

Brownell Library Trustees

Meeting Minutes

09/17/2019

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Dottie Bergendahl, Linda Costello, Helen Donahey, Jeanne Grant, Andy Kolovos, Joe Knox, Christine Packard, Sheila Porter, Ann Wadsworth

Teen trustees: Carrie Egan, Spencer Messier

Brownell Staff in Attendance: Wendy Hysko, Susan Pierce, Hannah Tracy

Other Attendees: Andrew Brown, Elaine Haney, Evan Teich, Caitlin Corliss, Iris Banks, Bonnie Doble

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Christine Packard, Chair.

1. Agenda changes/deletions - The agenda was reordered for the convenience of invited guests Andrew Brown, Elaine Haney, and Evan Teich. Item #9 – Discussion of plan for libraries pending merger vote – was moved up to become item #2.
2. Discussion of plan for libraries pending merger vote – Guests Elaine Haney and Andrew Brown were invited to share their thoughts. Andrew spoke first and said that because he does not have knowledge of library law or how the library functions, he would defer to the Brownell Trustees and staff as the experts and was at the meeting to learn and listen. Elaine Haney described her extensive past experience as a library trustee and a former chair of the Foundation. She spoke about the libraries as the linchpin of a good community and described Essex Free as the living room of its community and Brownell as a community hub. She stated that there should be zero changes to the libraries post-merger. The libraries are “already doing it right.” How we fund it is the only question. Elaine stated that no changes would be made to the library without the Brownell Trustees’ knowledge and participation.

There was follow up discussion with the trustees around a number of topics, including:

- the vital importance of continuing with a two library system to serve the community
- considering a way to describe the two libraries as part of a single system (words matter); a suggestion to consider a single card for both libraries
- a review of the Brownell Trustees governance structure (5 permanent trustees who cannot be removed and who elect their own replacements as vacancies arise, and 5 elected trustees who must be Village residents);
- discussion regarding the lack of communication to the public regarding changes to staffing and processes at the Village offices at 2 Lincoln and the impact this has on Brownell Library staff;
- discussion of IT concerns, particularly the challenge the Essex Free Library has due to not having any IT administrative controls, which they have requested but which has not been implemented. Library staff are not able to manage and troubleshoot library technology, which frustrates both staff and patrons. It was also noted that Library IT

needs and legal requirements regarding IT are very different from municipal needs and that this is an ongoing issue. Elaine Haney acknowledged that these concerns have been raised.

- It was noted that, although Elaine stated that “zero changes” are needed as part of alignment, changes have already been implemented at the library as part of municipal alignment, with some negative impacts. As one example, the new copier contract has resulted in increased costs for the library and increased demand on staff time and is not user-friendly for patrons. Continuing to require the library, with its unique needs, to align with municipal offices may not be productive.

Elaine closed the discussion with a request that the trustees help with the value proposition for why we do need our two libraries.

The guests were thanked for their time and left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

3. Minutes of Tuesday, August 20, 2019 – an amended version of the minutes which had corrected some typos was shared via email prior to the meeting and printed copies were distributed. A motion to approve the amended minutes was made by Dottie Bergendahl and seconded by Joe Knox and was passed unanimously.
4. Financial report – Joe noted that the fund balance was \$3,434.34 (really), after the donation of \$100.00 was paid to sponsor the First Wednesdays program. The CD is at \$2,771.12 (It was questioned why the CD total is less than last month’s reported amount – will be reviewed next month with the next quarterly interest statement.
5. Announcements – Dottie announced that the First Wednesdays brochures were available. Brochures were distributed.
6. Reports – Library Director and Staff report. Wendy responded to questions about the report which was sent with the agenda. There was concern about a trend of declining numbers in teen programs over the summer, however it was noted that this was a staffing issue and a new staff person has been hired for these programs so we would expect those numbers to rebound. There were concerns noted over the increased demands on staff due to the copier (counting the change collected, for example) and from inquiries due to the reduced staffing at the Village office.
7. Committee Reports – Strategic Planning Committee – Christine reported that this is going well. The committee will meet on Saturday from 9 am – 12 pm and expect to have a preliminary draft after that meeting. They expect to be able to present the Strategic Plan to the Board in December, so all is on track.
8. Foundation report – Dottie noted that the Foundation met on Monday, September 16 but it was a work meeting to bring order to the book room, not a formal business meeting.
9. Old Business – Municipal Alignment update – covered under item #2.
10. New Business – Meeting minutes recorder schedule

The schedule for recording the minutes was made as follows:

- October 2019 – Joe Knox
- November 2019 -Ann Wadsworth
- December 2019 – Andy Kolovos

- January 2020 – Linda Costello
- February 2020 – Jeanne Grant
- March 2020 – Dottie Bergendahl
- April 2020 – Beth Custer
- May 2020 – Sheila Porter
- June 2020 – Helen Donahey

Other new business – Budget Work Group

It was noted that a Budget Work Group needs to meet to prepare the budget. Dottie agreed to lead it. Sheila and Linda also volunteered. The group will meet on 10/2, 10/16 and 10/23 at 1 pm. Dottie noted that they will need the 2019 budget and actuals for the first meeting on October 2.

11. Adjournment – Sheila Porter moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. Dottie Bergendahl seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

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. ****