



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2024-01-08

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, Monique Pillow-Gnanaratnam

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director; Michelle Filleul, Assistant Director;
Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant; Joseph McDonagh, Financial
Committee Liaison to Reading Public Library (remote); Andrew Gregory,
Resident; Tara Gregory, Resident;

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew Grimes, Secretary

Topics of Discussion:

I. Call to Order 7:03 pm.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made in person or remotely.

III. Library Landscape Project Update

Based on feedback, Activitas has provided drafts of four rough conceptual ideas for the exterior library landscape project. Additional information from the ongoing survey will impact and guide the direction of future designs. The survey has received approximately 256 responses and will remain open through Friday, January 12. Ms. Filleul reported a solid response rate comparable to other library surveys.

A working group for the project consists of Library Landscape Committee members Andrea Hogan, Desirée Zicko, and Cherrie Dubois, as well as Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol, Economic Development Director Ben Cares, Library Director Amy Lannon, and other Town employees from the Facilities and DPW departments. The next meeting is scheduled for January 31 to review draft updates and narrow down preferred potential designs.

Although the holidays have caused some minor delays, the project has made substantial progress since the formation of the Library Landscape Committee approximately one year ago. Questions may be directed to Ms. Lannon, Ms. Dubois, or Mr. Popp.

IV. Financial Report

Ms. Lannon reported that expenses are on track for this time of year. RPL received several notable gifts totaling \$736 in December. Ms. Verrier asked about the budget line for software and license expenses, which is 83% expended as of December. Ms. Lannon clarified that this is due to large renewals frontloaded early in the fiscal year, such as the Library's North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE) membership.

Ms. Lannon also noted that the Library is completing its financial commitment to the community DEI assessment conducted by Opportunity Consulting. The remainder of the project will be covered by grant funds from the Town Manager's office.

Ms. Lannon presented the FY25 Level 1 Budget to the Select Board in December. When asked about upcoming staffing needs during the presentation, Ms. Lannon noted that a part-time assistant for the Office of Equity and Social Justice may be necessary to expand services and serve the Town's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion needs.

V. Director's Report

In December, Ms. Lannon reported positive library usage with increased foot traffic and 57 library programs. However, the exterior pickup lockers are currently awaiting a new part for repair. The Library hopes that repairs will be completed soon, as many patrons seek a quick pickup option during the cold winter months.

Over the weekend, the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE) installed a significant upgrade to Evergreen, the integrated library management software used by all member libraries. This is the first major upgrade in several years. NOBLE resolved upgrade issues with patron logins today. NOBLE and library staff are working to identify and correct other minor technical backend issues.

The new Sleuths on the Loose subscription service program provides registrants access to new and upcoming mystery titles. Registrations filled quickly. Those on the waitlist will be part of a second round with access to the books when returned from the first subscribers.

The Pleasant Street Center Book Club, formerly the Not-Too-Stuffey Book Group, is relocating to the Library in January and will be rebranded as the Studio 64 Book Group. The group will merge with the RPL Book Group in the fall to create a larger fiction-based book group. This will allow staff to develop a new nonfiction book group to serve diverse interests better. Ms. Dubois asked about the timing of the new combined meetings. Ms. Lannon explained that staff are still working on scheduling to accommodate the needs and preferences of all participants. However, the Library may offer daytime and evening sessions featuring the same book. Ms. Lannon emphasized balancing varying genre preferences and facilitating positive conversations. Ms. Dubois suggested that participants could choose and lead discussions on different books.

Fifty-four students from Austin Preparatory School recently visited the Library for a research project, resulting in new library cards and checkouts. The Library hopes to see more student visitors due to its proximity to the school. In the first half of FY24, 6,203

people attended 341 regular, virtual, and offsite library programs. Twenty-six passive program activities have also generated numerous interactions.

The Library sent copies of the Reading Daily Times Chronicle microfilm from January to June 2023 for digitization to be added to the online Reading Chronicle Archives. In December, about 80 users accessed this database resource. Mr. Popp noted that this number is likely higher due to how Google Analytics handles user browser settings. Mr. Egan highlighted this resource in the Reading Public Library Foundation's newsletter.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day community breakfast and cultural celebration will be held at the Reading Memorial High School Performing Arts Center from 9:30 to 11:00 am on Monday, January 15. The event will feature projects, performances, presentations, and keynote speaker Latifa Ziyad.

Federal and state tax forms will be available soon. For the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library will host tax assistance for adults aged 50 and older with some income restrictions. Appointments will be offered on Wednesdays from 9:15 am to 1:00 pm from February 14 through April 10. Tentative registration begins on January 16 through the Pleasant Street Center.

Ms. Lannon reminded the Trustees that the next general meeting on February 12 will be Ms. Pillow-Gnanaratnam's last. The local election is scheduled for March 5. Those elected must be sworn in by March 11 to participate in the next general meeting. Ms. Lannon complimented the Town Clerk's Office on their strong organization of local election logistics. Mr. Egan noted that paperwork regarding campaign finances must be completed by elected officials at Town Hall, even if no funds were raised.

Ms. Lannon noted that the Library continues to be fully staffed. However, long-time custodian John Davis is retiring this month. Although he technically works for the Facilities Department, Mr. Davis has been the dedicated Library custodian for most of his 42 years of service. Mr. Davis has always been the heart of the Library family, going above and beyond to set up programs, protect collections, and maintain the 38,000 square feet of the 125+-year-old building. A public retirement reception in the Library Community Room will be held on Thursday, January 18, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Ms. Dubois complimented Mr. Davis' high-quality maintenance and local knowledge.

The RMHS Interact Club has requested permission to set up a collection bin in the library lobby to collect hygiene products and non-perishable packaged foods to ship out to deployed U.S. Army soldiers. Collections would start January 22 and continue through February 14.

Motion: To approve the placement of a collection bin in the Reading Public Library lobby from January 22, 2024, through February 14, 2024, for care packages benefitting U.S. Army soldiers. (Dubois / Popp)

Vote: Approved 6-0

VI. Approval of December 11, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the December 11, 2023, Trustee Meeting as written. (Popp / Verrier)

Vote: Approved 6-0

VII. Future Agenda Items

Ms. Lannon thanked the Board for approving recent revisions to the Borrowing Policy. However, Library staff would like to implement a new change to one area of the policy, which will be presented in February and voted on in March. Ms. Lannon also suggested that the Board consider electing designated liaisons for areas such as human resources, finance, the Friends of the Reading Public Library, and other local groups or areas of interest at the March meeting.

Ms. Lannon and Ms. Filleul clarified that the Exam Cram program, which provides teens with collaborative study areas and snacks, will take place from January 17 through January 19 in alignment with the Reading Memorial High School exam schedule.

Mr. Popp complimented the Tween space mural. Ms. Lannon explained that furnishings are in the process of being ordered, although slightly delayed due to holidays and vacations. Furnishings should arrive within three months of being ordered.

Ms. Filleul noted that the Massachusetts Library Association will host various legislative breakfasts at different libraries rather than a Library legislative day at the State House in Boston. These events highlight the legislative agenda for the upcoming fiscal year and help legislators learn about what libraries are doing. Ms. Filleul invited Board members to attend a breakfast and noted that the closest one is Friday, February 9, at 8:00 am at the Wilmington Memorial Library. Ms. Filleul will share informational resources with the Board for review.

Ms. Filleul and Public Services Division Head Andrea Fiorillo will be going to the State House this week regarding two bills impacting school libraries. Ms. Fiorillo will provide testimony, and Ms. Filleul will attend as president of the Massachusetts Library Association. The bills are similar to those recently presented regarding public libraries. They are associated with active issues such as access, censorship, and intellectual freedom that will also be discussed at upcoming legislative breakfasts.

Adjournment: 7:39 pm.

Motion: To Adjourn 7:39 pm (Popp / Grimes)

Vote: Approved 6-0

Respectfully Submitted,



Andrew Grimes, Secretary