Marlborough Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2023

Meeting held at the Walker Building The meeting was called to order by Fred Haas at 7:00 p.m.

Board members attending:

Tom Abel

Bill Brewin

Fred Haas

Samantha Khosla

Rustin Kyle

Janice Merk

Robyn Ripley

Also attending: Sara Belisle, Library Director; Trustee-elect Jason Homer; Samantha Perlman, Councilor-at-large

Documents reviewed/referenced:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes from September 6, 2022 and January 3, 2023 meeting
3. Trust Fund/State Aid Reports for January 2023
4. Director’s Report

Proceedings:

1. **Minutes:** A motion (Kyle, Ripley) to approve the minutes from the September 6, 2022 and January 3, 2023 meeting passed.
2. **Trust Fund Reports:** A motion (Merk, Ripley) to approve the Trust Fund for June

# Director’s Report:

* Director Belisle reported that her first month is off to a good start. Working with outgoing Director Margaret Cardello was valuable to bring her up to date on the building project. Director Belisle has met several key personnel from City Hall. Morgan Manzella has worked with her to learn the day-to-day operations and provided valuable institutional knowledge.
* Director Belisle reported that the Walker Building lost power on Jan. 23 during the snowstorm. She contacted Trustee Chair Fred Haas and Facilities. The estimated time to restore power was over an hour, so she decided to close the library early for safety reasons. The elevator does not operate well in cold weather. It runs on oil and the doors were stuck open, but it was fixed. The library was a warming center during that day. Trustee Merk asked if there is emergency lighting in the Walker Building. Director Belisle said there isn’t, but they had flashlights and a custodian brought a headlamp to help people out of the building safely.
* Ann Coffey officially resigned. Director Belisle is in the process of posting the job with Human Resources. HR is down one staff member and it seems to be slowing down their process. Due to recent weather, there have been a few nights during the week where the library was one call out short from being able to be open. Seasonal sickness and Covid continue to make staffing a challenge.
* Director Belisle had a very productive first supervisors meeting. Annie Glater proposed to the team to create a general email account for the Library that patrons will use. Currently the “Contact Us” form on the website allows patrons to select different departments. These emails go directly to a single person, which does not allow for good patron service if that person is on vacation or out sick. This general email account will be monitored by the Reference Department who will forward emails if they are unable to answer them. This is hopefully streamline patron communication, which will be incredibly important with the new building. The team also began discussion to prepare for the new building and the move. Karen Mattes has created a working document to start listing all the little details we need to consider before opening the new building.
* Trustee Merk asked Director Belisle if she has a sense of when she can begin to bring new staff on board. She answered that if it is possible this fiscal year, it would be good to bring them on in April/May for training and operations so onboard people before the move to the new building. Once the posting goes live, she can hire multiple people for the position. As a follow-up, Trustee Merk asked if Morgan Manzella knows of any staff who would return to the library. Director Belisle said that everyone who would come back has already done so.
* Director Belisle met with Mayor Vigeant and laid the groundwork for the personnel request. She has met with other City Hall staff. She holds a supervisor’s meeting every two weeks. A lot of good ideas are generated at these meetings about patron communication, preparing for the new building, etc.
* Director Belisle updated the Board about the building project. Construction is progressing well. They are handing dry wall and will being to install tile in the bathrooms. All the terracotta pieces have been removed and will be shipped to the restoration company. The courtyard work is going to begin soon. Both entrances will be accessible, but the first-floor accessible ramp will be longer and have a switchback in it, due to the slope. This entrance is the one that leads directly into the large Community Room. The second-floor entrance will lead directly to the Circulation desk and book return slot. At the Supervisors meeting, the team picked what the signs will be above each of the service desks. The Circulation desk will say “Welcome!” and the Reference desk will say “Information”.
* Director Belisle did a walk with City IT through the building to go room by room to ensure the right data connections and power will be installed. Each Study Room, Meeting Room, programming space, and the training room will be outfitted with touch screen monitors that have a video conferencing software and a camera. The training room will have a second camera so we will be able to offer hybrid programming out of that space.
* Director Belisle is working with the LLB interior designer to choose the furniture for the building. Decisions are being made and orders will be placed soon. They also met with Tucker Library Interiors to go over the shelving quote. The order for that should be placed soon as they have a 12-16 week lead time. She hopes to place this order in the next few days.
* Two more tech orders need to be placed soon. One for TechLogic the company supplying our RFID gates and self-check software and one for TBS the company who will be doing our print and time management software. Director Belisle is working with the City’s Finance Director, Patrick Jones, to see if including the credit card payment option with TBS would be doable. After meeting with the representative to fully understand how the system works, Director Jones gave approval to offer credit card payments. Next, Director Belisle will work with IT to ensure we have the infrastructure necessary to incorporate this system.
* Back in December a proposal for the historic restoration (replacement) of the historic West Main Street Carnegie wooden entrance doors was shown from the architects. They gave a rough quote of $50,000-$60,000 for the work. According to the architect this is a reasonable quote for something that would enhance the look of the Carnegie building. If the wooden doors are not chosen, then we will install glass shop doors. Chair Haas noted that the Board tabled this issue earlier, pending the cost estimate. Trustee Abel said the public expects the renovation to make the building look authentic for the Carnegie building. Trustee Khosla noted that, due to the age of the Carnegie building, the doors have to be custom-made. Director Belisle said she will have the final quote soon. The building budget is looking good, but a few change orders are pending. The IT budget has been adjusted for the required technology in the meeting rooms. Trustee Merk said it would be unfortunate to invest in the renovation and not have wooden doors. Other than the terra cotta, we have not had unexpected expenses so far. Trustee Ripley agreed. Director Belisle said she will follow up with the architect.
* Director Belisle has spoken with colleagues at other libraries about transitioning from temporary space to the new building. Her colleagues said the transition will likely take approximately one month, factoring in delivery of furniture and shelving, installation, and IT training on the new systems. The contractor has not given an official date for finish and cannot yet predict when the building can be occupied. We don’t have a transformer yet because the hurricane in Florida caused a delay in delivery of transformer. If it arrives before March, we get occupancy end of May, beginning of June. The building will be complete late Spring, but it won’t be ready to be open to the public just yet. Chair Haas said there are too many unknowns right now to set an opening date. Trustee-elect Homer said Medford Library opened its new library before the permanent shelving was installed. It looked terrible and was not received well by the public. There was general agreement among the Trustees that the interior needs to be properly finished before opening. First impressions will be important to the public reception of the project. Chair Haas asked if there meeting space will be accessible to the public for evening events, after library hours. Director Belisle said it will be; the rest of the library will be closed off. She is coordinating with Facilities to find out how this is done at the Senior Center. The event charge will have to include an after-hours fee to provide for a custodian. She will talk to Senior Center and find out how billing works to make sure it is consistent in the community.
* The budget mid-year review was done this month. Director Belisle met with the city auditor, Diane Smith, to go over the budget and guide her through the process. Ms. Smith was incredibly helpful and the Library budget is looking good. Director Belisle had to transfer some money from the Part-Time Library Clerk line to help cover the Library Director line because of the week crossover with her and outgoing Director Cardello to cover her retirement payout of benefits. Director Belisle will meet with Trustee Abel to draft next year’s budget.
* Director Belisle provided an update about library programs. Annie Glater has coordinated with AARP and IT to have free tax help this year at the Library on Fridays and Saturdays starting February 10. Patrons can call the Library to reserve their appointment.
* There is a group called the MetroWest Program Planners that is comprised of many neighboring libraries. This group routinely offers free partnerships on Virtual programs they are hosting. Director Belisle shared this information with the Reference Department and many of these programs were selected and added to the Library calendar. It’s a great opportunity to diversify our program offerings for adults at no cost.
* Programming numbers have been picking up with 9 people attending a virtual mushroom growing program and 32 people attending 2 sessions of a candle making workshop.
* At supervisor’s meeting, the team reviewed the library policy book. Will need to update a lot of policies.These policies include, Meeting Room, Rules of the Library (Patron Behavior), Art Exhibits, Minimum Staffing Requirements, Collection Development, and Borrowing. The most pressing is the Meeting Room Use policy. There has been a rise in challenges to Libraries regarding their collections, but now also their programs, displays, and use of space. Director Belisle attended a workshop hosted by the MBLC about meeting policies. A general discussion about meeting policies followed. Given that there are a lot of policies to revise, the Board formed an ad hoc group to support Director Belisle. Trustees Merk and Khosla and Trustee-elect Homer volunteered.
1. **Foundation Report**
* Trustee Merk reported that the Foundation is gearing up to work on a newsletter to communicate with the donors regularly. They will issue a monthly newsletter with building updates leading to the opening. The Foundation Board has discussed possible events for donors and ticketed events. They will work with the Trustees and the Mayor to plan events.
* The Foundation is primed to launch another campaign to push over the fundraising goal of $2-2.5 million and to increase smaller donations. The Foundation has raised ~$1.42million. Director Belisle said a donor event could be hosted in the new library before the building is officially open to the public. Trustee Merk said it would be nice to offer the donors an early viewing of the building.
1. **New business**
* Trustee Elect Homer will schedule tours of the Worcester Library for the Board and the Foundation. Mayor Vigeant toured the library and provided feedback about the Marlborough Library to Director Belisle.
* Chair Haas said the Board has discussed increasing salaries for the library staff and asked how to move forward. Trustee Abel said we need to talk to the personnel director and the mayor. We have a salary survey of comparable libraries. Councilor-at-Large Perlman said the City Council wants to take a holistic approach to increasing the salaries, but it has been increasing salaries on a case by case basis. The process can take a long time. Trustee Abel said the Board will be approach the Mayor in the next few weeks to get on the agenda for the Finance Committee. The Board agreed that the Marlborough library staff are underpaid. They are non-union and do not have anyone to negotiate for them with the City. We need to increase salaries or we will lose good city employees.
* Trustee Abel noted that the Library Charter requires the Board to vote for its slate of officers in January. Secretary Bloomquist was absent, so the Board agreed to put this on the agenda for the March meeting.
1. **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn (Abel/Kyle) was passed at 8:10 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Samantha Khosla