



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2023-11-14

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; Andrew Grimes, Secretary;
Cherrie Dubois; Cappy Popp

Members - Not Present:

Monique Pillow-Gnanaratnam

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director; Michelle Filleul, Assistant Director;
Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant;

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew Grimes, Secretary

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. **Update: Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee**

Activitas and the Library Landscape Committee hosted a Neighborhood Listening Session regarding the Landscape Improvements on Thursday, November 9. The Library mailed notices to approximately 100 households and posted the meeting online. One neighbor attended in addition to Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee member Jake Soucy and his wife, Mary. This response was much lower than anticipated, but the meeting garnered additional input.

The lack of attendance shows a need for more awareness of the project's scope. Therefore, we have added a webpage to the Library website with background information and a timeline about the Library Landscape project. The page also includes links to helpful resources such as presentations, meeting minutes, and meeting recordings. Activitas expects to distribute a community survey to solicit additional feedback and may hold another neighborhood meeting after conceptual plans are developed.

IV. Collection Requests: Toys for Tots and House of Hope

Ms. Filleul requested approval for the Library to be a collection site for the annual Toys for Tots program organized by the United States Marine Corps Reserve. The Library has participated in the program in prior years. Collections start as soon as possible and continue through December 8.

Ms. Lannon requested permission for the RMHS Interact Club to set up a collection bin in the library lobby for the House of Hope, a homeless shelter in Lowell. Collections start as soon as possible and continue through December 15.

Ms. Lannon further noted that the Reading Education Foundation has a tree on display in the Library lobby advertising their upcoming Festival of Trees event on December 2 and 3. The Friends of the Reading Public Library will also collect materials for their book sale room from December 4 through December 9 in the Library lobby. The Reading Lions Club has an ongoing eyeglasses collection box in the Health Nook near the Reference Desk with no specific end date. Donations have been plentiful, and the box has been emptied several times.

Mr. Popp asked about the placement of the donation boxes in the lobby. Ms. Lannon suggested that the Toys for Tots bin be placed in the foyer near the Festival of Trees display and that the House of Hope bin be placed across from the Borrower Services Desk. Ms. Filleul noted that a contact from the Fire Department regularly collects the Toys for Tots donations. A contact for the RMHS Interact Club is also on file if intermittent pickups are needed to prevent overflow.

Ms. Verrier arrived at approximately 7:10 p.m. The discussion was briefly summarized and reviewed.

Motion: To approve the placement of a collection bin for Toys for Tots through December 8, 2023, and a collection bin for House of Hope through December 15, 2023, in the Reading Public Library lobby.

(Popp / Dubois)

Vote: Approved 5-0

V. Policy Review: Borrowing Policy, Fines & Fees Policy

Library staff have suggested a few minor changes to the Borrowing Policy and no changes to the Fines & Fees Policy. Checkout limits on CDs and DVDs have been eliminated. The Library of Things equipment agreement requirement has also been eliminated to reduce paperwork, though patrons should be aware of the higher replacement cost of these unique items. Guideline sheets make the replacement costs transparent for lost or broken items.

Ms. Verrier questioned checkout preference for Reading residents given the high popularity of items like the Oculus virtual reality headset. The Reading residency requirement for the Library of Things has been removed, although all items must be picked up in person at the Borrower Services Desk. **Evergreen, the Library's integrated library system software**, does not allow for preference for Reading residents when placing holds once availability is opened up to borrowers from other libraries. Mr. Popp

asked for clarification regarding the amendment date of the Policy. Ms. Lannon confirmed this is the date the Board will vote on proposed changes.

Ms. Lannon suggested combining the Borrowing Policy and the Fines and Fees Policy in next year's update while incorporating more formal procedures and guidelines for library cards. She noted that online library card registrations will be made available soon through Quipu eCard software.

Ms. Lannon noted that museum pass reservations are currently limited to Reading residents due to requirements imposed by the lending museums. However, many museums have relaxed these requirements since the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage visitors. Some libraries have opened museum passes to non-residents through reciprocal borrowing. Mr. Egan agreed that additional research and analysis of current usage is needed to ensure continued availability for Reading residents. Ms. Lannon noted that video games were previously only available at the library that owned them, but they have become more widely open to non-residents as collections have grown.

VI. Financial Report

a. Summary of FY25 Level I Draft Budget

Ms. Lannon reviewed the FY25 Level I Draft Budget that will be presented to the Select Board in December. The Town Manager or their designee will present a balanced budget to the Finance Committee in February, which will be further reviewed and formally voted on during the April Town Meeting.

The Library's recommended municipal budget request is \$2,183,700, an overall increase of 3.7% over FY24. The Finance Committee has issued guidance for a 4% increase. Pending union contracts, the expected Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for non-union municipal salaries is 1.25%. Materials spending for certification and eligibility for State Aid funding is also critical. Several expense lines have a slight increase.

Programming expenses have been significantly increased, including community programming under the Office of Equity and Social Justice. In FY23, the Library spent approximately \$12,000 on new community and cultural events, education, and training, offset by \$4,000 in grants. Therefore, the programming budget request is a \$6,500 increase.

Mr. Albert Pless recently presented to the Select Board on November 7 and hopes to present to the Board of Trustees soon. Tracking the Office of Equity and Social Justice expenses is important if these operations are ever transitioned to a different Town Department.

Ms. Lannon clarified the salary percentage changes that reflect transitioning a paraprofessional position from Collection Services to Public Services. Ms. Lannon confirmed that FY24 salaries are running approximately 5% under budget due to previously vacant positions. However, as of Monday, November 13, the Library is fully staffed, including student pages.

Ms. Lannon will file the FY25 action plan with the MBLC in December.

b. YTD Budget

The Library has recently received some nice donations, many of them in memory of **Mary Hubbard Blake**. Due to this month's Tuesday meeting and holiday schedule, a warrant for library bills will be made available for signature by Friday, November 17.

VII. Director's Report

a. Facilities

Ms. Lannon reviewed October usage statistics, highlighting the increased number of visitors. The Library is still working on expanding volunteer opportunities, especially for young adults. Homebound delivery usage and volunteers remain strong.

A panic button was accidentally pressed recently, requiring a public safety response and providing learning opportunities for the current process and procedures. Ms. Lannon will **meet with public safety officials and review and update the Library's internal Emergency Response** guide accordingly. On Monday, November 13, the carbon monoxide monitor in the basement boiler room was triggered, prompting an evacuation of the building and a response from the police, fire, and facilities departments.

An ergonomics consultant from MIIA recently reviewed service desk and individual workstation needs as part of the recent Staff Development Day free of charge. Public service desk stations are a particular challenge as they need to be flexible to accommodate the needs of multiple employees. The Library will apply for an MIIA grant with other town departments for funds to purchase specifically recommended ergonomic equipment.

b. Programs, Collections, and Services

The Health Nook in the turret near the Reference Desk was officially launched in October. The space offers accessible health information to the public, including dedicated kiosks and state and local health resources. Community Health Librarian Susan Beauregard is engaging in various programming and outreach to community groups.

In collaboration with the Information Technology and Facilities Departments, two ADA-compliant iPad catalog stations have been installed in the Children's Room and Reading Room. Additional equipment has been ordered for the Reference Desk and Ground Floor areas.

Museum pass reservations have increased and are approaching pre-COVID usage levels. Passes for Battleship Cove and Garden in the Woods were recently added. Ms. Dubois noted the dedication of Reading resident Edward Palmer in bringing the USS Massachusetts to Fall River and helping to establish Battleship Cove. Local History Librarian Jocelyn Gould is researching ways to promote the new museum pass.

Artwork by Library staff members Dawn Colford, Judy Terrazano, and Eileen Barrett is on display in the Studio area of the Library. Town Hall has previously worked with the Reading Art Association to display local artwork, and the Library is also doing so now.

Public Services Division Head Andrea Fiorillo recently testified at a legislative hearing at the State House in support of two bills addressing book bans and the freedom to read. As the president of the Massachusetts Library Association, Ms. Filleul also attended. Many librarians, including school librarians, shared their stories and experiences.

Autumn Hendrickson recently presented on Reading's Contribution to World War II. Local History Librarian Jocelyn Gould recently hosted Simmons University students for a seminar project for an Outreach and Advocacy for Cultural Heritage course. Parker Middle School 6th grade tours will finish in November. 6th graders from Coolidge Middle School will visit in the spring of 2024.

Ms. Filleul is working to obtain funding for a LyriQ Assistive Reader to be added to the Library of Things collection. This device scans printed documents and reads the words out loud to assist people with blindness or vision impairments.

c. Personnel

Library Associate Suzy Axelson recently celebrated eight years of service, although she was involved with the Friends of the Reading Public Library for many years before that. New Librarian II – Adult and Teen Services Sara Kelso started on November 13, 2023. Ms. Kelso previously worked at the Library as a substitute librarian. The Library is now fully staffed. The Friends of the Reading Public Library generously supported the Library's annual Staff Development Day, which focused on health, wellness, and team building.

An opportunity for a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) internship is being explored to provide extra support for the Director of Equity and Social Justice, Mr. Albert Pless, due to the availability of municipal salary funds in the current FY24 budget. A recent college graduate from Reading is interested in creating a series of disability-related workshops for the Library in collaboration with Mr. Pless. This individual could provide additional assistance and support for other DEI programs and associated administrative tasks for 10 to 15 hours per week for a set number of weeks. This test case will help inform the needs and expectations of a future DEIA internship program, which may be funded by a grant or college stipend. Mr. Egan asked about the timeline for formal approval from the Town. Ms. Lannon explained that she hopes to post the position soon. The position will be on the seasonal compensation chart overseen by the Town Manager.

d. Professional Development

Ms. Filleul, Children's Librarians Cate Zannino and Megan White, and Young Adult Librarian Meghan McCabe recently attended the New England Library Association (NELA) conference in Springfield. The conference was a valuable networking opportunity that generated new ideas and positively reinforced ideas already in place.

Public Services Division Head Andrea Fiorillo and Collections Services Librarian Kathryn Geoffrion Scannell will attend the Public Library Association (PLA) conference in Columbus, Ohio, in April. Several other staff members will attend the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) Conference in Framingham in May.

VIII. Approval of October 10, 2023, Meeting Minutes

A typographical error of "Mr." Lannon rather than "Ms." Lannon was noted in section IV. b. paragraph three. The season of "fall" was also inadvertently capitalized in several places.

*Motion: To approve the minutes of the October 10, 2023, Trustee Meeting as amended.
(Dubois / Popp)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

IX. Future Agenda Items

Ms. Dubois noted a recent WBZ news report highlighting booths at the Marlborough Public Library that allow adults with babies to work at the computer. The product is manufactured in the United States and allows working parents to get out of the house with their infants.


Ms. Verrier asked about the status of the exterior library lockers, which were out of service over the weekend due to server issues with the vendor. Library staff are working on resolving this. Ms. Filleul also confirmed that the exterior book return drop is closed on certain, but not all, long weekends because of overflow. One alternative is to have staff work overtime on holiday weekends while the Library is closed to empty the book drop.

Ms. Verrier inquired about the status of the transition plan for Town Manager Fidel Maltez, who will begin work as the Chelsea City Manager on January 1. Ms. Lannon reported that a hiring committee will contain some municipal staff members who are Reading residents. The Town is using the same consultant that hired Mr. Maltez. The timing of the process is difficult due to the holidays, and the final candidate may have to give a long resignation notice to their employer (30-60 days). However, it is moving along as quickly as possible. The Select Board will vote for an acting interim Town Manager during the transition.

Director of Equity and Social Justice Albert Pless expects to present at an upcoming Board meeting. Public Services Division Head Andrea Fiorillo will also give a winter programming update in December. The Library held 66 programs in October despite being closed for Columbus Day and Staff Development Day. This is an increase from the typical 45 to 50 programs usually held each month.

Adjournment 7:54 p.m.
*Motion: To Adjourn 7:54 p.m.
(Popp / Verrier)
Vote: Approved 5-0*

Respectfully Submitted,



Andrew Grimes, Secretary