

Brownell Library Trustees Meeting Minutes

December 19, 2023

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Linda Costello, Beth Custer, Helen Donahey, Jeanne Grant, Karen Hergesheimer, Christine Packard, Sheila Porter, Ann Wadsworth. Teen Trustee: Lily Larsen

Brownell Staff in Attendance: Wendy Hysko, Chessa Caylor

1. Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Jeanne Grant, Chair. Two items were added under new business: salary survey and budget hearing.
2. Public to be heard – none present
3. New trustee – trustees introduced themselves to our new trustee, Karen Hergesheimer, who is filling the seat vacated by Joe Knox. Karen then introduced herself and spoke about her involvement in the “Must Read Mondays” program.
4. Minutes – the minutes of the November 21, 2023 meeting were reviewed. Sheila moved approval of the minutes, Linda seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
5. Financial report – Ann reported that the checking account is at \$2,055.50 and the CD is the same as last month at \$2,864.14 (interest will be accrued next week so does not show in this report). The YTD interest is \$42.40 each. Nothing of concern in the budget. Sheila moved acceptance of the financial report. Linda seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
6. Staff and Directors report – the trustees reviewed the report. Tracey was commended for her diligence in securing a refund, and for all of the expertise she brings to her work at Brownell. It was suggested that numbers of attendees for the adult programs again be included in the report as has been done in the past; although it was noted too that trustees can still access that information from the statistics.
7. Committee reports – we have no committees.
8. Foundation report – no report due to Dottie being away.
9. Old Business – the Train Hop was discussed at some length. Consensus was that this event does not have the excitement and attendance that it used to have, particularly now that more activities are at Maple Street Park. Not having the train ride at the Five Corners was disappointing, as that is a big draw for families. Library patrons were requesting the maps well in advance, but the library did not receive them until the day of the Train Hop, so that made it difficult for attendees to plan. It was noted that there are activities for very young children, but not much of interest for tweens.
10. New Business
 - a. Salary survey – there was substantial discussion of the salary survey. Staff were deeply demoralized by the draft survey for a number of reasons. The staff put a lot of work into the survey and were disheartened by the fact that their efforts were not reflected in the survey. The number of salary grades was reduced. This resulted in most of the full-time library staff being compressed into the same pay grade, despite wide-ranging experience, skill sets, and duties, including some who supervise PT staff and others with no supervisory duties. There was no clear understanding of why these staff were in a particular grade and what the qualifications would be for that grade level. Citywide, across all departments, library staff were the only employees placed in Grade 1; and the

survey did not even have enough grades to include some of the part-time library positions. The failure to include salary information from Fletcher Free Library for comparison does not reflect the reality of the discouraging churn of Brownell hiring and training good employees who then leave for better-paying positions at Fletcher Free. Overall, the draft survey does not offer a path forward to retain library employees and provide a liveable wage for staff. Wendy will be meeting on 12/20/23 to discuss the survey. The trustees have asked to be kept informed as to what support may be needed for next steps following this meeting. It was suggested that it may be helpful to invite the city manager and council members to attend a library trustee meeting.

- b. Budget hearing – Wendy shared that the library budget hearing was particularly challenging this year. She appreciates that the city wants to make it clear that they are working to control costs for taxpayers, but there seemed to be a lack of understanding of how the library operates and the need to serve all patrons. The trustees are aware that libraries nationwide are facing a crisis caused by the lack of government-funded public services. Libraries and library staff are doing the best they can to meet the needs of ALL library patrons, including those who are struggling and seeking help and a safe place to shelter. There is a meeting on Thursday 12/21/23 of Department Heads and following that, Wendy will know more about the budget planning.
 - c. Future library trustee brainstorming – tabled due to time.
11. Adjournment – Sheila moved to adjourn and Linda seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Helen Donahey

Note on Vermont Open Meeting Law - minutes must be taken at every public meeting and must include at least the members present, active participants, motions made, and votes taken. And posted on website and be available by request within 5 days of meeting. ****Minutes should be provided to Library Staff for posting by Friday afternoon of the meeting week to adhere to Vermont Open Meeting law. ****