

Brownell Library

Trustee Meeting Minutes

1/16/2024

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Sheila Porter, Dottie Bergendahl, Jeanne Grant, Ann Wadsworth, Andy Kolovos, Helen Donahey, Karen Heresheimer, Beth Custer, Christine Packard, Gabby Stevenson (Teen Trustee)

Brownell Staff in Attendance: Wendy Hysko & Hannah Tracy

Public remote attendance: Raj Chawla and Amber Thibeault

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm

Agenda changes or deletions: Take out meet new member Karen Heresheimer. She attended last month's meeting. Under new business we will table the discussion on Future Library Trustee appointment until next month. Add under new business add to elect new officers, and how the library will change if level or 2% funding is passed

Public to be heard: None

Announcements: Christine attended The Right to Read event in Shelburne and proposed we as Library Board purchase and show the film with a panel discussion after at Brownell in March. It's a film about how reading scores have been declining and how to make a change. Vermont is near the bottom of reading scores across the country. On February 1st you can sign up for a free viewing by going to www.therighttoreadflim.org. Dottie made a motion to spend a minimum of \$200 to purchase the film. Sheila 2nd, Motion passed.

Minutes of December 19, 2023: Sheila moved to accept the minutes as written, Dottie 2nd, Minutes passed.

Financial report: Checking- \$1965.70 and CD -\$2871.28

We did not get updated monthly financial reports from the City.

Dottie acknowledged the financial report, Sheila 2nd, passed unanimously.

Library Director and Staff report: Make a change on page 2 to correct a date.

Committee report: No committees.

Foundation report: Dottie- Nothing new to report. There is a book donation drop off this Saturday from 10-12 at Brownell.

Old Business:

Salary survey update- Wendy got the salary breakdown for Fletcher Free library that the survey company did not acquire and has passed it along to them. Hopefully they will update the breakdown of positions at Brownell to reflect the work and responsibilities each staff member has at Brownell. After the updates are made it is up to the City Administration to adopt the new changes.

Budget hearing update- City Council has asked the library to create new budgets in 3 days time to reflect level funding or a 2% increase instead of the 8.7% originally proposed. Brownell library is the only department that was asked to come up with a tightened budget in our City.

The library is the only entirely free service in our community and a safe place for many residents to come. If the budget is cut, many services the Library offers will be impacted. The VOKAL shared ILS agreement indicates member libraries can't reduce materials budget more than the 3 year average to protect other libraries from having to make up for libraries losing their shared physical resources budgets and try to make it up through interlibrary loan. Digital books is another shared system that is increasingly popular for patrons. Part of the agreement states that if 4 or more patrons of Brownell have a hold on the same book, the library is required to purchase the book which is happening much more frequently with the increased demand. Wendy is seeing both ebooks and downloadable audio holds increase exponentially and our materials budget is being impacted by needing to purchase copies for EJ residents to ensure our high demand library isn't overwhelming this shared statewide resource. Only resident patrons of Brownell can access the digital collections including databases paid for by the City, digital books, digital magazine, digital craft programs and streaming service. Being part of the Homecard reciprocal borrowing agreement in our region is beneficial because no library can have every book in its collection so patrons of Brownell can use their card at other local libraries in the state and staff often refer people to area libraries if they don't want to wait for interlibrary loan and many patrons choose this option. Homecard patrons from other libraries are also bringing business to Essex Junction when they come to pick up a materials. Digital books have become increasingly popular with patrons since COVID. Cuts will need to be made by removing certain databases from our collection (graphic novels and local newspapers). Hannah will increase the computer replacement schedule to extend computers another year to reduce computer spending. Library computers are used frequently and need to be replaced to ensure our computers are working order for staff and the public. We will reduce training for our staff that is essential to maintain a knowledgeable staff and safe work environment for staff and patrons, and reduce replacement of worn furniture or equipment that is heavily used. Library furniture has slowly been converted to wipeable surfaces to be able to clean furniture available to our community. The adult programming will need to be scaled back, as well as the children's programs because the hours of operation will need to be decreased. There needs to be a minimum of 4 staff in the building to safely operate the library. Having Substitute staff would be eliminated in the reduced budget, meaning if multiple staff are sick the library will have to close. Our original budget would mean a \$20 increase from last year for a home valued at \$280,000.

Throughout this process of decreasing our proposed budget many errors have been located on the City financial side involving the library. They have been brought to the attention of the Financial Director and City Manager. The Library is working together with the City Manager and Finance Director in the next few days to get accurate numbers on our budget. The Finance Director provided incorrect budget numbers for both part-time and full-time staff, making it extremely challenging to provide the budget impact requested by the City Council. Errors have been compounded as Library staff have discovered incorrect staffing budgets for FY24 and the proposed FY25 budget. Trustee Dottie noted that in her 30 years working on the Library budget, this is the first time we haven't been able to trust the numbers coming across from Finance. We discussed what citizens of Essex Junction can do to help support the Brownell library. One way is to attend the coffee chat at Boxcar on 1/17/2024, or attend any of the City Council meetings either

in person or remotely and speak about the importance of the library in our community. You could also write to our City Council members.

January 24th @ 6:30pm City Council Meeting/Budget work session (Lincoln hall)

January 27th @11-12:30 Community meal & open house (Champlain Valley Expo- Blue Ribbon pavilion)

February 6th @ 6pm Budget coffee chat (virtual)

February 14th @ 6:30pm City Council meeting/ budget work session (Lincoln Hall)

February 28th @ 6:30pm City Council meeting/ budget work session (Lincoln Hall)

New business:

Dottie made a motion to purchase Tracey flowers valued at \$50.00 as a way to say Thank You from the board for all of her hard work and uncovering the financial errors in the budget in such a short time frame. Sheila 2nd, motion passed.

New officer nominees:

Chair- Jeanne Grant

Vice Chair- Christine Packard

Secretary of records- Sheila Porter

Treasurer- Ann Wadsworth

Dottie moved to accept the nominees, Jeanne 2nd, motion passed.

Adjournment: Sheila moved to adjourn the meeting, Linda 2nd, Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Beth Custer