

Bedford Free Public Library
Library Trustees Minutes
Tuesday February 13th, 2024, 7:00 PM
Zoom meeting: Meeting Online

In attendance: Padma Choudry, Elizabeth Hacala, Abby Hafer, Renae Nichols, Rachel Field
Mike Pulizzi, and Fahad Alden

Other attendees: Richard Callaghan, Director; Noreen O’Gara, Assistant Director, Marie Kelley,
Administrative Assistant, Gyasi Burk-Abbott and Emily Mitchell

Public Comments

Call to Order:

Abby called the meeting to order at 7:11 pm

Public Comments:

None

Secretary’s Report

Padma moved to accept the January 16th minutes and Rachel seconded to accept the minutes. Everyone is in favor of the January 16th minutes. The minutes are unanimously approved.

Director’s Report

The winter election series has been going well with some good attendance in person. Tuesday, March 5th there will be an in-person writer’s program. Three authors will be talking about their debut books, and how they got published. Also, we have added American Sign Language to our Mango Database. Last, at the end of the month Knitting with Norma will return in person.

The operating budget as of today for FY24 is on target. We bought some new computers for the staff and bought a new printer. This expense has used up a lot of the budget.

This past January we had an improvement over the previous January for circulation. Overdrive has been popular and there have been more meetings and more use.

Elizabeth moves to accept the Director’s Report and Padma second to approve the Director’s report. Passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

- HVAC Project update

Bids were posted last Wednesday. February 7th. Richard spoke to Ron yesterday and since Wednesday they’ve had 27 bid document requests. This includes 21 different companies and 6 of what are called Plan Houses.

Plan Houses are a kind of distribution center for public bids. Subcontractors will go to look for bids on specific projects. There is a pre-bid meeting for vendors on February 22nd. We are waiting for the final day of when they can open the bids and see what they have.

Padma asked what the pre bid meeting for vendors would be like. According to Ron, he stated you can have 15-20 people there or have no people at all. It depends on how the bid documents are written. Ron is not sure if the vendors will come to the meeting. If the vendors are viewing the bid documents and they have all the information they need, then they do not have a need to go to the meeting. It's a meeting that needs to be offered so specific questions can be addressed. The vendors can also walk through the building to see for themselves the kind of work that is going to take place. Sometimes vendors just come by and look on their own. It's basically an informational meeting for vendors to get more information and want to look at the building.

Padma asked what the process is on the bid due date. Emily explained that bids can come in at any time up to the due date but there is a specific date and time at which all the bids are open at the same time.

Rachel stated the URL in the document the trustees received from Richard indicates bids will be received at the facilities department on Wednesday March 13th at 11:00 am. They will be publicly opened and read in person. The goal is to have everything opened at the same time for everybody and then they will get reviewed. The reviews would go to the Select Board to see which one is the most responsive.

Padma asked Abby about Ron coming for 5 or 10 minutes to our meetings Abby couldn't get an answer on this. Richard stated that managers prefer to talk to other managers and town employees talk to each other. Richard is always talking to Ron and Ron has been good about providing updates and explaining the process.

Emily offered to get in touch with the select board when the bids come in, which will be around our March meeting.

The Strategic Plan

Richard is in the process of obtaining quotes from different consultants and putting together a timeline on how we can move forward with this and work with the HVAC project at the same time. Richard will let everyone know when the quotes come back and then will be able to put a timeline in place.

Abby asked if we have any wants or needs that we're trying to frame in the strategic plan. Richard stated that the consultants will find out from people in the town, boards, and staff if there is anything out of the ordinary. Part of the 5-year plan is replacing the Library Director

Rachel mentioned the last strategic plan which was 2018-2022 and asked if we could do an assessment of how we've done and things that we still have not been able to address. It was suggested that we review the strategic plan during April's meeting.

Tonight's meeting is the last meeting for Mike and Fahad and will not vote on a board chair and vice chair until the April meeting.

Richard sent out a link to the strategic plan to everyone at the last January meeting and it is on the website. Richard sent out an update that he filed with the state. Richard will send the updated version to everyone.

Trustee Vacancies

The trustee vacancies for the March election are Emily Prince and Gyasi Burk-Abbott. They both are at this current meeting. The new board members will meet with Richard for orientation and to talk about the board and the operations of the library.

New Business

The front entrance of the exterior steps of the old 1968 building needs to be replaced. They are currently cordoned off because of the deterioration of the concrete. In the past 20 years or more they have been patched up at least once a year. There is \$75,000 in the CPC budget for town meeting next month to repair the steps. Ron's concern is that the stairs are out of code. He has had a consultant look at the stairs and we are getting the money from CPC because it's part of the old building. This will hopefully pass at the town meeting. The repair would start on July 1st because it is FY25. Ron, Richard and Bob are concerned about what might be under the steps once they come down underneath the portico. Rachel suggested we not replace the stairs with cement and instead install granite. She also is asking New England Nurseries to contribute to the granite which will make the stairs last longer. Richard is assuming that the entrance will need to be closed while the work is being done and hoping it can be done during the summertime. Richard will find out how long it will take to replace the stairs.

Other Business

-Appointments: None

The town election is on Saturday March 9th. We have 2 new library assistants, Anna Sabella and Rich Suval. Both work part time. We also have a part time new custodian, Ryan Tilsley, Ryan works as a custodian at Concord-Carlisle School.

Mike moves to adjourn the meeting and Fhad second to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous to adjourn the meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 12th, 2024