popp)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

VI. CY24 Holiday Schedule (VOTE)

Mr. Egan asked for clarification regarding the 1 p.m. closing on Christmas Eve. Ms. Lannon explained that a 1 p.m. closing is the traditional procedure on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. However, the Library would be closed for the whole day on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve when these days fall on Thursdays because the Library opens at 1 p.m.

*Motion: To approve the CY24 Library Holiday Closings.
(Dubois / Popp)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

VII. DEI Community Audit Liaison

Ms. Lannon reviewed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Assessment that the Board previously agreed to provide funding support to supplement grant funding. The consultant, Opportunity Consulting, will gather qualitative and quantitative information about the community through focus groups and surveys. A core internal steering group composed of Town Employees will guide the process. A larger group with liaisons representing the Select Board and Board of Library Trustees will receive reports and updates and oversee the funding. An even broader networking group of other local stakeholders may also be involved to encourage participation in the community.

The project will begin in July and will not require a significant time commitment for meetings. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam asked about the timeline for the project. Ms. Lannon clarified that the project runs from July 2023 to January 2024.

Mr. Egan asked about the involvement of a School Committee Liaison. Ms. Lannon will follow up on this but noted that the assessment focuses on the community at large rather than the schools.

Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam asked for clarification on the responsibilities. Ms. Lannon explained that regular updates would be communicated, with meetings occurring approximately every month. The Trustee liaison will represent the Board and update the Board on the progress of the project. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam expressed interest in the position.

*Motion: To nominate Ms. Monique Pillow-Gnanaratnam as the DEI Community Audit Liaison.
(Dubois / Popp)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

VIII. Financial Update

Ms. Lannon reported that the Library has completed its 11th month of FY2023 and is running slightly under budget. Ms. Lannon has confirmed with Collections Services Division Head Jamie Penney that the Library is on target to meet its mandated material expenditure requirements. The Library is working to fill a vacant Children's Librarian I

position focusing on tweens. Some ongoing projects will be fully implemented in FY24, requiring additional investment. For example, there will be costs associated with maintaining the Library mobile app and exterior pick-up lockers. Donations have also continued to trickle in.

Ms. Lannon confirmed for Mr. Egan that the Mango Languages invoice is an annual online language learning resource subscription. Ms. Lannon also explained that the Library's state aid is given directly to the Library and earmarked for larger projects such as strategic planning, consulting, website redevelopment, and equipment outside expected operating costs. State aid is also used for marketing, brochures, and signage.

Mr. Egan highlighted the recent \$5,100 payment to Advantage Archives, LLC for microfilm digitization, generously funded by the Reading Public Library Foundation. Ms. Lannon explained future digitization would count as material expenditures that the Library has purchased for public use. The digital records now go back to approximately 1853.

IX. Director's Report

Ms. Lannon explained that the Reading Municipal Light Department had scheduled a power outage for the Library only from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 15, to perform work required to install a high-speed (Level 3) Electric Vehicle charger. This will not affect any other neighbors in Town. The Library is closed to the public on Thursday mornings, so scheduled staff will work remotely.

Ms. Filleul reported a successful Friends and Family Day event with many visitors, including Mr. Popp and his family. Although the crowd skewed toward young families, approximately 150 people visited the Library booth throughout the day. Staff highlighted summer events, the Juneteenth celebration, and the Library of Things collection. Several people also signed up for library cards at the event. The Library issued 106 new library cards in May.

Ms. Lannon highlighted the developing Tween spot in the Children's Room and noted most of the project would be completed in FY2024. A mural is also being designed to follow the tree motif. Mr. Popp clarified the location is near the alcove, which formerly housed the Graphic Novels. Ms. Lannon explained that the new shelves in this area would feature a rotating collection of popular and interesting titles for tweens.

Ms. Lannon noted that Public Services Division Head Allyson Dowds is preparing a summer programming update. Ms. Filleul has printed 700 brochures showcasing summer events to help increase awareness at school outreach visits and to Library visitors. Ms. Dubois noted an error regarding Sunday hours, which do not exist from June through September, and suggested adding an asterisk clarification. Ms. Lannon said the brochure is also available electronically with live event links. Ms. Lannon recognized the work of the Public Services Division, Ms. Filleul, and Communications Specialist Desirée Zicko in organizing, publicizing, and designing the programming and the brochure.

Ms. Lannon thanked the Trustees and the Library staff for their assistance in responding to two separate public records requests totaling just under 30 hours of work to complete the required tasks. The documents are now in the hands of the Town Clerk.

Ms. Lannon recognized the recent high school graduation of pages Nemaya Wickramasinghe and Althea Culaba and the June work anniversaries of Head of Research and Reader Services Andrea Fiorillo and Children's Librarian Ashley Waring.

The Town's Pride Parade event will occur on Saturday, June 17, at 3:00 p.m. and run through Town. Activities will be taking place on the Town Common as well. This is a cooperative community effort with 31 other sponsors and many volunteers.

A Juneteenth celebration will take place on the Town Common on Saturday, June 24, from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. featuring drummers, dancing, a pop-up market, food trucks, beer vendors, a DJ, student groups, and more. This event is also a collaborative effort with support from the Reading Education Foundation, a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant, and various Town Departments.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification on the Library's sponsorship role in the Pride Parade. Ms. Lannon explained that the Library provides financial support for an American Sign Language translator for both the Pride Parade and Juneteenth. Also, the Library personnel devoted time to planning, securing permits, and assisting with safety procedures.

Mr. Egan questioned the lifespan of the RFID checkout pads. Ms. Filleul noted that the pads being replaced are at the self-checkout stations, which are heavily utilized and have undergone wear and tear over the past seven years. Ms. Lannon reported that approximately 68% of checkouts are done at self-checkout stations.

Mr. Egan requested an update on the summer programming survey. Ms. Filleul acknowledged that initial responses have not been as high as the spring survey due to the busy period around the end of the school year. However, a press release was recently sent out. The survey will be publicized in newspapers, newsletters, social media, and flyers.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification on outreach efforts with the Pleasant Street Center. The PSC will host a multi-week event series in the Library Community Room. New Elder Services Librarian Elizabeth Weilbacher is off to a good start in planning book groups and programming for senior citizens. A deposit collection at the Pleasant Street Center continues to circulate frequently.

Mr. Grimes requested additional context and comparison for the snapshot statistics provided in the monthly Director's report. Ms. Lannon will include this going forward to facilitate the analysis of usage trends.

Ms. Lannon described two Nathalie Nordstrand paintings, "Snow & Ice Boston Public Gardens" and "Sudbury Mill," recently donated to the Library, which has a growing collection of paintings by this local artist Nathalie Nordstrand. Debra Johnson generously donated these paintings in loving memory of her mother, Georgette Simard, an active patron and volunteer who recently passed away.

Ms. Filleul showcased an eyeglasses donation box that the Reading Lions Club would like to have at the Library, perhaps in the Health Nook. Former Public Services Division Head Lorraine Barry is a Lions Club member. The Lions Club hopes to have the collection in place for six months and will pick up donations when contacted. Trustee approval is required for all community donation collections that do not benefit the Library. Ms. Lannon noted the importance of supporting local organizations if Library space allows and stressed the Lions Club's support for large print and low-vision materials.

*Motion: Allow the Lions Club to have an eyeglasses donation box at the Library.
(Dubois / Grimes)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam inquired about the Lions Club advertising the location of the donation box at the Library. Ms. Lannon believes they will publicize it and other donation boxes around Town.

X. Approval of Minutes from May 8, 2023

*Motion: To approve the minutes of the May 8, 2023, Trustee Meeting.
(Egan / Pillow-Gnanaratnam)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

XI. Future Agenda Items

a. Considerations for Revisions to Collection Development Policy

Ms. Lannon noted that Library staff have been working to review the current Collection Development Policy and Request for Reconsideration of Materials. Areas of improvement and recommendations are being considered after going through the exercise of the recent Request for Reconsideration of *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. Ms. Lannon invites feedback from the Trustees ahead of the July discussion on the policy, with revisions being formally voted on during the August meeting. Mr. Egan suggested a further review of the public nature of Requests for Reconsideration and public comments while acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining anonymity in public record requests. Mr. Egan proposed examining the policies and processes of libraries in other communities.

b. Friends of the Reading Public Library Liaison

Ms. Lannon noted that a Friends of the Reading Public Library Liaison to the Trustees might be helpful to show support and answer questions at Friends meetings. Ms. Lannon acknowledged Mr. Egan's active participation in the Reading Public Library Foundation in facilitating open communication with the Board.

Ms. Lannon mentioned the July meeting will include an update on summer programming, a report from the Office of Equity and Social Justice, and the distribution and discussion of the FY2024 warrant schedule and supplemental spending recommendation. Ms. Lannon invited the Board to send future agenda items to Mr. Egan and carbon copy her as well.

Adjournment 8:14 p.m.
*Motion: To Adjourn (Grimes / Popp)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

Respectfully Submitted,



Andrew Grimes, Secretary