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BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

November 16, 2023

Co-Chair Kathleen Keohane called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference through Zoom technology. Also attending were Co-Chair Elaine Alligood, Vice Chair Corinne Olmsted, Trustees Gail Mann and Mary Stearns, Library Director Peter Struzziero, staff member Grainne Griffin, and member of the public, Susan Lewis. Trustee Carthy did not attend the meeting.

Public Comments

None.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the October 19, 2023 Trustees meeting were approved unanimously on a motion made by Co-Chair Keohane and seconded by Trustee Mann.

Director's Report

Director Struzziero referred to his Director's report included with the meeting materials and thanked the staff for their work in offering excellent programs and services.

Library Operations Update

Director Struzziero noted that a valued staff member who had left has returned to the Library. In response to a question, he updated the Trustees on the status of the RFID project, noting that approximately 80% of the current collection has been tagged. He noted that the remaining materials to be tagged would be moved and the project would continue apace at the temporary space in the Chenery as soon as the move is complete. Director Struzziero further noted that he expects to launch the RFID technology in temporary space. He reported that he is spending time on administrative housekeeping in anticipation of the move to temporary space and the demolition of the building. He also noted that he was further refining assumptions as the FY 2025 budget process continues given the significant transition that will occur over the next 18 months.

FY 2025 Budget Update

Director Struzziero reported that there have been several meetings with the Town to discuss the Library's budget submission. Co-Chair Keohane and Vice Chair Olmsted have been actively involved in the process. He noted the percentage increase in the submission. The Library has not submitted any capital requests given the new building but he noted that he and the Trustees would be addressing this for future submissions. Vice Chair Olmsted noted that the team will need to prepare an alternative "no override" budget. Director Struzziero reported that the Select Board had inquired about the need for additional staff in the new building. The team has reported on efforts over the past few years to make more use of technology and to rework job descriptions for efficiency and to better align with current trends in public libraries. Director Struzziero noted that the Select Board understands and appreciates the complexity of operating temporarily out of three separate locations and appreciates all the effort to make it work.

Assistant Director Position

Trustee Mann reported on the process for interviewing candidates for the Assistant Director position. She noted that a search committee with a representative of the Trustees, a staff librarian, the Town HR director and Director Struzziero is in place and has begun to conduct interviews. The finalist(s) will have a second interview, which will include a presentation to the committee, and thereafter the committee will make its decision. Director Struzziero noted that he hoped to have an Assistant Director on board before the end of the year and that the Assistant Director would regularly attend Trustees' meetings.

Move out/Temporary Space

Director Struzziero confirmed that the Library building would close to patrons 6:00 p.m. on November 22nd, the day before Thanksgiving. The following week will be spent packing and preparing for the move to the three temporary spaces. He noted the goal of offering some limited services at the new temporary locations beginning November 27th, including holds pick-up and book returns, and that on-line reference services, as well as limited in-person service, will be available. In response to a question, he noted that patron IT access is expected to be available at the Beech Street Center the week of December 11. The move will likely take place the week of December 4th, and full temporary services are expected to be available December 11th. Saturday hours should commence December 9th; there will be no Sunday hours while the library is providing services in temporary space. It was noted that the library website has been updated to include relevant information and that a hot line is available for questions.

As previously reported, a celebration to commemorate the old library and what it has meant to Belmont is scheduled for Saturday, November 18th.

Building Project Update

Co-Chair Keohane reported that the moving company has been selected and that the demolition bid package is expected to go out shortly. The Building Committee expects to award the demolition contract at its December 12th meeting. She noted that the permitting process is ongoing and that work is in process to accomplish what is necessary in the next several weeks.

Co-Chair Keohane noted that a community update meeting is scheduled for November 29th. She reported that additional design work needs to be done, particularly in the children's wing. She noted that construction bid documents are in process and are scheduled to go out in mid-January. While the project is still on budget, much of the contingency fund will likely be necessary to cover increases in costs, particularly with respect to energy code requirements and stormwater regulations.

In response to questions, Co-Chair Keohane noted that most of the furniture in the new building will be newly acquired. She described the process for making existing furniture not moved available to other Town departments, followed by placing what is left on a municipal list for sale, and then a "yard sale" of the balance.

Key Topics

Co-Chair Keohane noted her desire for the Trustees to continue to consider organization structure and development in anticipation of the move into a new Library. She also would like for the Trustees to consider Board composition and succession, particularly in the event one or more long-standing Trustees retires from the Board.

Friends/Library Foundation Update

Trustee Stearns reported that the Friends membership drive is underway. The Friends held a Spooky Halloween event on October 24th that was over-subscribed. Since the annual and every day book sales, and the associated revenue from the sales, will be paused during the transition, the Friends is working on setting up book drop sites where books can be donated and then sold to a company for a negotiated fee. The Friends is working out a plan to store their materials during the transition.

Co-Chair Keohane summarized recent fundraising activities, including larger donations and recognition for the donors. She noted that the Belmont Library Foundation's recent newsletter had generated additional donations. Co-Chair Keohane reported that an additional transfer of funds to the Town to pay for project costs is scheduled for an early December Select Board meeting. Upon motion made by Trustee Mann, seconded by Co-Chair Keohane, the Trustees unanimously authorized Co-Chair Keohane and Trustee Mann to instruct the Town (i) to liquidate the Philip May bequest trust account for deposit into the library capital building fund, and (ii) to transfer of a total of \$550,000 from such fund to the Town, including \$300,000 raised by the BLF and deposited into such fund, all for the sole purpose of paying invoices authorized by the Library Building Committee for the design, demolition, construction, equipping and furnishing of a new Belmont Public Library.

Schools Update

Vice Chair Olmsted reported on the risk survey for the middle and high school, the results of which might affect future programming. The school department has presented a level service budget and is expected to prepare a no override budget as well.

Director Struzziero and Vice Chair Olmsted are working on an MOA with school administration to provide young adult services in the BMHS library during the transition. The Trustees concurred that they should continue to work on this together and share the MOA with the Trustees if/when one is agreed to.

Other Business

Co-Chair Keohane noted that she would request a January 2024 coordination meeting of representatives from the Trustees, the Friends of the Belmont Public Library and the Belmont Library Foundation as the transition gets underway.

Next Meeting: December 14, 2023 7:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Co-Chair Keohane moved to adjourn the meeting and Co-Chair Alligood seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail S. Mann, Secretary

Exhibits:

- Agenda, November 16, 2023
- Director's Report November 2023
- October 19, 2023 meeting minutes