



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2023-07-10

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:**

Patrick Egan, Chair; Monette Verrier, Vice-Chair;
Monique Pillow-Gnanaratnam; Cherrie Dubois; Cappy Popp

Members - Not Present:

Andrew Grimes, Secretary

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director; Michelle Filleul, Assistant Director;
Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant; Sudeshna Chatterjee, Director
of Equity and Social Justice; Joseph McDonagh, Financial Committee Liaison
to Reading Public Library;

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Monette Verrier, Vice-Chair

Topics of Discussion:

I. Call to Order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made in person or remotely.

III. Programming Update (Summer)

TABLED

IV. Office of Equity and Social Justice Update

Director of Equity and Social Justice Dr. Sudeshna Chatterjee briefly reviewed the Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ) mission, which is focused on embracing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the Reading community. The OESJ seeks to carry out its mission through an advisory and supporting role in the community. The OESJ is a community resource facilitating collaborative engagement through respectful dialogue and behavior.

The OESJ offers events and programs that humanize and celebrate everyone and encourage civic dialogue and education around diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. Annual town-wide events celebrating Juneteenth, Native American Heritage Month, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Disability Inclusion have been the main focus in 2022 and 2023. Over 200 people attended the 2023 Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration, and over 400 attended the 2023 Juneteenth Freedom Festival. These two events were

supported by grants from the Reading Cultural Council and Massachusetts Cultural Council, respectively.

The Office offers supplemental support for other community events, such as Reading Pride and the New Resident Open House, celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion. Programming design and support to other departments and community stakeholders, such as the Coalition of Us (CATO) conversation program, is also provided. The Reading Reflect program serves as a model for community education, and a second installment is currently being planned. A second Disability Inclusion Workshop in collaboration with the Reading Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is being planned, as well as the 2023 New Resident Open House, a Genocide Awareness Workshop/Forum, and a Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2024 celebration.

The OESJ seeks to support, guide, and empower community members and town leadership to create and sustain an inclusive organizational culture, processes, and spaces. Through the DEI Needs Assessment, the OESJ hopes to identify community needs further and communicate them to leadership and staff. The OESJ advises leadership and town stakeholders on the implications of policies, processes, and programs and designs staff and board training. The OESJ also assists with community outreach and broadening inclusive communication. The involvement of multiple stakeholders is essential as current issues evolve, and action items are developed. Dr. Chatterjee feels that the visible public work of her office is critical, as well as the many invisible behind-the-scenes efforts.

Dr. Chatterjee stressed the importance of building bridges to connect all voices in meaningful civic dialogue while strategically amplifying voices from traditionally marginalized communities. A system for confidentially documenting community input and concerns helps with the organization of operations. The Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading (PAIR) group volunteers are working to establish bridges and trust throughout the community. Facilitating open dialog and connection spaces among community members, employees, key stakeholders, and future collaborators is essential. For example, support groups and resources are being formed for minorities, women, and older adults.

Dr. Chatterjee acknowledged that discrimination and bias do not have borders. Relationships with peer communities in neighboring municipalities such as North Reading, Wakefield, Winchester, and Stoneham have helped create community learning spaces, outside relationships, and expanded perspectives. The OESJ also represents Reading at the state level through participation in organizations such as the Massachusetts Municipal Association, Massachusetts Human Rights Coalition, Massachusetts DEI Coalition, and Metropolitan Area Planning Council. These exciting state-level conversations have helped form connections with national organizations such as the American Association of Access, Equity, and Diversity.

The upcoming DEI Community Needs Assessment seeks to identify community needs and gaps in programs, processes, and services that act as barriers in the local Reading community. An employee-driven steering committee featuring liaisons from various elected boards and departments will begin meeting in August. They will oversee a process that will include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and educational public forums to generate a wide range of feedback and involvement.

As the Director, Dr. Chatterjee has developed a public engagement process to create welcoming community events that reach all target audience members. She documents data regarding concerns, feedback, and ideas and identifies stakeholders. She examines situations for feasibility and interest in collaboration, identifying short-term and long-term outcomes. The next step is to plan and implement programs collaboratively.

She reviews feedback to reinforce success and create change when the process is repeated. Sustained goal building and thoughtful execution of action items in response to feedback received are essential to optimizing community impact.

Mr. Egan questioned the nature of any emerging themes Dr. Chatterjee may have realized from her community conversations. Dr. Chatterjee acknowledged many situational issues regarding new policies and noted the value of sharing resources and empowering people to discuss contentious and emotional topics. Dr. Chatterjee noted that many issues involve referrals to leadership in other Town departments.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification on OESJ outreach efforts surrounding controversial issues such as the holiday displays on the Town Common. Dr. Chatterjee noted that she has since organized a retreat and workshop in collaboration with an outside consultant for the Select Board to present resources on other municipalities' best practices and goals. Dr. Chatterjee acknowledged the difficulty of navigating conversations with elected boards as a paid employee but is open to communication.

Mr. Egan questioned the status of PAIR volunteers. Dr. Chatterjee reported approximately 70 members and strong attendance in meetings focused on community outreach and the DEI Community needs assessment. Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam complimented Dr. Chatterjee's hard work and inquired about her development and trajectory. Dr. Chatterjee acknowledged that no community is perfect and hopes to improve growth and collaboration through partnerships and community events continuously.

The Board thanked Dr. Chatterjee, who excused herself at 7:23 p.m.

V. Collection Development Policy Review (includes Request for Reconsideration forms and procedures)

Ms. Lannon presented a copy of the Library's current collection development policy, including a copy of the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights and the Library's Form to Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials. Ms. Lannon noted that the Board regularly reviews all policies to ensure their strength and applicability.

Ms. Lannon highlighted some proposed additional language to both the Collection Development policy and the Request for Reconsideration to make an item ineligible for further reconsideration for five years after a decision has been reached. Proposed language regarding the public nature of Requests for Reconsideration would inform filers of the potential release of particular identifying information per Massachusetts Public Records Law. Ms. Dubois questioned whether the information would need to be requested for release. Ms. Lannon clarified that the Library may exercise discretion, but there is no legal obligation to keep the information secret. Any public records request may result in the sharing of identifying information.

Ms. Lannon also suggested adding a note that the item will remain in circulation during the reconsideration process. Ms. Lannon noted that the best practice would be considering the proposed changes in preparation for potential amendments and motions in August. Ms. Dubois and Ms. Verrier questioned what materials are provided to patrons wishing to request reconsideration of an item. Ms. Lannon clarified that Library staff give patrons the two-page form and the full Collection Development policy. Ms. Verrier inquired about the nature of the Tween space collection. Ms. Lannon explained that the Tween space will be a special area within the Children's room.

Ms. Verrier and Mr. Popp suggested adding language regarding the potential release of the petitioner's full name. Mr. Egan noted a Reading residency requirement for completing the Form to Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials but no requirement to hold a library card.

Mr. Egan acknowledged that some libraries have a two-step process, where decisions made by a Library staff review committee can be appealed to the Board rather than just going directly to the Library Director and the Board. Ms. Lannon explained that an internal collection development committee review would not involve a public meeting or discussion but would include the same analysis process regarding usage, shelving locations, and surrounding communities. However, the current process allows for transparency through public meetings and public comment.

Mr. Egan expressed concern about the five-year reconsideration period. In most cases, there is no problem with analyzing the book as a whole and repeating the reasons for the recommendation. However, a material change in facts may affect research and usage over time. Ms. Lannon explained that the 5-year period is the result of surveying the practices of other libraries. Although Ms. Lannon has only personally experienced a handful of challenges in her 30 years of experience in the library field, the number of challenges is growing. There is a potential for repeat challenges on the same material, and a reconsideration period is meant to address this problem. Requests for reconsideration should be made with meaningful intent.

Ms. Verrier suggested scaling back the reconsideration period to one year. Ms. Lannon explained that circumstances might change and that the staff would review the book again. Ms. Lannon clarified that staff may adjust an item's placement in the library collection without filing a Request for Reconsideration.

Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam inquired about an intermediate method of discussing subsequent challenges of the same book. Ms. Lannon explained that the composition of the Board may change over time and could vote to approve different motions. Ms. Lannon will consult with Town Council, but the Board may decide to confirm its prior decision and not recognize additional requests for reconsideration in response to a specific item rather than having a blanket reconsideration period in the policy. Mr. Egan suggested that a different policy would need to address repeat requests. Mr. Egan believes that repetition in justifying the decision is acceptable as long as there are no substantial changes and the material is considered whole.

Ms. Lannon will develop proposed language for voting at the August meeting regarding the one-year reconsideration period. She will leave the current process as is rather than adopt a two-tier approach with an appeal of Library staff decisions to the Board. Ms. Lannon clarified that this policy would be scheduled for review in approximately one year. Other Library policies are expected to be reviewed throughout the year to ensure they meet the Library's needs.

VI. Charter Review Committee Appointment

Mr. Egan shared that Town Manager Fidel Maltez had reached out to the Board regarding having a Trustee or Representative on the Charter Review Committee, which is scheduled to begin meeting in the Fall. Every ten years, a committee is formed to review the Town Charter. The Town Charter establishes the Board and its responsibilities, among many other things. Ms. Lannon noted that despite his absence tonight, Mr. Grimes had expressed interest in the charter, and his background in finance may be beneficial.

Motion: To approve Mr. Andrew Grimes as the Charter Review Committee Appointee representing the Board of Library Trustees.

(Popp / Dubois)

Vote: Approved 5-0

VII. Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee Appointment

Motion: Approve Mr. Cappy Popp as an Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee member.

(Dubois / Verrier)

Vote: Approved 5-0

VIII. Discussion: Trustee Meeting Materials

Mr. Egan commented on the possibility of publicly posting meeting packets with the Town Clerk separately from meeting agendas for future meetings. Ms. Dubois questioned the practices of other local boards. Mr. Egan believes the Select Board and School Committee currently post meeting packets. However, only the agenda posting and official minutes are required. Everything else is voluntary. Ms. Verrier questioned whether packets would be available with the Town Clerk's Office at Town Hall or online. Ms. Lannon has been communicating with Town Clerk Laura Gemme and believes an electronic copy would be posted on the Town website and Laserfiche.

Mr. Egan and Ms. Verrier questioned the redaction process for the meeting packets. Per Ms. Lannon, public comment emails may not necessarily be included in the packets. Requests for reconsideration are separate, but the best practice would be to thoughtfully redact identifying information. For public comments included in the packets, library staff could remove contact information such as email addresses and phone numbers from members of the public to address privacy concerns. Some information may be legally required to be provided upon request.

Ms. Lannon suggested that packets could still be distributed to the Board on Thursdays, with public postings on Mondays in case of any changes. Ms. Lannon will clarify the temporary nature of packets posted on the website versus permanent Laserfiche availability. The Select Board has meeting packets available dating back to 2005.

Mr. Egan noted that people have suggested posting meeting packets in the past and that it would be helpful to see and track this information over time. Ms. Lannon will continue distributing the packets to the standard distribution list and will begin working with the Town Clerk to facilitate public posting as well. Ms. Lannon will also review the protocol of other local elected boards for communicating and publicizing public comments. Ms. Lannon clarified that personal information from minors must be withheld.

IX. Financial Update

a. General Update

Ms. Lannon noted that the entire expense budget (L92) has been fully expended with the current warrant T2335. State aid has been used to purchase some recent library materials. However, the Library does anticipate returning \$45,646 of municipal salary funds due to several vacancies and transitions that have taken place throughout the year. One full-time Children's Librarian position is still open.

The Library received several gifts in June, including a Young Women's League of Reading donation supporting the EcoTarium museum pass. Members of the Abigail Book Club also made several generous donations.

b. FY24 Warrant Schedule

Ms. Clemente developed a schedule of warrants for FY24, including signature due dates with holidays noted. In general, warrants are available for signature on Thursday afternoons. Ms. Lannon thanked Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam for suggesting this helpful organizational tool to keep track of warrant dates.

c. FY24 Supplemental Spending Recommendations

Joseph McDonagh, Financial Committee Liaison to Reading Public Library, inquired about the budget summary line item for the Reading Public Library Foundation. Ms. Lannon and Mr. Egan clarified that the Foundation has invested funds and makes periodic gifts to the Library at the Trustees' discretion. The Library is now spending down a more significant donation from the Foundation given after the most recent renovation. After FY23 spending and encumbrances, approximately \$69,256 Foundation gifts are available in the Town's bank account. Ms. Lannon explained that only the Library's Trust accounts earn interest. Mr. McDonagh questioned the donation amounts required for tax purposes. Mr. Egan acknowledged the importance of tax requirements and noted that the Foundation's Treasurer is more familiar with them.

Ms. Verrier questioned the \$30,298 gift funds available for the Studio space. Ms. Lannon explained that the Library plans to use these directed gift funds to update the current iMacs in the Studio and explore the purchase of a large format printer for posters and maps or a vinyl cutter.

Mr. Egan inquired about State Aid awards. Ms. Lannon explained that the MBLC awards State Aid funds yearly and that the Town's auditors prefer prompt and regular spending to avoid surplus. Ms. Lannon has incorporated these funds into long-term budget spending and larger strategic planning capital projects to prevent requesting capital funds from the Town.

Ms. Lannon recommends \$187,800 in FY24 supplemental spending from funds received through gifts, trust income, and State Aid. This is just under 10% of the \$2.1 million municipal budget. \$187,800 will be for ongoing projects, including the Tween area, Health Nook, and Town-wide DEI Community Needs Assessment. \$99,000 will be for new projects such as a feasibility study to support the Library Landscape Committee.

marketing, equipment, and furnishings to optimize staff work areas, and supplemental funding for programs, staff development, and materials.

Gift revenue varies yearly but averages approximately \$9,000 in general donations outside bequests and more significant contributions. In FY23, gift funds of \$2,800 for the Health Nook and \$61,000 for the Tween Area were approved. Ms. Lannon recommends \$34,500 gift funds for general staff development, program support, and a Library Landscape feasibility study and concept design. General staff development includes staff meetings and a staff day for professional development and training. Ms. Lannon noted that FY23 program spending included a disability inclusion workshop, major author talks, the Juneteenth freedom festival, passive Children's programming supplies, and more. \$20,000 is being earmarked for the concept and design of the potential development of the School Street side of the Library. This is a generous estimate based on the \$25,000 cost of the study for the larger Birch Meadow project.

State Aid funds can vary from year to year but serve as a helpful reserve cushion for supplemental spending. \$92,882 of state aid funds were available for spending as of 6/30/2023. \$52,473 was awarded in FY23, but FY24 State Aid will not be awarded until December 2024. Ms. Lannon recommends FY24 State Aid spending of approximately \$84,000. Expenses include marketing and communication efforts such as printing and producing flyers, brochures, and Town Common signs. State Aid funds also help facilitate the purchase of library materials, including special items like microfilm and museum passes. Another recommended use for state aid funds is for ergonomic equipment and furnishings that promote accessibility at the Library's four public service desks. The FY24 municipal budget reduced spending for professional development. Ms. Lannon hopes to use State Aid to continue providing staff learning opportunities. The Public Library Association (PLA) Conference will be held in April 2024 in Columbus, Ohio. Ms. Lannon would like to send at least two staff members to this beneficial but expensive event. She also noted that the financial commitment for the DEI Community Assessment will generate helpful data for FY26-FY30 Strategic Planning.

The Library has nine trusts managed by The Commissioners of Trust Funds, a volunteer town board appointed by the Select Board that oversees trust investments to generate revenue and provide sustaining support outside the tax levy. Due to the economic downturn of FY22, the Library did not recommend spending any Trust income in FY23. However, with modest growth of \$5,873 in FY23, the Library recommends allocating \$5,500 further to support materials expenditures and improvements to staff workspaces.

Ms. Lannon noted that final FY23 amounts may vary slightly as the Year-End close process will be completed in August or September. Ms. Verrier requested an update on the outdoor patio space. Ms. Lannon noted that this space is used for Children's programming, including the Plant Lab series on gardening. However, Library staff have expressed concerns about safety and supervision issues. A glass wall around the railings helps to enclose the space, which unfortunately remains out of sight from the Children's desk. A heavy door is traditionally kept locked as a safety precaution. Ms. Verrier asked about outdoor tables for reading and studying. Ms. Lannon will review the policies on the space with staff and research age-appropriate seating to make the space more usable. Ms. Dubois acknowledged the risk and responsibility of monitoring children in the area. Perhaps supervision from parents or guardians should be required.

X. Director's Report

Ms. Lannon reviewed June usage statistics and featured a prior month and year comparison suggested by Mr. Grimes. Ms. Lannon noted an increase in the Overdrive circulation of e-books and ongoing issues with the visitor counter software. Volunteer hours have increased thanks to the generous service of both students and adults.

Ms. Lannon recognized Children's Librarians for successful elementary school outreach visits promoting the summer reading program to over 1,200 children. Children's Librarian Megan White led a Citizen Kids program that organized a trash pickup day on June 11 at the Town Forest with over 35 volunteers. This program series focuses on community government and hopes to continue in the fall.

Community events included the Juneteenth Freedom Festival, with over 400 attendees, and the Annual Pride Parade. Over 150 people visited the library booth at Friends and Family Day. Dr. Sudeshna Chatterjee is serving on the Town of Reading Public Health Audit.

About 100 people attended the Summer Concert with PanNeubean Steel. There was also a great turnout for the Summer Sizzlers book talk event featuring mocktails courtesy of the Friends of the Reading Public Library. Ms. Filleul reported on positive and practical programming suggestions from the ongoing programming survey. Future programming trends will include financial literacy and veterans' services.

The signage at the Teen Room entrance has been updated to remove the red "Stop" sign. All are welcome to use and browse the teen collection, although seating spaces are reserved for teens. Ms. Clemente and Senior Library Associate Valerie Gould-Heithaus recently celebrated work anniversaries. The second round of interviews for the Librarian I – Children's position has been completed. The position is expected to be filled by early August. Staff completed a wide variety of professional development, including attendance at the American Library Association (ALA) conference in Chicago by Children's Librarian Ashley Waring.

XI. Approval of Minutes from June 12, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of the June 12, 2023, Trustee Meeting.

(Dubois / Pillow-Gnanaratnam)

Vote: Approved 4-0

XII. Future Agenda Items

a. Meeting Room Use Report and Recommended Policy Updates

Mr. Egan reminded the Board of the next meeting on August 14 and reviewed availability. The Meeting Room Use Report will be presented along with recommended updates to the policy for review. Ms. Lannon welcomes any questions or comments about data. Mr. Egan noted one community member's concern about streamlining the reservation and deposit process when booking meeting rooms.

b. Request for Reconsideration: "Tricks" by Ellen Hopkins and "The Best of Assigned Male" by Sophie Labelle

Mr. Egan noted that two requests for reconsideration were filed within the past few weeks. One is for "Tricks" by Ellen Hopkins, and the other is for "The Best of Assigned Male" by Sophie Labelle. Ms. Lannon explained that Library staff are developing a report with qualitative and quantitative data about both books and advised consideration at the August meeting. Three copies of "Tricks" were provided for Trustee review, and copies of "The Best of Assigned Male" will be made available for review soon.

Adjournment 8:43 p.m.

Motion: To Adjourn (Dubois / Popp)

Vote: Approved 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Monette Verrier", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Monette Verrier, Vice-Chair



Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ)

Reading Public Library

RPL Trustee Presentation

July 10, 2023.



Today's Presentation

1. Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ): mission, approach, best practices
2. Areas of focus: events, advising, partnerships, networking
3. Updates and ongoing activities
4. DEI Needs Assessment
5. Public feedback and input



OESJ Mission

The Office of Equity and Social Justice is a town-wide shared service which provides education, support and resources aimed at making Reading an inclusive, diverse and accessible town for all.

- **Diversity-Embrace and celebrate all the ways we differ-** that includes but is not limited to age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, and any other identifiers that make one individual or group different from another.
- **Equity-All having the opportunity to fully participate-** fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time trying to identify and eliminate barriers that have historically prevented the full participation of some individuals or groups.
- **Inclusion/Belonging-All feel welcomed and valued-** creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, represented, supported, and valued to fully participate.
- **Access-Of any and all abilities-** creating spaces and practices so everyone feels included regardless of physical, intellectual, linguistic abilities.



DEIA Approach in Reading

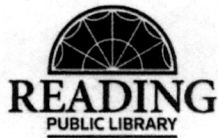
An advisory and supporting role to facilitate community education and best practices across the municipality

- Based on best practices, collaboration and optimization of resources
- Not enforcing, but encouraging awareness and education around DEIA
- Supporting other departments, boards, staff and leaders
- Community resource to learn and engage through respectful dialogue and behavior



Areas of Focus

- Educational Events and Programs
- Data, Resources and Advising
- Partnerships and Relationship building
- Networking and Professional Development



Educational Events and Programs

Offer events and programs that humanize and celebrate one another and encourage civil dialogue and education around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion

- **Four annual townwide events-2022/2023-** Juneteenth, Native American Heritage Month, MLK Day, Disability Inclusion
- **Provide supplemental support to other DEI themed OR community events** in and around town- Reading Pride, New Resident Open House
- **Design a model for community education-** Reading Reflect
- **Provide programming design and support** to other departments and stakeholders- CATO conversation



Events (January to June 2023)

Event	Collaborators	Attendees	Grants
Martin Luther King Day 2023	Reading Public Schools	200+	Reading Cultural Council
CATO Conversation-Bill Russell	OESJ was the collaborator	40 (capped)	N/A
Disability Inclusion Workshop 1.0	SEPAC	40 (capped)	N/A
Juneteenth Freedom Festival	Town Hall & Community Partners	400+	Mass Cultural Council



What's coming up next?

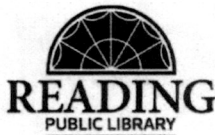
Event	Collaborators
New Resident Open House 2023	Chamber, Town Hall, RPL
Reading Reflect 2.0	TBD
Disability Inclusion Workshop 2.0	SEPAC
Genocide Awareness Workshop/Forum	PAIR & Community at large
Martin Luther King Day 2024	RPS, CATO



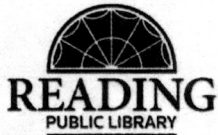
Resources & Advising

Support, guide, and empower community members and town leadership to create and sustain inclusive organizational culture, processes and spaces

- **Identify community needs and communicate to leadership and staff-** DEI needs assessment
- **Advise leadership and town stakeholders on implications of policies, processes and programs-** inclusive event planning; Bill Russell Day proclamation
- **Design staff and board training and/or program ideas** – RPL staff, Town Hall staff, Elder Services
- **Assist with community outreach and broadening communication to be more inclusive** to other departments and stakeholders- health needs assessment, family engagement models for RPS



Strategies	Issues/Items	Stakeholders involved
Identify Community Needs	Steering Town DEI Needs Assessment	Town Departments, RPL, PAIR
Advise Leadership <i>Help identify action items and/or share resources</i>	Inclusive Holiday Display Policy Honoring Bill Russell in Reading Inclusive Event Design and Planning Hate graffiti in RPS	Town Manager, Select Board, Community residents Town Manager, CATO Reading Recreation, Friends of Reading Recreation RMHS Principal and Leadership team



Strategies	Issues/Items	Stakeholders involved
Design and Develop Training & Workshop Ideas	Disability Inclusion Talking about difficult topics as a board DEI focused onboarding training for RPL staff	Town Departments, RPL, RPS Town Manager, Select Board RPL Public Services Leadership
Expanding community outreach and communication	Health Needs Assessment- Health Inequity Focus Group RPS Family and Community Engagement Committee- inclusive models of engagement	Community disability and health inequity advocates RPS

Partnerships and Relationship building

Build bridges to connect all voices in meaningful and civil dialog, while also strategically amplifying voices from traditionally marginalized communities

- **Creating bridges and trust-** Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading (PAIR)
- **Open dialog with key stakeholders and future collaborators-** town departments; community organizations; residents and students, parent networks, sports community
- **Create connection spaces for community members and employees-** support groups and employee resource groups
- **Document concerns and establish transparent process**



OESJ/PAIR active collaborators

Town Departments

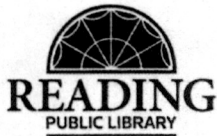
Pleasant Street Center
Reading Rec
Economic Development &
Planning Division
Reading Public Schools
Reading Police Department
Reading Public Library

Community Networks and Organizations

Special Education Parent
Network (SEPAC)
Reading Cares
Reading Clergy Association
Student Clubs at RMHS- GSA,
SOCA, Disabled Students Union
Coalition of US (CATO)
The Flourish Collective
Understanding Disabilities (UD)

Public Boards and Committees

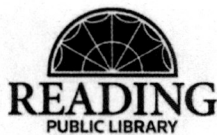
School Committee
Select Board
Board of Health



Networking and Professional Development

Establish relationships and explore outside perspectives and acknowledge that discrimination and bias do not have borders

- **Connect with neighborhood towns and municipalities** –North Reading Human Rights Group, Winchester Social Justice Network, Wakefield and Stoneham Human Rights Commissions
- **Connect and represent Reading at state level networks** through peer associations- Mass Municipal Association, Mass Human Rights Coalition, Mass DEI Coalition, MAPC
- **Connect the Office of Equity and Social Justice to national professional DEI organizations**-American Association of Access, Equity and Diversity



DEI Community Needs Assessment 2023-2024

- **Objective-**

- ❖ a. to identify community needs
- ❖ b. identify gaps in programs, processes and services that act as barriers

Eg: Staff Hiring & Retention; Community Events; Community Services and Human Services; Facilities and Spaces

- **Steering Committee-** employee driven (department representatives)

- **Timeline-** kick-off meeting August end; 8/9month process

- **Format and Process-**

- ❖ Surveys, interviews, focus groups
- ❖ Accompanying educational public forums

- **Communication and Outreach-** Town/RPL Communication Strategy; also via Outreach working group/PAIR



Public Engagement: Emerging Process

Systematic documentation, and follow-up

- Document concerns/feedback/ideas as data
- Identify existing Stakeholders
- Examine feasibility for undertaking and/or interest in collaboration
- Identify short-term and long-term outcomes, share DEIA best practices
- Collaboratively develop plans and programs
- Implement
- Gather feedback and review
- Repeat process with results to reinforce successes and create change



THANK YOU!



COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Library Mission Statement

The Reading Public Library is a center and resource for learning and civic engagement. We provide a place and platform of, by, and for the people who can benefit as individuals as well as contribute to the well-being of the community.

Core Values

- Education
- Equity
- Accountability
- Access

Collection Statement

An important role of the Reading Public Library is to provide library materials selected in response to the diverse educational, informational, and recreational needs of all community members of every age and literacy level.

Professional staff select and provide materials in a variety of formats; including but not limited to, print, media, and digital formats; and in a variety of community languages.

Selection Criteria

This policy is intended to provide direction and guidance to staff members in their roles as materials selectors. Staff select print and non-print library materials in accordance with one or more of these criteria.

- Relevance to the library's mission and core values
- Current usefulness, interest, and/or permanent value
- Popular demand
- Relevance to the existing collection
- Standards of quality in content and format
- Price

The selection process includes the use of authoritative professional reviews, popular reviews, publishers' catalogs, standard lists of basic works, firsthand examination, and patron requests.

The Library Gift Policy addresses donations of materials for the collection. The following collections are selected with additional criteria:

Children's Collection

This collection serves children from birth through sixth grade. Children's librarians also select materials and give special attention to books of value to parents, teachers, and other adults working with children.

Local History and Genealogy Collection

This collection includes material that relates to or advances our knowledge about the town of Reading, Massachusetts and its history, people, and institutions. The collection also provides genealogists with methodological aids with which to begin research and learn genealogical techniques.

Periodicals

Professional staff consider both content and accessibility of all periodicals. Magazine subscriptions are reviewed yearly prior to renewal.

Reference

The Reference collection is intended to serve adults and students in middle school and up. Materials selected for the Reference collection supply ready information on a certain subject, in an easy-to-use form, or are tools for bibliographic access.

Teen Collection

Professional staff select materials for teens to meet the needs, interests, and reading levels of young people in grades six through twelve.

Intellectual Freedom and Controversial Materials

The Board of Trustees of the Reading Public Library endorses the Library Bill of Rights ([see Appendix I](#)). The Board recognizes its right and responsibility to provide worthwhile materials of interest to its readers, including those on all sides of controversial issues.

The Library does not advocate particular beliefs or views. The selection of any given item is not an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed. Library materials will not be marked in such a way as to show approval or disapproval. Access to library materials shall be controlled only to the extent necessary to protect them from danger or theft.

Parents are responsible for determining what their children may read, watch, or listen to. Selection of materials is not restricted by the possibility that young people may obtain material their parents consider inappropriate.

Reading residents with serious objections to specific items in the Library should direct their complaints to a librarian. If the complaint is not resolved, the resident may file a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" (Appendix II) form to the Director's attention. The item and the form will be reviewed by the Board of Library Trustees. If materials meet the criteria of selection, they will not be removed from the collection because of pressure by any individual or group. [PROPOSED – Once a decision has been reached on a Request for Reconsideration, the title in question is ineligible for further Reconsideration for 5 years. To be added to the Request for Reconsideration policy as well.]

Scope and Limits of the Collection

The Library does not attempt to serve as a depository of record nor to purchase materials of a highly specialized or technical nature. It does not undertake to support individual research in any subject field except local history. When requests are received for material outside the scope of this collection, every effort will be made to borrow the material from another library or to direct the patron to an agency where the material may be found.

The Reading Public Library is cognizant of the resources of other public, academic, and special libraries and will not needlessly duplicate materials. Through cooperative agreements with other libraries, particularly the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE), the resources of those libraries are readily available to Reading Public Library patrons.

This policy recognizes the differing functions of school and public libraries and establishes the responsibility of the school to supply materials needed in quantity to support the school curriculum. The Library undertakes to provide a general, comprehensive collection that will enrich the resources available to students and teachers.

Deaccessioning Practice

To ensure that the collection remains useful and reliable, it is evaluated on an ongoing basis, with decisions made whether to dispose of, repair, or retain items. Material is

evaluated based on use, physical condition, currency of information, number of copies, inclusion in standard bibliographies, and availability in nearby libraries.

Materials that are withdrawn from the collection are disposed of at the discretion of the librarians responsible for the designated areas.

The library is not able to save materials for patrons or notify patrons when materials are withdrawn.

Budget

The acquisitions budget for each department or category is established by the Director at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Legal Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to approve policies for the selection of Library material, formulated by the Director. These policies are administered by the Director with the assistance of the staff. Responsibility for selection of specific materials rests with the Director, but the Director's interpretation of policy is subject to review by the Board.

Adopted: April 2021
Amended: May 2022

Appendix I

American Library Association Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights.

Appendix II

Request for Reconsideration of Materials

Reading residents with serious objections to specific items in the Library should direct their complaints to a librarian. If the complaint is not resolved, the resident may file a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form to the Director's attention. This process is serious and can take time.

The item and the form will be reviewed by the library director and the Board of Library Trustees, using qualitative and quantitative data and assessments of the material. If the material meets the criteria of selection, it will not be removed from the collection because of pressure by any individual or group. [PROPOSED – Once a decision has been reached on a Request for Reconsideration, the title in question is ineligible for further Reconsideration for 5 years. To be added to the Collection Development Policy as well.]

Requests for Reconsideration are reported to the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) and the American Library Association (ALA). [PROPOSED - Pursuant to state law, all documents and emails received by a public employee or board are considered a public record unless the content falls within one of the stated exemptions under the Massachusetts Public Records Law. Please be aware that this may require releasing certain information, including identifying information such as your name.]

Intellectual Freedom and Controversial Materials

The Board of Trustees of the Reading Public Library endorses the Library Bill of Rights. The Board recognizes its right and responsibility to provide worthwhile materials of interest to its readers, including those on all sides of controversial issues. The criteria used by the professional staff when selecting materials are listed in the Collection Development Policy.

The Library does not advocate particular beliefs or views. The selection of any given item is not an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed. Library materials will not be marked in such a way as to show approval or disapproval. Access to library materials shall be controlled only to the extent necessary to protect them from danger or theft.

It is deemed the responsibility of parents and caregivers to determine what their children may read, watch or listen to, and selection of materials is not restricted by the possibility that young people may obtain material their parents and caregivers consider inappropriate.

The great diversity of the library's customers means that the library must do more than provide materials for the common denominator in order to be effective.



Reading residents may request the Board of Library Trustees reconsider library materials.

Please return the completed form to a staff member at any service desk or email to rdgadmin@noblenet.org. You will be notified of when the Board is scheduled to review this request.

Amended: May 10, 2022

Form to Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Date: _____
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Email: _____
 Telephone: _____

You represent: Self Organization: (Please Name) _____

MATERIAL FOR RECONSIDERATION

Format: _____
 Title: _____
 Author / Date _____
 Call #: _____

1. What brought this material to your attention?

2. Have you examined or read the entire item? If not, why?

3. What concerns you about the material? Please be specific.

4. Are there materials you suggest that provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?



5. What action are you requesting the Board of Library Trustees to consider?

Signature _____ Date _____

Please return the completed form to a staff member at any service desk or email to rdgadmin@noblenet.org. You will be notified of when the Board is scheduled to review this request. [PROPOSED - Pursuant to state law, all documents and emails received by a public employee or board are considered a public record unless the content falls within one of the stated exemptions under the Massachusetts Public Records Law. Please be aware that this may require releasing certain information, including identifying information such as your name.]

FY24 Supplemental Spending

Summary

The FY24 Library' municipal operating budget is \$2,105,025 with the following breakdown:

- \$1,698,150 (81%) Salaries
- \$273,675 (13%) Materials
- \$115,200 (5.4%) Supplies, licenses, equipment, maintenance
- \$14,000 (0.4%) Professional Development
- \$4,000 (0.2%) Programs

The Library receives supplemental funds through gifts, trust income, and State Aid. FY24's recommended supplemental spending budget is **\$187,800**, or just under 10% of the municipal budget. The total includes \$99,000 in **new** spending and \$88,800 for three **ongoing FY23** projects. These funds will:

- complete installation and launch of a new Tween area. ¹
- complete installation of Health Nook furniture and equipment. ¹
- complete the Town-wide DEI Community Needs Assessment. ¹
- support a feasibility study to further develop the School Street side of the Library.
- supplement and expand program funding.
- support staff development.
- supplement the materials budget.
- fund marketing and communications.
- purchase general equipment and furnishings to improve staff work areas.
- begin the FY26-FY30 Strategic Planning Process.

¹Continued from FY23

Gifts: Description and Details

The Library receives directed and unrestricted financial gifts. Examples of directed gifts range from donations "for a new Tween Area in the Children's Room" to requests to purchase specific items for the collection. Please see the [Library's Gift Policy](#) for more information.

Unrestricted gifts include cash donations and bequests.

The Reading Public Library Foundation (RPLF) regularly gives money to the Library to be used at the discretion of the Board of Library Trustees, provided the funds are not used for operational salaries or expenses that are the responsibility municipal budget.

Financial gifts are recorded and reported to the Board of Library Trustees. Donors receive a card or letter of acknowledgment in thanks and for tax-deduction purposes. If requested, the Library also sends acknowledgments of gifts to third parties.

FY23 Gifts Summary

Starting Balance July 1, 2022	\$394,438
Revenue	\$29,604
Expended	(\$100,023)
FY23 Approved: Health Nook	(\$2,800)
FY23 Approved: Tween Area	(\$61,000)
Net Available June 30, 2023	\$260,219

Revenue in the form of gifts varies from year to year. Outside of bequests and larger donations (e.g. the RPL Foundation), the Library receives an average of \$9,000 in general donations each year. Sixty-five percent (\$63,800) of the recommended gift spending is for three projects approved in FY23 that will carry over into FY24. The recommended new spending for FY24 is \$34,500 or 13% of the remaining gift funds of \$260,219.

FY24 Recommended Gift Spending (\$98,300)

Purpose	New FY24	FY23 Approved
General Staff Development (staff meetings, training, etc.)	\$3,500	
Programs and Services (Community, Adult, Teen, Children's) ²	\$11,000	
Library Landscape Feasibility Study & Concept Design	\$20,000	
Health Nook Equipment and Furnishings (FY23)		\$2,800
Tween Area (FY23)		\$61,000
Totals	\$34,500	\$63,800

²FY23 Programs and Services examples include:

- Town-wide Disability Inclusion Workshop with Lisa Drennan
- Author Event: Isaac Fitzgerald, "Dirtbag Massachusetts"
- Author Event: Stories to Tell with Kyle L. (Kyle Lukoff)
- An Evening with Claudia Foxtree
- Juneteenth Freedom Festival
- Passive Programming supplies for children

State Aid: Description and Details

The Library maintains all certification standards and requirements to receive State Aid. State Aid funds may be used for any purpose. The Library uses State Aid for marketing and communications costs, purchasing or replacing equipment and furnishings, and supplementing various municipal operations budget lines. Please visit the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for more details on the funding and disbursement of state aid to public libraries. Spending expectations in FY23 were based on the FY22 award of \$43,240

State Aid "Reserves"

The Library maintains a portion of the State Aid awards as "reserves" for planned large projects or emergency capital expenses. Past uses of State Aid include the FY19 website design services (\$23,900) and professional consulting services for the FY21-FY25 Strategic Plan (\$23,727). In FY23, the Board voted to contribute \$25,000 to the town-wide DEI Community Needs Assessment.

FY23 State Aid Balance (7/1/2022)	\$81,228
Expended (<i>maximum \$43,240</i>)	(\$41,089)
FY23 State Aid Award	\$52,743
FY24 State Aid Balance (6/30/2023)	\$92,882

FY24 Recommended State Aid Spending (\$84,000)

The State Aid award varies from year to year. Spending for FY24 is based on the award from FY23 (\$52,743) and anticipates using an additional \$31,257 from the accumulated State Aid reserves for a total of \$84,000. We will not know the FY24 State Aid award until December 2024. However, a conservative estimate for the FY24 award is \$48,000.

Purpose	FY23 Award	Reserves
Marketing and Communications: Examples of expenses include brochures, advertising, and signage.	\$13,000	
Materials: Supplemental spending for new collections and to expand unique collections such as the museum pass program and microfilm digitization, and the Library of Things.	\$5,000	
Equipment and furnishings: Improve the Children's and Borrower Services workspace areas.	\$9,000	
Professional Development and Tuition Assistance	\$6,000	
Supplies: Consistently underbudgeted and to be spent as needed	\$1,000	
DEI Community Assessment (Approved FY23)	\$18,743	\$6,257
FY26-FY30 Strategic Planning: Due October 2025 (expended FY24-FY25)		\$25,000
TOTAL	\$52,743	\$31,257

Commented [AL1]: Microfilm, digitization, Museum Passes

Trusts: Description and Details (\$5,500)

Town meeting establishes trust funds at the request of the Board of Library Trustees or community members. The Commissioners of Trust Funds, a volunteer town board appointed by the Select Board, oversee trust investments to generate revenue and provide sustaining support outside the tax levy. (<https://www.readingma.gov/325/Commissioners-of-Trust-Funds>)

The Library has nine (9) trusts managed by the Commissioners. Due to the economic downturn of FY22, the Library did not recommend spending any Trust income in FY23.

Starting Balance July 1, 2022 ³	\$90,470
Revenue/Depreciation	\$5,873
Expended	\$0
Net Available June 30, 2023	\$96,343

³Expendable funds only

FY24 Recommended Trust Spending (\$5,500)

In FY23, Trust income increased by \$5,873. With this modest growth, the Library recommends allocating \$5,500 further to support materials expenditures and improvements to staff workspaces.

Purpose	FY24
Materials: Supplemental spending for new collections and to expand unique collections such as the museum pass program, microfilm digitization, and the Library of Things.	\$3,000
Equipment and furnishings: Improve the Children's and Borrower Services workspace areas.	\$2,500
Totals	\$5,500

Commented [AL2]: NONFICTION

Respectfully submitted,

Amy F. Lannon, Library Director
July 6, 2023

NOTE: FY23 totals are not final until the Year-End close in August/September. Final amounts may vary slightly from what is noted in this document.