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BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

February 9, 2023

DATE: April 4, 2023

TIME: 8:44 AM

Chair Alligood called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference through Zoom technology. Also attending were Trustees Gail Mann, Mary Stearns, Mark Carthy, and Director Peter Struzziero. Vice Chair Kathy Keohane and Trustee Corinne McCue Olmsted joined the meeting at 7:30 after representing the library at a budget meeting.

Members of the public, Barbara DuBois-Hoag, Carolyn Bishop, and Susan Lewis also attended the meeting. Staff members attending this meeting included Lauren Pfindner and Gráinne Breathnach-Griffin.

AGENDA:

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the January 19, 2023 Trustee meeting were approved on a motion made by Chair Alligood, seconded by Trustee Carthy, and voted unanimously.

Library Operations Update

The Library Director reported a burst pipe in a staff office, causing a loss of heat, a small amount of damage to a staff members materials, water on the floor, etc. In addition we had repeated failures of the air compressor which controls heating levels and also several failed hallway and stairwell lights.

FY24 Budget Update

- Ongoing Process / "Budget Summits"

The Library Director said that the FY24 budget submission process includes a number of reviews and includes a number of budget summits within which budgets for all town departments are being reviewed and discussed. The Library Director worked with the Budget Working Group to develop the budget. Highlights we discussed at trustee meetings before being submitted to the town. The initial submission requested a 1.65% increase. Potential future contractually required raises were subsequently included and the overall increase YOY is now 2.66%.

Additionally, this request is largely FTE neutral and included an assistant director position funded by the reallocation of budget dollars to meet the most critical library operations needs.

The Town Administrator's recommendation cuts this budget request by \$95K putting the library budget below the MAR which is necessary for accreditation and the Town Administrator is aware of this.

The submitted budget is a product of analysis of the prior five years of planned versus actual expenditures. Trustee Carthy asked if the library's budget "give backs" at the end of a fiscal year have been greater than the proposed \$95k cut and whether the staffing line item has been underspent on the order of \$95k or more annually. Vice Chair Keohane said that the "give backs" have been less than the proposed cut. Trustee Mann commented that the town administration does not like the optics of adding a senior position to the library staff this year.

Trustee Carthy said that the Trustees have a statutory right and obligation to allocate their budget. He provided the text from Massachusetts Chapter 78, Section 11: Board of Trustees; Powers and Duties to the Trustees which describes the statutory authority.

The Select Board and the Warrant Committee will review the submitted budget. The Library Director and the Trustees have been invited to attend the Feb. 27 Select Board meeting to discuss the budget request and the complexity of running the library during the building phase. The next “budget summit” will be held on March 16.

Building Committee Update

- Timeline

The Building Committee will meet Tuesday February 14 from 5 to 6:30 and the meeting is public. This meeting will focus on the proposed library design. Subsequent meetings will be held on February 28 and March 14.

The Building Committee is currently examining the library design. The architect is receiving community feedback and looking at the impact of code changes and COVID on the design.

The architect has proposed turning a section of the reading porch into indoor space due to the New England climate. This change would extend it into the adult area. Vice Chair Keohane said that the architect suggested realigning the Children’s’ Room outside space because indoor space could be used throughout the year and is a better use of space.

The architect added another set of stairs to meet code and is considering moving the Innovation Center closer to the Teen Space to increase adult quiet space.

Vice Chair Keohane said the community stairs or stadium seating provide casual seating and are envisioned as a library gathering place. The Building Committee’s accessibility consultant recommended enlarging the community stairs to meet accessibility requirements.

Vice Chair Keohane then enlisted feedback from the Trustees as to whether the community stairs or stadium seating should remain in the design and questioned the trade off between space utilization and design elements. Trustees Mann and Stearns said stadium seating has been controversial since the start of the project. Trustee Stearns asked if the stadium seating could be removed because it is the number one concern she has heard about the library design. Trustee Mann said the stadium seating does not make enough impact relative to the space used and asked for the cost impact of removing it. Chair Alligood said people have told her they would not sit on the stadium seating and space would be more flexible without it. Vice Chair Keohane will explore if it is possible to create gathering space without the stadium seating and the program impact if they were removed.

The Historical Society in reviewing the original floor plan showing the second floor space planned for them requested their space be reworked to eliminate/reduce windows. The architect will show the Historical Society a revised second floor plan at the end of March.

The building timeline requires that the library move out of its present building during the fall of 2023. The Library Director and the Trustees are investigating temporary sites in Belmont able to provide circulation, reference, and programming activities for the public. The Library Director has contacted the

Town Administrator and the School Department to identify temporary sites for staff office space in town owned buildings. Costs associated with the move into temporary space are accounted for in the budget for the new library.

- CPA

Vice Chair Keohane said that the Community Preservation Committee has approved the library's request for funds to preserve three sets of historical items in the library and Town Meeting members must vote positively at the upcoming spring Town Meeting to disburse the funds. The library will make a presentation describing this CPA request at this Town Meeting.

- Naming Rights

Trustee Mann made a motion, seconded by Trustee Carthy, to reappoint Vice Chair Keohane for one year to approve naming rights up to \$250K in the new building on behalf of the trustees with the conditions attached in the December 2021 motion for the initial one year appointment. The motion was passed unanimously.

Key Updates

Foundation Update

Trustee Mann reported that the Belmont Library Foundation gifted \$300K to the Town of Belmont for the library building project 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. These funds are on deposit in the Library Capital Building Fund 2020 maintained by the Town. At the January 23rd Select Board Meeting, Vice Chair Keohane and Trustee Mann, on behalf of the Trustees, gifted a total of \$875,000, including the Belmont Library Foundation gift and other funds raised for the project, to the Town for the sole purpose noted above. An additional \$125,000 of AARPA funds were also designated for this purpose, making \$1 million available for the project at this time prior to any authorized borrowing.

Vice Chair Keohane reported that outstanding pledges at the end of 2022 for the new library building have been fulfilled with some donors fulfilling their entire pledge and/or donating a second time.

Friends

Coordinator of Reference Services Pfendner met with the Friends leadership to discuss their space assignment in the new building.

The Friends will sponsor "Books in Bloom" April 28 and 29. The Friends will hold their Book Sale the first weekend in May and may have a second book sale prior to the building closing in September or October.

Library Mini Golf

The Friends will hold a Mini Golf fundraiser for two days in March. The adult event will be held on Friday night and the children's event on Saturday.

School Committee Update

The School Committee is focused on preparing the budget and the search for a new Superintendent.

Director's Report

The Library Director announced that long time employee Gráinne Griffin has been promoted to Head of the Circulation Department.

The Library Director will be on medical leave effective Feb 13 and Lauren Pfendner will be the Acting Library Director.

There are new staff members in circulation and the Children's Room to provide part-time support.

Public Comment

Barbara DuBois-Hoag would like the new library to use flexible and movable equipment, asked the Building Committee to investigate issues regarding the water table under the library and asked if there was contact with the Armenian community to locate a place to provide temporary space. She was glad to hear comments about the need for practicality and flexible arrangement rather than stadium seating. She said that the library would lose flexibility with stadium seating.

Vice Chair Keohane said she has asked the OPM, CHA, to keep a list of design issues as well as operational issues such as access to the grate near the brook outflow to allow the DPW to provide needed maintenance.

Carolyn Bishop thanked the Library Trustees for their hard work on behalf of the library. She considers stadium seating a waste of space given that there will be other meeting spaces and stadium seating will create noise. She would like more quiet spaces. She suggested using solar panels on the entire roof rather than only on one section and reducing the number of windows to save energy. She thinks the Children's Room location is too far from the entrance and will add to noise in the library. Vice Chair Keohane encouraged the public commenters to attend the Building Committee meetings to be held on Feb. 14, Feb. 28, and March 14.

Adjourn

Trustee Mann moved to adjourn the meeting and Chair Alligood seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 23, 2023, 7 pm

Exhibits:

- - Board of Library Trustees Agenda, February 9, 2023
- - Library Trustees Meeting Minutes, January 19, 2022
- - January 2023 Statistics
- - Director's Report, February 2023