

MEETING MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY DIRECTORS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

Bristol Public Library, 5 High Street, Bristol, CT 06010

ATTENDEES: Valina Carpenter, Eric Frenette, Nicholas Jakubowski, Elizabeth Kanachovski, Andrea Kapchensky, Barbara O'Neill, Pina Salvatore, and City Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto. Library Director Deborah Prozzo and Assistant Library Director Scott Stanton.

Absent: Thomas Jensen and Kimberly Ploszaj.

Item 1- Call to Order

Chairperson Carpenter called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Item 2- Public Participation

None.

Item 3- Approval of Minutes

Director Kapchensky MOVED to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2024 Regular Meeting. Seconded by Director O'Neill. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

Item 4- Communications

Library Director Prozzo received confirmation from Main Street Community Foundation that all the Trust Fund distributions were sent to the Comptroller's Department. There was a check for \$7,765 for Samuel Goodsell, a check for \$27,090 for Manross Memorial Trust Fund, and a check for \$1,157.50 for the Bristol Libraries Trust Fund. There's a Joint Council meeting tomorrow. Once they are approved, we should see the money in the accounts within a week. So right now, they're not showing up.

Library Director Prozzo and Chairperson Carpenter received a communication from Harley Graime, the Director of Emergency Management, requesting use of the Bristol Library facilities should Governor Lamont or his designee issue a cold weather protocol declaration requiring the Department of Emergency Management to provide shelter for anyone requiring overnight housing during that specified period of time. The shelter will be manned by qualified Bristol CERT members assisted by Bristol-Burlington Health District nurses to aid those being housed. The Bristol Department of Emergency Management, along with the Bristol CERT members, will supply cots, blankets, and supplies for the shelter. The Library Board will hopefully supply a custodial staff member. They appreciated the assistance that the library provided last January during a 4-day cold

weather protocol declaration, and hope to work together again should the need arise.

Chairperson Carpenter stated that we still have yet to receive any kind of protocols letting us know what specifically would be expected. Last time we talked about the cost of having a custodian here overnight. We still need some questions answered. We need more clarification and information before we can make any decisions. Chairperson Carpenter will respond soon to Harley's letter via email and renew the request for protocols. She noted that the mayor and corporation counsel were cc'd on Harley's letter. There are cost and safety components to this. At this point, this is not a directive. It will be on the agenda for the next Library Board meeting.

Item 5- Reports and Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

No Report.

b. Property Committee

No Report.

c. Policy Committee

Director Salvatore stated that the committee needs to review the social media policy. Assistant Library Director Stanton suggested following their original plan to meet, then bring something to the Board, and finally get it to corporation counsel. The committee will try to schedule a meeting just before the next Library Board meeting.

d. Strategic Planning Committee

No Report.

e. Library Director's Report

1) June 2024 & July 2024 Statistics

The numbers are pretty strong. We ended the fiscal year with increases pretty much across the board from last year, so that's good. Our June and July numbers are driven by summer reading. We had a great summer reading program for all departments this year which was reflected in our program numbers in particular, and circulation, especially our digital materials. Our foot traffic was up. We had one of the highest months probably since pre-Covid. It was over 17,000 for one month. We're very busy. We had over 54,624 website page views. That's really huge. Also, our wi-fi was up. It was over 15,000 for July. The library continues to evolve in the new landscape out there. It's very encouraging to see good, strong numbers.

Director Salvatore asked whether the card registrations were new ones, and yes, we had 240 new card registrations in June.

Our community outreach for the summer included 7 farmers' markets. Almost 100 new library cards were issued there. This number is included in the statistics. Community outreach is really working. We're averaging anywhere between a low of 150 interactions at the booth to as high as 200. There's a lot of activity. Chairperson Carpenter has seen the stack of applications. Most of the P.R. materials that the staff brings with them gets taken. The Friends are having a successful raffle every week when they're there. The farmers' market has definitely been a huge success. It's been well worth all the time and effort. We're happy to be part of that.

I completed the annual report for the State, which has a new format. Instead of using the Excel spreadsheet that they've had for the past 20 years, they did something web based. There were some problems with the new software. I discovered some incorrect formulas in the circulation piece which I reported to the State. It took them a while to fix that, but the report is now complete. I've received confirmation that they received it. The report is on file if anyone ever wants to see a copy of it. The numbers were very strong and showed increases in most areas since last year's report was filed. Because we submitted the report, we will be getting some money back from the State for Borrow-It funds. It pays to complete the survey.

2) Year-to-Date Budget

We're only a few months into the new fiscal year. Everything is pretty much on track as would be expected at this point. We've already got strong numbers in our revenue from collecting library fees, copier charges, and library room rentals. We're off to a very good start. Revenue is up.

We received brand new copiers today. The city has leased them. They are being used already. All the software was able to be transitioned to the new machines. That means we can use Cassie and Princh.

As far as our Main Library, Children's Library, and Manross, it's so early. If you see anything that's showing up as 100% used, that's because the entire line item has been encumbered for bill paying.

When we closed the books on fiscal year '24, we saw substantial savings in the public utilities, natural gas. We were able to save quite a bit of money for the city. The solar program has worked out very well.

I ran a special report for the Manross Trust Fund so you can see what Manross has already spent some of their trust fund money on. You will see that we're running a negative, and as I mentioned earlier,

the funds have not been deposited yet. We are waiting on Joint Council approval, more than likely tomorrow night. That negative will go away once everything gets transferred and put into those accounts. The majority of the funds that we've used so far have paid for programs at Manross, both adult and children's for the summer. We used some money to pay for the first Hoopla bill and to help with Library Connection Overdrive, which is also digital content.

The Trust Fund expenditures for Goodsell and the Bristol Libraries Trust Fund are on the final page. So far, we've used Goodsell money for reference materials and books, and also for the Connecticut Library Brain Fuse Job Now database. The Bristol Libraries Trust Fund at the Main Library is the smallest trust fund. We have not used that yet. We want to add a little more money to it before we use it.

3) Staff News

We have a new circulation clerk starting on Thursday. Then we will be fully staffed. We're very excited to have somebody because the Circulation Department was short a clerk all summer. That made it a little tough for coverage. When you're running a summer reading program, it's difficult to have a key staff position be vacant. So, we're happy to have our newest member on board.

4) Summer Reading

The summer reading program, as I mentioned, was a great success this year. All the supervisors input their statistics into the State Report that was submitted this afternoon. We had 705 adult participants this year, which is the largest number we've ever had for adults. The children's numbers look to be very high. So, all in all, we had a very good summer. I'd like to commend the staff for their hard work and all the effort they put in to make the program interesting, educational, and fun for everybody. Kudos to all the departments for a job well done!

5) Author Luncheon

The Author Luncheon tickets sold out to the general public in 3 days. Thanks to the Friends for being here to sell tickets and make the process seamless. There is a wait list and we added another table. We are at 31 tables at the Double Tree. We're very happy that we had a great, strong response.

6) Donate Button

I met with Diane Waldron, the Comptroller, and Marie O'Brien, our Board of Finance liaison, regarding the donate button and the questions that had come up at the previous Board meeting regarding whether we should keep the entire Centennial Fund amount with the

city, move it to Main Street, or split it. Their recommendation was to keep the entire amount with the city for now because that would allow us full access to the entire amount if we wanted to use it. If we set up a donate button, then Ryan from the Treasurer's Office will help us link it right to that account. We do have the capability, as I mentioned before, to link the donate button directly to Main Street Community Foundation, in particular, to the Bristol Libraries Trust Fund, which is the smallest trust fund. This is what Susan Sadecki recommended. That's very easy. We can do that anytime. At some point, the Board can decide whether they want to keep the entire Centennial Fund with the city, which is the recommendation, or send it over to Main Street.

I talked with Seth, our IT staff member, and we would like to do a mock up for the Board for the October meeting so you could see what the page would look like on the website. Perhaps you could vote on whether you want to go with keeping the money with the city or not and whether the page looks the way you would like it to be. Chairperson Carpenter noted that we'll put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

7) Website Accessibility

I received a letter back on April 26th from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. It was a letter directed to me. I won't read the whole letter, but it's regarding a complaint that was filed against the Bristol Public Library alleging discrimination based on disability. Specifically, the complainant alleges that the library is failing to afford persons with disabilities an opportunity to participate in and benefit from the services, programs, and activities communicated through the library's websites and third-party websites that is equal to opportunities afforded to others. So, when I first saw this, I thought they had the wrong Bristol because the attorney that sent this to me is from Kansas City and out of the region 7 office which covers Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. You can imagine my confusion as to why we would be receiving a communication from that office. So, I contacted Attorney Favazza and she confirmed that it really is us. Apparently, an anonymous individual has filed this complaint, and so our attorney, our corporation council representative, Tom Conlin, requested a FOIA concerning the details of the complaint. He did this on July 16th and we eventually got a copy of the complaint, but most of the information is redacted. So, we don't know who the individual is, where they're from, who has the actual disability, or what the disability is. A question on the form asked if they tried to resolve the complaint through the institution's grievance process and the answer was no. Nor did they try to mediate this through the office for civil rights.

Discussion followed. Library Director Prozzo will give further updates at the next Library Board meeting.

f. City Council Liaison Report

City Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto talked with Diane Waldron about the Centennial Fund and getting a better return. He noted that interest rates may be changing in a month or so. There are pros and cons to going with Main Street. This is something for the Board to take action on.

Discussion followed regarding CD interest rates, having access to the Centennial Fund money via appropriation requests made to the Board of Finance, getting a predictable annual return via quarterly distributions from Main Street versus receiving variable interest payments from city investments, and using a donate button to grow the funds.

Library Director Prozzo stated that the intent of the Centennial Fund was specifically for the Main Library to honor the 100 years. The Board needs to decide if they want to keep that fund going to work towards the next 100 years and what they would like to do with that money. It's a great way to cover additional expenses for things we need at the Main Library because we don't have the trust fund money available that we do at Manross. We used it for the carpeting project most recently. She's been tracking the interest and there's a little bit. She asked the Comptroller for an interest statement for the Board but hasn't seen one yet.

g. Friends of the Library

Director Salvatore had some announcements and updates.

The Friends were here on August 1st to help sell Author Luncheon tickets. On that day alone we sold 261 tickets out of the 300 that were available. So that was very successful. I don't think that's ever happened. The mail-ins were opened that day. Another table was added.

The Friends Café on the second floor of the Main Library is having a \$5.00 bag sale on September 13th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on September 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It's cash only. Up until that day, books with a yellow sticker are half price. The Café is open whenever the library is open.

Saturday hours resumed at the library this past Saturday so the bookstore will be open on Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in addition to Mondays and Wednesdays.

This summer, the Friends supported multiple adult and children's programs at both libraries including a couple magic shows and traveling theater.

This year, the Friends decided not to sell books at the Farmers' Market, but instead they gave away activity books to kids. As of July

28th, they gave away over 200 books. They also had a raffle. If you came by, you got a raffle ticket for a gift card, and if you signed up for a library card, you got an extra raffle ticket.

On Thursday, our Friends meeting will be here at 6:00 p.m. Anyone who's a member is invited to attend, or if you're not a member, you can come down Thursday night and become a member.

h. Community Outreach Committee Report

Director Kanachovski has been to the Farmers' Market.

Item 6- Old Business

None.

Item 7- New Business

None.

Item 8- Adjournment

There being no further business, **Director Frenette made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. Seconded by Director O'Neill. All present voted in favor and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Vontell

This meeting was digitally recorded.