

BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

April 25, 2024

DATE: May 17, 2024
TIME: 10:35 AM

Chair Kathleen Keohane called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference meeting through Zoom technology. Also attending were Vice Chair Corinne McCue Olmsted, Trustees Stephanie Cahoon, Gail Mann and Mary Stearns, Library Director Peter Struzziero, Assistant Library Director Lauren Pfindner, Children's Librarian Deborah Borsuk, and Circulation Director Grainne Griffin. Trustee Mark Carthy did not attend the meeting.

Trustees' Meeting Calendar

Chair Keohane reported that the Trustees would be setting an annual meeting calendar. The Town Clerk noted the importance of a practice and predictability for planning purposes. Meetings will not be scheduled on any holidays, nor on town, state or national election days. The Trustees will strive to meet on the third Thursday of each month whenever possible so long as a quorum is available and present, with the understanding that there will not be 100% attendance at all meetings.

Chair Keohane referred to the matters generally discussed at the various monthly meetings. She noted that the Select Board no longer assigns liaisons to the various Town departments but rather looks to the Departments to schedule updates to the Select Board on a periodic basis.

Library Trust Accounts

Chair Keohane and Trustee Mann summarized again for the benefit of newly elected Trustee Cahoon the process of reconciling the various Library trust accounts maintained by the Town, noting that they will update the Trustees periodically or when specific action is required.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the March 21, 2024 Trustees meeting, as amended, were approved unanimously on a motion made by Chair Keohane and seconded by Trustee Mann. The minutes of the April 11, 2024 Trustees meeting were approved unanimously on motion made by Chair Keohane and seconded by Trustee Stearns.

Temporary space: Benton Library children's services

Children's librarian Deborah Borsuk discussed the experience of operating out of temporary space at the Benton Library. She noted that the previous Benton team still utilizes the space, and there are adults as well as children using the library. Ms. Borsuk said she has seen several new patrons who live within walking distance of the Benton. She's noted interest in the history of the building.

The Children's librarians are now doing familiar programs to continue to attract patrons as well as introducing new programs, such as "little bookworms" and a once-a-month playgroup to attract new patrons.

She noted some challenges, which are being managed, including the two-hour closure in the middle of the day for lunch and to ease congestion, and managing program attendance in the smaller space. The Benton board has voiced praise for the work that Ms. Borsuk and her team are doing.

Chair Keohane reminded everyone that the working groups were established proactively, with neighborhood and key stakeholder participation, to address potential issues and challenges. Specific to the Benton working group that she represents the Trustees on, she noted that the Town was aware of neighborhood concerns about parking and access and that Glenn Clancy had recommended certain parking limits for traffic control. Vice Chair Olmsted suggested considering additional hours on Wednesdays, which are school early release days as well as other additional hours. Chair Keohane noted that similar feedback has been received from patrons on modifying hours.

The Trustees complimented and thanked the staff for their efforts.

Trustee Stearns and Director Struzziero then reported on the temporary space at the Beech Street Center, principally for adult services. They highlighted the collaboration with the Council on Aging and the Recreation Department with respect to programming and computer availability, and noted that patrons appreciated the convenience factor. There are some initial challenges associated with managing services in a small space, which the staff have worked on and will continue to work on.

Trustee Stearns, the Trustee representative to the working group for the Beech Street Center, noted that initially the situation was challenging in part due to communication issues. The director of the COA announced her resignation close to the time of the move and the staff were anxious about the override vote. In addition, space constraints were a consideration. The library staff has sorted through most of the move-in challenges, the yes vote on the override is now in hand and the senior tax return services offered at Beech Street are now concluded, freeing up some space in the building. Trustee Stearns noted that a working group meeting was scheduled for April 26.

Chair Keohane complimented Circulation Director Griffin for her contributions to the transition of adult services to the Beech Street Center.

Director Struzziero reported that a survey had been launched March 25 to obtain feedback on the temporary locations. He noted that the responses were principally complimentary, with the public noting appreciation for access to services. Other feedback has focused on the Beech Street Center space considerations and the desire to increase hours at both locations.

Library Director's Update

Director Struzziero referenced his Directors' Report furnished with the meeting materials. He noted that a new community outreach librarian, Janina Majeran, had been hired. He reported that the Minuteman Library Network had made available to network libraries an excellent new collection management tool that assists with building balanced collections to reach the entire community and provides statistics on use of the collection.

Director Struzziero acknowledged the value Assistant Director Pfender is bringing to the Library and its programs and services. Now that an Assistant Director is on board and a new Library is being built, Chair Keohane has requested more clarity and structure regarding the administrative roles. Director Struzziero has begun work on an administrative work plan that will inform goals for the next fiscal year.

Director Struzziero noted that he and Trustee Carthy have been working on control of the invasive knotweed problem and suggested that ongoing control should be considered. Chair Keohane noted that

there has not been a landscape budget in the past but agreed that this should be considered for the new building.

Building Project Update

Chair Keohane reported that the Library Building Committee expected that the recently awarded construction contract would be signed by the end of the month. The contract came in higher than the anticipated construction budget but within the overall budget for the project with contingencies. The contractor, G&R Construction, has built many municipal buildings, including the Medford Public Library, and has worked with CHA, the project's owner's project manager, and Oudens Ello, the architect for the project. She noted that the staff were assisting with furniture selection for the new building.

Trustee Mann expressed sincere thanks to Chair Keohane for her extraordinary efforts to make the Library project a reality.

Chair Keohane noted the need for a letter of intent or agreement to document plans for the Belmont Media Center's presence in the new library. The BMC will have dedicated space that it will equip and staff. Chair Keohane would also like to obtain similar documentation with the Friends and the Historical Society regarding their occupancy of space in the new library. Trustee Cahoon inquired about the term of these agreements. Chair Keohane suggested 3-10 years to allow for review and amendment as circumstances change.

Key Topics

Friends/Library Foundation Update

Trustee Stearns reported that the Friends in-person annual meeting is scheduled for June 11. The slate of officers will be elected at the meeting and the assistant director of the Medford Public Library will be the speaker. She noted that their membership goals for the year were exceeded.

The Friends will have a table at the May 18 Town Day. The Friends will co-sponsor an ice cream truck to kick off the summer reading program on June 22.

Chair Keohane reported that the Belmont Library Foundation was working on housekeeping matters, including naming conventions for donor recognition at the new library and following up with donors about recognition opportunities. She noted the Reardon family plan to make a generous donation in memory of Emily Reardon.

Schools

Vice Chair Olmsted noted that Meg Moriarity (current chair) and Matt Kraft (new member) were elected to the School Committee at the April Town election. She reported that the last day of school is June 14 for all schools other than Winn Brook. Winn Brook's last day is June 18 because of a gas leak closure during the year. Vice Chair Olmsted noted that she would be attending a future meeting of the School Committee at which she will introduce Assistant Director Pfendner to the Committee. She reported that Chair Moriarity is willing to pass on library announcements to the Committee and suggested announcing relevant programs at the high school. Vice Chair Olmsted that roof and boiler work were being planned for the Chenery.

Vice Chair Olmsted and Director Struzziero noted that they were still exploring collaboration opportunities with the Middle School regarding young adult books and services. They had explored the possibility of lending stored young adult books to the Middle School but the effort was tabled because the Middle School received a grant from the Belmont Foundation for Education to purchase young adult books and the cost of accessing and moving the stored books was prohibitive.

Other Business

Chair Keohane noted that she and Vice Chair Olmsted would not be at the next meeting due to an unavoidable conflict. She reviewed items to be addressed at that meeting. Trustee Stearns agreed to run the meeting. Chair Keohane noted that Clair Coburn, the chair of the Library Building Committee, would provide an update on the library project at the April 29 Town Meeting.

Next Meeting: May 16, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Chair Keohane moved to adjourn the meeting and Trustee Mann seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail S. Mann, Secretary

Exhibits:

- Agenda, April 25, 2024
- Director's Report April 2024
- March 21 and April 11, 2024 meeting minutes
- March 2024 statistics
- Trustees calendar
- Dates of Trustees meetings
- State aid spending Q1 calendar 2024