

BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

March 20, 2025

DATE: April 29, 2025
TIME: 9:51 AM

Chair Kathy Keohane called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference meeting through Zoom technology. Also attending were Vice Chair Corinne McCue Olmsted and Trustees Mark Carthy, Stephanie Cahoon, Gail Mann and Mary Stearns. Library Director Peter Struzziero and Assistant Library Director Lauren Pfendner attended the meeting. Circulation Director Grainne Griffin and members of the public Ed Barker and Tara Donner, both candidates for Library Trustee, and Barb Hoag also attended the meeting.

Chair Keohane introduced two guests who would be participating in the facilities consolidation discussion, Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator, and David Blazon, Director of Facilities.

Chair Keohane noted that the Trustees had considered facilities consolidation in the past and had discussed the subject at their February meeting. She highlighted the unique requirements of the library, particularly with respect to custodial support, but recognized that maintenance and operations requirements would change with a new state of the art facility.

Town Administrator Garvin then led a discussion, noting that the Town was transitioning to a shared service model with respect to Town facilities. She discussed the benefits of the model and budget and control implications. Facilities Director Blazon then spoke about the requirements of maintaining new, complex systems and the importance of a centrally controlled share service model, both functionally and economically.

Chair Keohane noted the importance of specifying a clear escalation path to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely manner and that the service model would need to be fleshed out in a memorandum of agreement. Trustee Carthy requested a breakdown of the savings to the Town budget between transferring all maintenance and on-site custodial staff to the Town vs. transferring maintenance to the Town and having the Trustees and Library Director retain direct supervision of custodial staff. Others stressed the importance of direct supervision by the Library Director (or his designee) of on-site custodial staff. The trustees thanked Ms. Garvin and Mr. Blazon, and agreed to further consider this issue.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the February 27, 2025 Trustees meeting were approved as amended on a motion made by Chair Keohane and seconded by Trustee Carthy.

Library Director's Update

Director Struzziero referenced his Director's Report included with the meeting materials which includes program and service highlights. He noted that technology librarian Ellen Girouard will be retiring in April. Her long and valued service to the Belmont Public Library was acknowledged by all. Director Struzziero noted that the transition locations were doing well and that he and the staff were working on plans for moving into the building.

Vice Chair Olmsted inquired about the Library's arrangements with respect to the various temporary locations and whether staff and services would be permitted to continue in the locations until move-in date, given that the timeline has changed since the original arrangements were worked out. Chair

Keohane and Director Struzziero noted that they would continue to update the appropriate Town staff and would work to extend timelines as necessary to accommodate the construction and move-in schedule.

Director Struzziero referenced an executive order providing for the defunding of library grants. The impact to Belmont isn't clear yet; he will follow any updates from the Minuteman Library Network and Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and update the Trustees with any new information.

Director Struzziero and Chair Keohane noted that a memorandum of agreement regarding the Belmont Historical Society's dedicated space in the new building has been drafted and is being reviewed by the Town and will then be shared with the Trustees.

FY 2026 Budget

Director Struzziero noted Town support for the 4% budget increase reflected in the Library's latest submission. The next budget summit is scheduled for March 27.

Library Policies

Trustee Stearns reported that the policy working group had reviewed the Library's museum pass policy and other network libraries experience with this subject. Director Struzziero noted that the Friends organization sponsors and funds the museum passes. Procedures for accessing the passes are on the Library's website. Based on their review, Director Struzziero noted that the working group recommends retiring the stand-alone policy. The procedures will remain on the website and ideas for updating the procedures included in the Circulation Policy should be addressed to the Friends for collaborative discussion. It was noted that Trustee Stearns, whose term as Trustee ends April 1, is joining the Friends' board.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Vice Chair Olmsted noted that decision making with respect to museum passes would no longer rest with the Trustees if the policy is retired. She noted her view that the museum passes should be treated as any other gift to the Library and repeated a prior suggestion that the passes should be further marketed to expand usage. Trustee Cahoon, former President of the Friends, noted that the Friends organization is in favor of opening the program to non-residents to increase usage. At the conclusion of the discussion, Chair Keohane moved that the Library's Museum Pass Policy be retired. Trustee Stearns seconded the motion. The motion was approved, with Chair Keohane and Trustees Cahoon, Mann and Stearns voting in favor and Vice Chair Olmsted and Trustee Carthy voting against. Chair Keohane noted that the Trustees' liaison to the Friends organization will continue to put forward to the Friends the Trustees' views on this matter.

Chair Keohane noted that the Belmont Land Trust will be locating various artifacts in the room they have sponsored. The Trustees will need to consider ownership of the artifacts at a future meeting in light of the Tangible Gift Policy.

Building Project Update

Chair Keohane reported that the project is currently more than 40% complete. A completion/move-in update should be received in early April. She noted that project updates had been circulated with meeting materials. While increased change orders are expected in the next phase of the project, the budget implications are not expected to be significant. As she has previously reported, higher risk items,

such as steel, have already been secured and are on site. Chair Keohane noted community comments regarding the size of the building. Much of the increased square footage is due to building code and ADA requirements, as well as increasing the amount of space available for children's and teens.

Friends/Library Foundation Update

Trustee Stearns reported that the Friends organization is in good financial shape. She noted that the Chenery book awards program is actively underway and the Friends has received applications for the scholarships they sponsor. The Nominating Committee will be recommending a slate of directors for election at the Friends' meeting scheduled for June 12. The Friends and the BLF are discussing merging the two organizations. Chair Keohane reported that events are being discussed with the Friends to showcase the library and increase awareness and usage as we anticipate the opening of the new building.

Ed Barker, President of the Belmont Library Foundation, noted that he would put forward the recommended naming conventions for the "Wall for All" at the next Trustees' meeting.

Future Meetings:

April 17 (in-person)

May 15

June 26

Adjourn

Chair Keohane moved to adjourn the meeting and Trustee Mann seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail S. Mann, Secretary

Exhibits:

- Agenda, March 20, 2025
- February 27, 2025 meeting minutes
- February 2025 statistics
- Director's Report – February Highlights
- Owner's Project Manager Monthly Update xxx 2025
- Owner's Project Manager Total Project Budget Update

