

Bedford Free Public Library
Library Trustees Minutes for Tuesday October 11th, 2022
7:00 PM • Online Meeting via Zoom

Chair Mike Pulizzi called the meeting to order at 7:05.

Present

Trustees: Mike Pulizzi, Elizabeth Hacala, Rachel Field, Padma Choudry(7:35), Abby Hafer, Fahad Alden.

Other attendees: Dot Bergin, Bedford Citizen.

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

Not in Attendance: Robin Grace Silbert.

Public Comment

None.

Secretary’s Report

Chair Mike Pulizzi let the board know that Robin Grace Silbert had resigned from the board due to selling her home and moving out of Bedford. The Trustees thank Robin for her tireless work on behalf of the Library, Friends, and Trustees. Her insights, humor, dedication, and energy will be very sorely missed.

The trustees have the legal authority (Town Bylaw 12.2) to appoint members in the case of a vacancy. After a brief discussion Rachel proposed we formally decide to not entertain nominations and allow the caucus and election cycle fill the position since there were only a few months left in Robin’s term. Moved by Rachel, seconded by Abby. Ayes: Abby, Fahad, Elizabeth, Rachel, Mike: Vote 5-0-0.

The June minutes were approved: Moved by Rachel, seconded by Elizabeth. Ayes: Fahad, Elizabeth, Rachel, Mike: Vote 4-0-1. Abstained: Abby

Elizabeth moved we authorize the Chair to approve the July 2022 minutes in light of Robin’s resignation and the inability to get enough votes otherwise. The Trustees approved that motion, moved by Elizabeth Seconded by Fahad. Ayes: Abby, Elizabeth, Fahad, Mike, Rachel Aye (5-0-0). No Abstentions.

The September minutes were approved: Moved by Rachel, seconded by Abby. Ayes: Fahad, Elizabeth, Rachel, Mike: Vote 4-0-1. Abstained: Elizabeth

Director’s Report

- Richard mentioned an event by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners that the trustees might be interested in: *Trustee Deep Dives: Collection Development and Intellectual Freedom* to be held on Tuesday, October 18, 2022
- There will be a 4 week financial program from Babson College. It will be on Zoom and sponsored by the Friends.
- Nicole in the Children’s Room has started a lot more programming. She has been working with the Parents Diversity Council on the annual Diwali celebration
- Nicole is also working on a Cultural Council grant for the summer reading program. She is looking to get a mobile maker space to visit this summer.

- We are 25% through the budget so far for this year. We are a bit behind because we are currently still down a Children's Librarian.
- Statistical Report:
 - We are a little behind (8-9%) on circulation.
 - Patron foot traffic is about 24% above last year. There are a lot of kids in the library. People are also using the library for other things, especially visiting the Children's room, study space, and small group meetings.
 - We are seeing some impact from streaming services. Libby would count towards our statistical numbers, but Kanopy, Hoopla and TumbleBooks would not count. We have the statistics for these services but the MBLC does not use them.

Abby moved to accept the Director's Report, seconded by Padma. Ayes: Michael, Elizabeth, Rachel, Fahad, Abby, Padma: Vote 6-0-0.

Unfinished Business

- HVAC Project: This is taking longer than expected. The Facilities Department wanted to make sure that the vendor does not have to interrupt the heat during the winter. So they may start in the winter, but there will likely be some work that will have to wait. Hopefully, we will get some bidders. We cannot have a start date until we secure a vendor.
- Rachel asked whether we have considered the virus filtration requirement and the cost of replacement filters, and whether we have budgeted for those items. Richard noted that the new system will have the required MERV-13 filters, and believes that they will be replaced twice a year, just like the current ones. Richard will compare the MERV filter cost to the current filter cost and make sure that we have sufficiently budgeted.
- Staffing issues: The library has had to close early several nights due to staffing issues. We are still trying to replace Elaine from the Children's department. We have not had a lot of good responses yet. Additionally, there are some issues with staffing at the circulation desk, as there is a part time person who left for a full time position, while another person is on vacation. We just hired another part time person last Friday. The Library has been looking at statistics to see if there is a specific night that we might be able to close the library early, as a planned way of resolving the staffing issues. They suspect Thursday nights would be best, as they have been historically slower nights. While it's not ideal to close on Thursday night, it could be a possibility.
 - Fahad asked whether we could post job postings on LinkedIn. Noreen indicated that the Library needs someone with an MLS degree, and, standard sites, like Indeed, while useful for other positions, have not been necessarily helpful for the Children's position. There is a posting in Simmons, which says the MLS is required, and MLS candidates will be considered.
 - Rachel asked regarding staff morale, since in the past when there was a considerable turnover in staff, and concerns were raised. Richard says staff morale is pretty good. While COVID did accelerate some retirements the staff seems happy to get back to normal operation and doing their regular jobs. The staff that we have is really eager to help, but it would not fair to rely on them for extra help all the time. It's not one day that's understaffed consistently, but changes depending on the week. Elizabeth agrees that it's better to have predictable closings rather than scrambling to finding coverage. Closing for a few hours would not affect our state aid at all as we are above the minimum needed.

New Business

- Richard noted that in previous years, the Board would talk about the budget in November and meet with the Finance Committee in January. The Finance Committee has asked that everything be moved up this year, so the Library has been asked to have the budget ready for December. Richard will have the budget ready for November, and we can vote in December. Richard has already started working on the budget.
- Social media: The Library does not have a dedicated person handling social media, but has been doing a lot more systematically. Facebook is probably the most successful, but they also have a presence on Instagram and Twitter. Padma suggested looking for a Social Media intern.
- Lane School – Elizabeth voiced concern about the lack of a School Librarian at Lane School both in terms of library literacy for students and the potential impact on the library staff. Padma shared that the parents were surprised and not generally happy about the change from her conversations with other parents. Library literacy is supposed to be moving to the classrooms. It is a little early to tell what the impact will be, but there may be some more foot traffic. It's generally a highly skilled and highly specific field. The Board noted that it seems like this might be a slippery slope of cutting of the budget. For cuts like this, generally, they will see how the change goes for a year, and whether enough parents are still concerned.

Other Business

Assabet Interactive: Museum Passes and Library of Things: The Library has gotten a new system for handling both of these programs: Assabet Interactive. It has a calendar, and can handle the Library of Things, Museum Passes and booking study rooms. People can book online and they can book for 1-14 days. They will have to agree to the terms and conditions. It is quite easy to learn. Richard was unsure whether this functionality was available through the mobile app yet.

Elizabeth noted that all the hotspots are still out, so we will need to fold that into the budget. Richard mentioned that the MBLC grant program had ended but we have already replaced the ten hotspots the grant provided. Padma asked why the Library of Things did not have a laptop, and Richard noted that Chromebooks are easier to maintain and secure. The Chromebooks are only available for use inside the building. There are no plans to have laptops in the future. The Library does not accept donations of used laptops or Chromebooks as these are usually out of date and we end up recycling them ourselves.

Appointments: none

Next meeting will be Tuesday, November 8th at 7PM via Zoom. It will be on Election Day.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37. Elizabeth made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Rachel seconded. Approved - Ayes: Elizabeth, Rachel, Padma, Abby, Fahad, Michael: 6-0-0.

Meeting minutes are respectfully submitted by Padma Choudry and Elizabeth Hacala.

Documents distributed during the meeting: Agenda, Director's Report, Minutes from June, July, and September meetings, September 2022 Expenditures, September 2022 Statistics and the Collection Challenges Guide from the Massachusetts Library Association.