



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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2024 APR -9 AM 9:05

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2024-03-11

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; Andrew Gregory; Cappy Popp,

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director; Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant; Andrea Fiorillo, Head of Public Services; Albert Pless, Director of Equity and Social Justice

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew Grimes, Secretary

Topics of Discussion:

I. Call to Order 7:01 pm.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made in person or remotely.

III. Welcome

Mr. Egan welcomed Mr. Gregory to the Board and congratulated Mr. Grimes on his recent re-election. The Board is looking forward to working together over the next year.

IV. Spring Programming Update

Public Services Division Head Andrea Fiorillo presented a spring update on Library programming scheduled for March through May. As of December, the Library has been fully staffed and very busy planning programs.

The Children's Room has had several successful sessions of registered storytimes for children on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings. They also offer registered evening, sensory, and baby storytimes. These small group programs provide a calmer environment and allow for more focused language and literacy growth. Drop-in storytimes on Fridays and Saturdays regularly have approximately 80 attendees per session. A second Library staff member now helps cover these large but fun drop-in programs.

There will be 123 children's programs this spring, including 49 storytimes. The Special Guest storytimes have featured representatives from the Reading Municipal Light Department, the Reading Police Department, the Office of Equity and Social Justice, and Veteran Services. Peter Sheridan singalongs remain popular as well. The Children's Room also creates rotating passive programming featuring STEM activities, turret play, and crafts that draw in children and their caregivers.

There will be 18 teen and 72 adult programs, including a series on college admissions. A recent teen-oriented CPR training was full with a waitlist, and the program will be offered again. For adults, there will be March Matinees featuring live theater broadcasts on Wednesday afternoons, and RPL will offer Mental Health First Aid classes in collaboration with the Reading Coalition for Prevention and Support.

The current "What's the Big Idea" thematic programming initiative focuses on the "Library as a Space and Place." Around that theme, RPL will host an Animal Extravaganza event featuring snakes, miniature ponies, pet selfies, crafts, an opportunity to donate pet food to needy animals, and more. Other programs include an intergenerational paint night for ages 12 and up, three Taylor Swift fan sessions for different age groups, including friendship bracelets and trivia, and a community crochet project for climate awareness in coral reefs.

The Children's Room will run a "Dollar and Sense" financial literacy series and a "Citizen Kids" community service project series. Ms. Fiorillo noted that a recent gun safety class for parents was well attended. RPL also offers weekly programs for homeschoolers in two different age groups.

In May, Jarrett J. Krosoczka will visit the Library for an in-person author talk regarding his popular Lunch Lady graphic novel series, select volumes of the *Star Wars*™: Jedi Academy series, *Hey, Kiddo*, and more. Author Stephen Puleo will also present a talk on his new book *The Great Abolitionist: Charles Sumner and the Fight for a More Perfect Union*.

The Office of Equity and Social Justice will present a three-part series on disability rights and awareness. The first session focusing on blindness will take place on March 26.

An exhibit on artificial intelligence and the legacy of physiognomy will be on display in the studio in April and May. Related to that, there will be a program on artificial intelligence in the workplace on April 25. Eclipse glasses and programming will be available ahead of the April 8 eclipse. REI will be at RPL for a bike maintenance workshop on April 22. **Two programs aimed at the veterans' community are the history of the Coast Guard and navigating the federal hiring process.**

As part of Read Across America Week, Children's librarians visited all Reading elementary schools to read.

Outreach efforts this spring include RPL on Wheels visits to local parks and apartment complexes with a Pop-up Art program; ongoing work with the Reading Public Schools Multilingual Learner Department to support students in elementary through high school;

and long-term deposit collections at the Sawtelle Family Hospice House, Peter Sanborn Place, and Pleasant Street Center. Children's librarians are also doing storytimes at The Goddard School of Reading and the Christian Cooperative Preschool.

RPL will attend both the YMCA Healthy Kids Day and the Pleasant Street Center Health and Community Resource Fair. RPL is able to donate books to the Reading Food Pantry and will also be finding ways to support the nearby Solstice House (59 Middlesex Ave), which provides rehabilitation for women with mental health diagnoses.

The Board and Ms. Fiorillo discussed opportunities for further outreach at Frank Tanner Drive, Cedar Glen, Archstone Circle, The Residence at Pearl Street, and the Pleasant Street Center. Ms. Fiorillo noted that RPL makes individual homebound deliveries throughout the community, but some locations have limited space. The Board noted that transportation vans from housing complexes and the Pleasant Street Center do not regularly visit the Library anymore, but this may be revisited.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification on the sign-up process for registered storytimes. Ms. Fiorillo explained that although registration for the first Fall session was bumpy, caregivers have become more familiar with the balanced schedule for registered and drop-in storytimes. Most people who called to register were able to find a space. This format has a significant time commitment but is very popular.

Ms. Verrier and Mr. Popp look forward to seeing the RPL on Wheels in the community as the weather gets warmer. The Board thanked Ms. Fiorillo for her presentation.

V. DEI Assessment Update

Director of Equity and Social Justice Albert Pless presented an update on the community's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) assessment project. Mr. Pless noted the positive energy and safe space that the Library provides for the community and the Office of Equity and Social Justice. Mr. Pless highlighted the similarities between the mission and core values of the Library and Office of Equity and Social Justice mission and core values, including educational resources, equity, engagement, inclusion, accessibility, and inclusion.

Mr. Pless reviewed the purpose of the DEI assessment, which is intended to provide data-driven evidence and a baseline for analyzing Reading's DEI performance. The process highlights positive actions and key barriers to progress. The assessment will inform and prioritize the Town's DEI strategy and decision-making to help better allocate resources and budgetary funding toward solving key challenges in the community.

The process began in the spring of 2023 when the Town received a grant, and the Board of Library Trustees generously approved additional funds. The project kicked off in September 2023 by gathering historical data and conducting background interviews with key Reading stakeholders including Town leadership, community members, residents, and volunteers active in community life. The consultants also gathered quantitative data such as the United States Census, the 2023 Town Employee Demographic Report, and more to help better understand the demographics in Reading. They also conducted a community survey with 681 responses and a workforce engagement survey with 141 responses from Town employees.

In October 2023, Mr. Pless began working on qualitative engagement and outreach in the community through focus groups and additional interviews. The focus groups took place at the Library. They centered on BIPOC, senior citizens, Reading Memorial High School Students, and an intersectional group with individuals from diverse minoritized groups with faith-based and LGBTQ+ participants who were not fully represented in the community survey.

The consultants conducted a root cause analysis workshop to look at major findings and potential recommendations in collaboration with volunteer members of Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading (PAIR) and the Town's internal Implementation Committee. Findings and recommendations will be documented in a final report and presented to the Select Board on April 9.

The DEI assessment is the first step in a continuous process. It is up to the Town and Town Departments to plan and implement positive actions internally and externally based on recommendations derived from the assessment. Mr. Pless hopes that information will benefit the Library's upcoming strategic planning process.

Ms. Verrier asked how interviewees were determined. Ms. Lannon explained that the previous Director of Equity and Social Justice, Sudeshna Chatterjee, used her networking contacts to recruit a balanced and diverse list of key stakeholders in the Town, ranging from members of Town government to interested small business owners and community members.

Mr. Pless thanked the Board for their support.

VI. VOTE: Borrowing Policy/Fines and Fees Policy Combined

Mr. Egan noted that the Combined Borrowing, Fines, and Fees Policy was reviewed in detail in February. Various changes have been incorporated to simplify the language.

Motion: To adopt the Borrowing, Fines, and Fees policy as presented.

(Dubois / Popp)

Vote: Approved 6-0

VII. REVIEW: Internet Use Policy

Ms. Lannon reviewed revisions to the Internet Use Policy, which intended to use more assertive, succinct, and direct language. Ms. Lannon noted that wireless internet access at the Library is unsecured, data is not encrypted, and filters are not in place. Copyright laws must be upheld. Accessing material that meets the legal definition of obscenity is prohibited, as is using the internet for illegal purposes or to transmit threatening, obscene, or harassing materials. The Library reserves the right to contact the Reading Police Department regarding the violation of the policy.

Ms. Verrier commented on the availability of WiFi in the parking lot and around the perimeter of the building, which is considered Library property. Mr. Egan expressed concerns over the fairness of computer access, as the internet is a shared resource. Ms. Lannon noted that more people bring their own devices now, which has eliminated wait times for public computers. Ms. Fiorillo noted that Reading Memorial High School issued

Chromebook computers to all students during COVID-19, and the Chromebooks available for in-library use at the Research and Reader Services Desk have not been checked out in recent years. However, printing, faxing, and scanning continue to be popular.

Ms. Dubois asked about alternative uses for the Chromebooks available for internal checkout. Ms. Lannon noted that these laptops are continuously updated and serve as a backup for busy public computers. Several laptops are available in the Library of Things collection for external checkout. The Chromebooks are also available during Library programs on coding, gaming, and technology, as they do not contain access to internal library files. Assistant Director Michelle Filleul will consider Chromebook usage when planning future technology device updates.

Ms. Verrier pointed out a grammatical error in the seventh policy point, and Mr. Popp suggested adding a colon before the final amended date. The policy will be further discussed and voted on in April.

VIII. REVIEW: Safe Child Policy

Ms. Lannon, Ms. Fiorillo, and Children's Team Leader Olivia McElwain have researched and surveyed comparable Safe Child policies at peer libraries in NOBLE and of similar size to Reading. Due to the establishment of the new Tween area, raising the age of unattended children to 10 rather than nine is recommended. Although maturity levels vary, this double-digit standard better reflects the tween demographic. Library staff do not provide childcare, active supervision of unattended children, or transportation.

Language in the policy has been updated to reflect the advent of cell phone technology. Procedural language has also been streamlined to clarify the policy. Library staff will continue to follow established procedures, such as documenting incident reports. Children should have a means of contacting a parent or caregiver. The Library reserves the right to contact the Reading Police Department to assist with safety issues involving minors when a caregiver is unavailable. Youth spaces are intended to be used by youth, although accompanying caregivers and adults searching the collections are permitted.

Ms. Verrier suggested rewording the fourth policy point to eliminate the duplicative use of "emergency." The eighth policy point regarding library privileges should remain as a separate statement and is intended to be enforced at the discretion of Library staff.

Ms. Verrier questioned adding the age of 12 to the third statement regarding children being unattended for more than two hours at a time. Ms. Fiorillo stressed the importance of consistency, noting that children 12 years old and up may be unattended in the Teen Room for longer periods. Grade and maturity levels do not necessarily align with age. Children are not generally asked about their age, which could be untruthful. Mr. Popp raised concerns about using a grade level system in the policy due to the alternative structure of homeschool programs. Concerns about varying birthdays and ages within grades were also raised. Ages are used at the beginning of the policy to define unattended children and caregivers, although grade levels are later mentioned. Consistent use of ages and grades were discussed. Mr. Gregory suggested inserting a chart with age and grade equivalents, although this may be difficult to establish due to

homeschooling and birthday differences. Two new policy versions will be drafted with reference to age and grade.

Ms. Lannon also raised concerns over the two-hour time limit for children ages 10 and 11, as this may be difficult to track if children are moving throughout the Library. Ms. Dubois noted that behavior is also a factor. Ms. Fiorillo explained that despite a certain level of accountability, the Library is not acting in loco parentis and should not serve as a drop-off location for younger children. Parents and caregivers are ultimately responsible for children. A lack of close supervision may pose a safety issue. Caregivers of tweens are not expected to attend library programs, but programs are often shorter than two hours. Ms. Fiorillo highlighted the difficulties of the crossover year of age 12 and 6th grade and expressed concerns about unsupervised children on Ground Floor computers near adults.

Mr. Egan questioned the frequency of unattended children during closing time. Ms. Fiorillo explained that this problem is often weather-dependent and seasonal. Ms. Lannon noted that this issue puts Library staff in an awkward position. An unattended child may be waiting for a ride or able to make it home safely. A library staff member does not know how old a child is, where they live, or what their caregiver has deemed appropriate. The policy will be further discussed and voted on in April.

IX. Discussion of Trustee Liaisons

Mr. Egan reviewed a bylaw provision allowing for the Chair's annual appointment of liaisons in areas such as the Finance Committee, the Friends of the Reading Public Library, the Reading Public Library Foundation, trust funds managed by the municipal Commissioners of the Trust Funds board, staff development and human resources, and building.

Ms. Lannon noted that the Board can appoint a member to the Celebration Trust Committee. Reading's 350th Anniversary Celebration Trust was founded in 1994 for the Town's 350th anniversary. Unexpended funds remain in the trust and are set aside for future use by the Town of Reading in commemorating its past. The Celebration Trust Committee meets to consider funding requests. The Board appointed Phil Rushworth in June 2022. His term will expire in June 2024. The Board agreed to contact Mr. Rushworth regarding his interest in reappointment.

Mr. Egan noted that Ms. Verrier has professional expertise in human resources and personnel matters and has already had several meetings with Library staff members. Mr. Egan officially appointed Ms. Verrier as the Library Staff Liaison.

Mr. Egan is actively involved as the Reading Public Library Foundation president and will serve as the Board's Reading Public Library Foundation liaison. Mr. Egan is also happy to be the liaison with the Friends of the Reading Public Library.

Mr. Egan reviewed Joseph McDonagh's role as the Financial Committee Liaison to the Reading Public Library and frequent attendance at Board meetings. Ms. Lannon noted the importance of the Board's awareness of Finance Committee meetings, especially those that may impact the Library budget process. It may be helpful to have an

additional set of ears absorbing information about municipal financial decisions. Mr. Grimes is happy to attend Finance Committee meetings.

X. Strategic Plan Update

Ms. Verrier, Ms. Lannon, Ms. Filleul, Librarian II Olivia McElwain, and Head of Collection Services Jamie Penney are participating on a steering committee to guide the strategic planning. Ms. Lannon noted that the Library has signed a contract with Maura Deedy for a strategic plan refresh. Ms. Deedy previously worked for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and is very familiar with Massachusetts libraries and laws.

The FY26-30 plan will have new goals and objectives under the existing main areas of focus of Customer Convenience and Personalization, Community Learning and Engagement, and the Library as Space and Place. Ms. Deedy will review data from recent community surveys such as the Library Landscape Survey, Reading Center for Active Living Committee data, and the Community Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion assessment. She will also conduct workshops, focus groups, and interviews with library staff, patrons, and board members. The goal is to have the new plan completed in June or July, voted on in September, and filed in October.

XI. Financial Report

Ms. Lannon invited the Board to attend or watch the FY25 budget presentation to the Finance Committee on Wednesday, March 13. The budget presented to the Board and Select Board remains the same.

Ms. Lannon reported that the Library is doing well financially for FY24, with salaries running approximately 4% under budget. The trust funds have experienced positive growth, meaning additional supplemental spending funds should be available for FY25. Ms. Verrier asked how trust funds are reflected in the financial report. Ms. Lannon clarified that each trust has a non-expendable portion that must continue to be invested in addition to earnings that are available for spending. Ms. Lannon will reformat this section to illustrate changes more clearly in the future.

XII. Director's Report

Ms. Lannon reported ongoing repairs and software issues with the exterior pickup lockers. The lockers have been unavailable for several months due to various repair delays. The Library hopes to renegotiate its service contract with the vendor.

Despite a snow closure on February 13, approximately 15,000 people visited the Library in February. This is due in part to increased program offerings. Ms. Lannon and Ms. Fiorillo highlighted the growth in visits to the Children's Room, which is now fully staffed. Both reiterated that passive programming provides valuable educational and intergenerational interaction opportunities. The February scavenger hunt featured birds found in Reading backyards. The Wellness Way featured various physical activity stations ranging from jumping jacks to yoga poses as participants traveled from the Children's Room to the Health Nook near the Research and Reader Services desk. Various crafts and toys are also available. These fun activities help develop fine motor skills and communication through perceptive and expressive language.

Ms. Lannon reported on the recent Town Manager appointment of Matt Kraunelis, who has eight years of experience in Reading and over 25 years in law and government.

Staff are evaluating additional shelving options for the Library of Things collection, which has grown to approximately 80 items. The Dementia Friendly items in the Library of Things collection have been relocated to the Health Nook. Ms. Lannon noted the Library hopes to train 100% of front-facing Library staff as Dementia Friends and encourages all employees to take Mental Health First Aid training.

As part of a town-wide green initiative, the Library is tracking purchases of environmentally friendly products to satisfy the planned minimum content standard of 30% post-consumer recycled materials for supplies in FY25. The Library strives to be more environmentally friendly with internal and external printing.

Ms. Filleul is working with Treasurer Diane Morabito to implement credit card payment options for meeting room rental fees and hopes to offer this option soon. There will be a small processing fee for transactions.

Ms. Lannon summarized recent professional development opportunities that Library staff have participated in. Ms. Filleul is currently attending the Computers in Libraries conference in Virginia. Ms. Fiorillo and Collection Services Librarian Kathryn Geoffrion-Scannell will attend the Public Library Association Conference in Ohio in April.

Ms. Fiorillo encouraged the Board to visit displays near the Borrower Services desk promoting the Oscars and the Crochet (or Knit) for Climate Awareness program series. Sample crochet and knitting pieces featuring coral, fish, and more are currently on display. RPL will offer various workshops in March and April, with take-home kits with patterns, recycled yarn, and crochet hooks available throughout the summer. The project intends to raise awareness about the effects of climate change on coral reefs.

XIII. Approval of the February 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes

*Motion: To approve the minutes of the February 12, 2024, Trustee Meeting as written.
(Popp / Grimes)*

Vote: Approved 6-0

XIV. Future Agenda Items

A short executive session regarding security planned for the end of the April meeting might move to May due to scheduling conflicts.

Adjournment 8:32 pm

Motion: To Adjourn at 8:32 pm

(Grimes / Popp)

Vote: Approved 6-0

Respectfully Submitted,



Andrew Grimes, Secretary

A decorative graphic featuring a dark grey background with various patterns: a circular pattern of small dark spots in the upper left, a white abstract shape in the lower left, and a striped pattern in the lower right.

*Spring 2024
Public Services
Update*

At a glance

Children

123 programs

- 49 storytimes; special guest, class style, and drop in

Teen

18 Programs

- CPR Training
- College Admissions

Adult

72 programs

- March Matinees-live theater broadcasts
- Mental Health First Aid

Highlights

Your Place is Here: WBI final hurrah

- Animal Extravaganza
- Paint Night
- Swiftie Sessions
- Crochet for Climate Awareness-Coral Reef project
- Pop Up Art on the book bike

New for Kids

- Dollar & Sense Series
- Citizen Kids: Design a community service project
- Gun Safety for parents class
- Homeschoolers weekly programs

Big Author Events

- Jarrett Krosoczka
- Stephen Puleo

New for Adults

- Artificial Intelligence and the Legacy of Physiognomy Exhibit/AI @ Work
- Bike Repair with REI
- Solar Eclipse Sessions with an Astronomer
- History of the Coast Guard
- The Federal Hiring Process for Veterans & More

Outreach & Offsite

- Read Across America Week-visits to all Reading elementary schools
- Pop Up Art on the Book Bike
- Book Bike visits to parks and apartment complexes
- RPS Multi-Language Learners support
- Elders Services deposit collections at Sawtelle Hospice, Peter Sanborn, and Pleasant Street Center
- Storytimes at local preschools: Goddard, Christian Cooperative
- YMCA Healthy Kids Day
- Pleasant Street Center Health & Community Resource Fair
- Food Pantry Book Donations
- Solstice Rehab support-in the works

QUESTIONS?





Office of Equity and Social Justice

Trustee DEI Assessment Update

March 11, 2024



Mission & Best Practices

Reading Public Library

• Mission

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

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.

Core Values

- Fact/data driven
- Expansive definition, strategic prioritization
- Collaborative
- **Inclusive Process**
- Responsive

Why did we do an assessment?

We wanted to:

- Establish a **data-driven baseline** for how Reading is performing on DEI
- Highlight what we are already doing **well**
- Identify key barriers to making progress
- Point to the most impactful next steps
- **Inform** our DEI strategy and decision-making to help us better allocate resources and **budget** to solve key challenges

Timeline

September 2023

Phase 1: Kickoff

- Background interviews, gathering historical data
- Reaching out to key Reading stakeholders and volunteers active in community life. Understanding hopes for the assessment, and Town's future.

September – October 2023

Phase 2: Quantitative Gathering

- RPL, census, and Reading workforce data Understanding the demographics in Reading. Conducting data analysis and data visualizations.



Timeline cont.'

Phase 3: Qualitative Engagement

October – December

- Reaching out to hear directly from Reading community members and employees
- Hearing from the community's experiences with diversity and inclusion in Reading through focus groups, surveys, and interviews

Phase 4: Root Cause Analysis

February-March

- Analyzing major findings and potential recommendations
- Identifying and addressing the findings with members of PAIR and the Implementation Committee, using collected data to study underlying issues and policy concerns.

Timeline cont.'

Phase 5: Findings & Recommendations

March – April

- Presenting findings and recommendations to the Committee, and Reading
- Presenting final report to Committee and project team in March. OC will present to Select Board on April 9, 2024.

Methodology Informing the Report

Quantitative Data

- Pulling **quantitative data** from the US Census and 2023 Town Employee Demographic report. This includes demographic and administrative data about Town residents and employees.

Community Survey

- Available between September 7 - October 26, 2023. Received **681** responses from Town residents and community members.

Interviews

- **19** interviews with Town leadership, community members and residents (there are at least three more being conducted).

Methodology Informing the Report cont.'

Focus Groups

- 4 focus groups with community members of the following: (1) BIPOC (2) Senior citizens (3) Reading high school students (4) Intersectional group with individuals from diverse minoritized groups (faith-based, LGBTQ+, etc.)

Workforce Engagement Survey

- Available between October 18 - November 10, 2023. Received **141** responses from Town employees.

What to expect?

- This is the first step of a continuous process - **not one-and-done**.
- Opportunity Consultants will share recommendations, but it is up to town and town departments to plan and implement these.
- The **April 9** meeting w/ Presentation is a good chance to listen to how the library can take this community-wide information and apply it to strategic planning, turning outward and applying core values of education, access, equity, and accessibility.



Questions

