

Bedford Free Public Library
Library Trustees Minutes for Tuesday June 14th, 2022
7:00 PM • Online Meeting via Zoom

Chair Mike Pulizzi called the meeting to order at 7:03.

Present

Trustees: Mike Pulizzi, Elizabeth Hacala, Fahad Alden, Rachel Field, Padma Choudry
Other attendees: Emily Mitchell, Selectboard Liaison; Dot Bergin, Bedford Citizen; Doris Smith.

Administration: Richard Callaghan, Director; Noreen O’Gara, Assistant Director.

Not in Attendance: Abby Hafer, Robin Grace Silbert.

Public Comment

Doris Smith, who was an elementary school librarian for many years, noted that she was very concerned about the efforts to ban books that are spreading across the country. She cited the NY Times, which said the American Library Association reported an unprecedented number of challenges this year. Doris asked to include a question on the Materials Considerations form about whether the submitter is a resident of Bedford. She asked whether Minuteman Library Network has a policy, and Richard Callaghan said it would be up to each individual library. Since the item was not on the agenda, Richard suggested that we could add the item to the agenda for the next Trustee meeting to allow the public to have an opportunity to comment.

Secretary’s Report

Elizabeth Hacala noted that she was inadvertently recorded twice on the motion to adjourn in the May minutes. She should be removed and the vote tally changed to 6-0-0. The amended May minutes were approved: Moved by Rachel, seconded by Elizabeth. Ayes: Elizabeth, Rachel, Fahad, Michael. Abstain: Padma: Vote 5-0-1.

Director’s Report

- Richard, Bethany (in a different capacity) and Emily will go to a conference next week that includes a Friday afternoon session on freedom challenges. Rachel will send out the information. There will also be a session on Thursday regarding Collection Development.
- The Bedford Flag has been busy. Last Friday, the Cultural District Celebration started at the Flag. A group of 5th graders recently visited the Flag, and Sharon McDonald, the Town Historian, did a tour and presentation. We have not had visitors for a while, even prior to COVID. Tomorrow, 8th graders from California will be coming to visit the Flag, as well. The CA teacher had contacted Richard in 2019 about coming to visit, but due to difficulty scheduling, it was not able to happen until now. Sharon won’t be able to do the tour, but a member of the Historical Society will be coming, and Noreen will help.
- The touchless water bubbler has been installed. The plumber had to come out 4 times.
- We reached out to the Town Recycling Coordinator to get rid of old computers. We filled up a pickup truck full of stuff. We always have some good monitors and backup computers ready.

- The Statement of Expenditures for June FY22, was a bit unusual. We got back more in personnel than anticipated because we didn't open on Sundays in the fall, although there were some custodians that have been working on Sunday. We will have the full EOY report in the July meeting.
- The Library's summer reading program is separate from the Davis elementary summer reading program. The school libraries are organizing their programs independently.
- Looking at the Statistical Report, it was an odd year to compare because we were close for most of the previous year.
- Elizabeth raised that, looking at the Library of Things, all the hotspots were checked out. We have 20, but they've been very popular for the last couple of months. Maybe because people are going away. 10 of the hotspots were obtained through a grant that runs out at the end of December. We have to make a decision about whether we want to keep them because we will have to pay for them going forward. However, the group noted that when we did only have 10, they were always out.

Elizabeth moved to accept the Director's Report, seconded by Fahad. Ayes: Michael, Fahad, Padma, Rachel, Elizabeth: Vote 5-0-0.

Unfinished Business

- Fines discussion: Before COVID, we decided to suspend fines and extend until this June. We either need to make this a permanent suspension or extend for some period of time. So far, we have suspended the fines for 27 months. Richard spoke to the Town Manager about it, who thought it was a good idea, as it was more equitable. Fahad conveyed anecdotes about people from years ago who were afraid to come back to the library because of fines. Elizabeth noted that sometimes people are hesitant, even if we're not assessing fines. Richard noted that the fines we have been collecting has gone down for a number of books, due to e-books and automatic renewals. Padma stated that a number of kids, especially during the summer, take out a large number of books at once, and would be hesitant to do this if there were still fines. Rachel referenced a NY Times article that said when the NYPL removed fines, a number of missing books were returned. Richard suggested he thinks that this should be a policy to remove fines for overdue materials.

Rachel moved that the library continues for the foreseeable future the current policy of not charging fines for overdue materials, seconded by Fahad. Ayes: Michael, Fahad, Padma, Rachel, Elizabeth: Vote 5-0-0.

- Printing: Initially, we had established there would be no charges for printing until January 2022, and then extended this to June to get better statistics. The comparison is to the period prior to COVID. Computer usage is only 40% of what it was before. There was more printed in the FY20 period than in the FY22 period. Some people do take advantage, but Noreen noted that it's often user error, where they don't know or it's accidental (e.g., they keep hitting the print button). It's not necessarily taking advantage, but people need education or help, and part of the library's mission is to educate people who need an education. Fahad noted that for all the services the library provides there are some people that abuse the system. Michael asked if there was a minimum amount, and Richard responded we could charge 5 or 10 cents per page. Logistically, there is not a way with the current system to say X# of pages for free and then charge for pages

beyond that. Rachel suggested adding signage that says “Printing is on the honor system. Help us keep this service free by limiting your printing.” We will continue offering free printing for 6 more months and change the signage to see if that helps.

- Bid by July to get some Vendors in here.
- Performance Review of the Director: Michael noted that everything is in and has been received. Next year, we will revisit how we go about the Director review, and perhaps have it start a little earlier so it coincides with a regular meeting, so everyone has an opportunity to voice their opinion on the submission. Elizabeth asked whether the other Board members could get a copy of the submission. Richard said he has the final copy that was signed and went to Town Hall; he will send it to Michael. Michael said he wanted to look at the Open Meeting laws prior to sending, or we could discuss at the July meeting, if people agree. Elizabeth noted it’s OK to send as a one way communication, if there’s no discussion via email.

New Business

- Bethany Klem, Head Children’s Librarian, who has been a Children’s Librarian with us since 2014, will be the new Library Director in the Town of Dover. Richard noted that Bethany is one of the best children’s librarians he has ever worked with, and that she needed very little management. This is good career advancement for Bethany. It’s bittersweet, but we are very happy for her. We will be advertising for a new Head of Children’s Department. In reclassification, we got a good boost, so hope that the salary for the role will be competitive. Bethany is officially leaving June 24th, but this Friday is her last day. The staff are getting together to say farewell. Elaine in the Children’s Department will be taking over the summer reading program, and will have extra people in there to help out. This will be a busier summer than we anticipated.
- 2 long-term, part-time employees will be retiring as of June 30th. Deb has been here 22 years and volunteered prior to being hired by the library. Her position is currently 27 hours a week and has benefits. There are internal candidates for this role. Karen has been here since 1995. This position has less hours, but the hours can be funneled to other employees.
- We will have an intern, Kate Lickety, a rising senior from Middlebury College, who plays softball and is an Arlington resident. Middlebury would pay for her internship if it’s compelling enough. She is treating it as an operational internship. She’ll be working with Children’s services, and we’ll be treating the position as a Library Assistant I.

Other Business

Next meeting will be Tuesday, July 12th at 7PM via Zoom. Rachel will not be able to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58. Rachel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Padma seconded. Approved - Ayes: Elizabeth, Rachel, Padma, Fahad, Michael: 5-0-0.

Meeting minutes are respectfully submitted by Padma Choudry.

Documents distributed during the meeting: Agenda, Director's Report, May minutes, May 2022 Expenditures, May 2022 Statistics and Computer Usage/Public Printing comparison of part of FY22 with part of FY20.