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DATE: September 18, 2023
TIME: 9:26 AM

BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

August 2, 2023

Co-Chair Kathy Keohane called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference through Zoom technology. Also attending were Co-Chair Elaine Alligood, Vice Chair Corinne McCue Olmsted, Trustees Mark Carthy, Gail Mann and Mary Stearns, and Library Director Peter Struzziero. Children's Librarian Deborah Borsuk, and members of the public, including Barbara Dubois and residents of the Benton neighborhood in Belmont, joined this meeting.

Transition Operating Model: Benton Library for Children's Services

Summary: Co-Chair Keohane reported that the Library has been working with the Town and other stakeholders regarding arrangements for library services while the new library building is being constructed. The Library has now signed memoranda of agreements to house various library staff and operations at the Chenery Middle School and to provide adult services at the Beech Street Center. The Library Trustees have been working with the Town and the Board of the Benton Library to arrange for children's services to be provided at the Benton during the transition period. The Benton Library is an asset of the Town; the lease for the building with the Friends of the Benton Library expired at the end of the year.

Representatives of the Benton neighborhood have expressed various concerns about the proposed operating hours. The proposal was presented to the Select Board in July and the interested parties have been in discussions about the operating model since then. The proposed operating model is on the agenda for the August 7th Select Board meeting. The purpose of the Trustees' meeting is to review and approve an operating model for children's services at the Benton Library during the transition period.

Co-Chair Keohane highlighted the Library's goal of balancing community needs, MBLC requirements, and local considerations. She reviewed state requirements and the operating hours agreed to for the Beech Street Center and the original proposal for the children's services at Benton. Co-Chair Keohane acknowledged neighborhood concerns relating to traffic and safety.

Revised proposal: Co-Chair Keohane then presented a revised proposal for children's services at the Benton Library for consideration by the Trustees, noting that the proposal includes a significant reduction in proposed operating hours. She presented options for 39 and 36 hours weekly, noting that Sunday hours had been removed from the original proposal and that no large programming would be held at Benton. The proposals provide evening hours until 7:30 p.m. two days a week and a break for lunch each day between 12:00-2:00 p.m. since there is no staff room at the facility. Co-Chair Keohane suggested a willingness to work with a working group that includes neighborhood representation to address issues that may arise during the transition period. She noted that much time and effort had been devoting to securing transition space and that alternative space is not feasible.

A discussion ensued. The Trustees and members of the public expressed their views and concerns about the proposals. At the conclusion of the discussion, Trustee Mann moved that the Trustees approve the

proposal for 39 hours weekly for Children's Services at the Benton Library during the library construction period, and Trustee Carthy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Co-Chair Keohane acknowledged the significant contribution of Children's Librarian Deborah Borsuk and Trustee Stearns on this effort. Co-Chair Keohane noted that she and Trustee Stearns have been working with neighborhood representatives and will continue to do so.

Adjourn

Co-Chair Keohane moved to adjourn the meeting and Co-Chair Alligood seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gail S. Mann, Secretary