

MEETING MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY DIRECTORS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024

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

ATTENDEES: Valina Carpenter, Nicholas Jakubowski, Thomas Jensen, Elizabeth Kanachovski, Andrea Kapchensky, Kimberly Ploszaj (via Zoom), Pina Salvatore, and Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto (arrived at 6:57 p.m.).

Library Director Deborah Prozzo and Assistant Library Director Scott Stanton.

Absent: Eric Frenette and Barbara O'Neill

Item 1- Call to order

Chairperson Carpenter called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Item 2- Public Participation

None.

Item 3- Approval of Minutes

Director Salvatore MOVED to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2024 Regular Meeting with a punctuation edit (2 additional commas) to Item 4- Communications. Seconded by Director Kanachovski. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

Item 4- Communications

Library Director Prozzo stated that Assistant Library Director Stanton sent out an email regarding the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative. We were selected as a featured stop on the Age Well Across Connecticut tour. The library was recognized for prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility for aging residents, people with disabilities, and those with dementia. There is a sign out in the parking circle.

We received a letter of commendation from the Department of Defense for being a top performer as a Vietnam War commemorative partner. We've participated by doing a variety of programs at the library. Scott passed around the recognition letter.

After the Agenda was posted, we received our quarterly distribution letters from Main Street Community Foundation for the Board's approval. **Director Jakubowski MOVED to add the vote on the quarterly distributions to the agenda. Seconded by Director Jensen. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**

Item 5- Reports and Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

1) Centennial Fund

If the Centennial Fund is moved to Main Street Community Foundation, we will get distributions, which will go into a city account. We will not be able to touch the principal. We will only be able to use the interest. The mayor leans toward this plan because the money will grow more, however, if the money is left with the city, we will have direct access to the full amount. There is now about \$143,000 in the expenditure account and \$43,877.16 in the revenue account. We brought in \$259.19 in interest in July and \$371.42 in interest in August. That will be added to the revenue account where it sits and earns interest. The last time we spent Centennial Fund money was for a carpet project. That came out of the expenditure account. Library Director Prozzo has not moved any revenue money over. The Board's decision about this depends on the focus of the fund. Main Street is the better choice for long-term growth, but keeping it with the city is better in the short-term for special projects. Requests for appropriations are needed to move money from the revenue account to the expenditure account and require Board of Finance approval.

Director Kanachovski MOVED to keep the Centennial Fund with the city rather than moving it to Main Street Community Foundation. Seconded by Director Kapchensky. Majority in favor. Director Jakubowski opposed. Motion passed.

2) Donate Page on Website

Library Director Prozzo recommends revitalizing the Centennial Fund via a donate button. Unfortunately, we have not had an opportunity to work on a donate button for a couple of reasons. One is that the treasurer's office has not gotten back to us yet with a preference for using PayPal or some other means. Also, there is the compliance issue with our website. We'd like to get that squared away before we add a donate button. Library Director Prozzo suggested moving this item to next month's Agenda.

3) Quarterly Distributions

Vote to accept or reinvest quarterly distributions from the three trust funds at Main Street Community Foundation.

Bristol Libraries Fund: The 2024 amount available for distribution is \$4,630. **Director Kapchensky MOVED to accept the 4th quarterly distribution of \$1,157.50 scheduled for October 2024. Seconded by Director Jakubowski. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**

Samuel Goodsell Library Fund: The 2024 amount available for distribution is \$31,060. **Director Salvatore MOVED to accept the 4th quarterly distribution of \$7,765.00 scheduled for October 2024. Seconded by Director Kapchensky. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**

Manross Memorial Library Fund: The 2024 amount available for distribution is \$108,360. **Director Jakubowski MOVED to accept the 4th quarterly distribution of \$27,090.00 scheduled for October 2024. Seconded by Director Kapchensky. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**

b. Property Committee

No Report.

c. Policy Committee

Director Salvatore reported that the Policy Committee met on September 23rd. The committee members are Pina Salvatore, Barbara O'Neill, and Valina Carpenter. Andrea Kapchensky was there as well. It was just an informational meeting to review and discuss the draft of the social media policy that Assistant Library Director Scott Stanton had prepared. The next step is for Scott to incorporate some of the comments that we had and submit that to corporate counsel for review and approval. Once that happens, he will bring it back to the board for a vote, possibly in November, if everything goes according to schedule. Thank you, everyone.

d. Strategic Planning Committee

No Report.

e. Library Director's Report

1) August 2024 Statistics

Highlights: Our overall circulation was down by 4%, but our online circulation was up. In particular, Hoopla and Kanopy were up by 48%. We had some increased activity in the Bristol History Room. A fully staffed Reference Department is making a difference there. Our foot traffic was up by 15%. WiFi sessions were up by 172%.

2) Year-to-Date Budget

We're still early in the fiscal year, but right now everything is trending normally. I did include for the Board's benefit the Centennial Fund interest amounts. I'll do that monthly now. I believe the Comptroller's office was going to supply those to us, but I can just as easily print them off through Munis. So, you'll see the interest and the amount in the available budget. You will see there's

a year-to-date expended amount of \$68,000. That was before they transferred out some incorrect interest entries. That's a correction there. It's not that we spent any money. The next page shows the Centennial Fund funds available. As I mentioned, it was \$143,939.62.

Library Revenue is actually the same as last month because it had not been updated when I ran the report on October 1st. The September entries were not included. So, it will be higher than that because we did make deposits and we did have some room rentals. That will appear in the November report.

The Main Library is showing that we've spent 32% of our budget. We only have one line item that will need to be looked at a little bit down the road. We are over by \$63.80 in our maintenance supplies. We are required to purchase certain supplies from certain vendors and the price went up from the time we placed the order to when it came in. So, there's a little bit of an overage, but we have sufficient funds to be able to cover that as we go through the fiscal year. Everything else is on track.

The Children's Library is at 79.1%. A lot of their budget is program supplies encumbered with our vendors like Baker and Taylor. Spending is on track.

Manross Library is at 39.8%. Everything is on track with them. The Detail Report shows what we have spent Manross Miscellaneous Trust Fund money on. This includes a variety of programs, e-books through Overdrive Advantage, our Hoopla digital, and the Author Luncheon. We will be doing some book orders before the end of the calendar year. We've got \$21,000 available to use there.

Goodsell & Bristol Library Trust Fund: There is \$34,928 available in Goodsell and we've got \$14,731 encumbered with our Baker and Taylor vendor. The Detail Report shows what we've spent that money on so far. The Main Library Miscellaneous is the small one. The Board didn't spend any of that money last fiscal year, so we were able to carry it over. Now we're starting to get a little bit more money there that might be able to be used for a bigger project. Right now, we're at \$9,476.

I would like to have a budget meeting before the November Board meeting. We've done this the past couple years. I'll be working on the budget for FY26 and would love to have some input and thoughts from the Board. I imagine it will be similar to years past - no increase. I don't have anything really out of the ordinary that I would be looking for, but I think it's worth having a discussion, and maybe just go through the various line items. It wouldn't necessarily be just the Finance Committee. Anyone interested could attend. Chairperson Carpenter suggested making this an informational meeting of the Finance Committee. It will take place at 5:30 p.m. on November 4th.

3) Library Card Sign-up Month

Library card sign-up month was in September. It was a huge success. I'd like to commend the staff, particularly the Circulation Department at the Main Library, and desk staff at Manross. We issued 235 new cards. We had a tremendous response at the Farmers' Market. Every session, we made new cards. It was an excellent opportunity to be visible in the community. A lot of people stopped by the booth. Of course, we had the Friends represented there each week. It was definitely worthwhile. We were also at the Mum Festival in the marquee tent. We saw 144 people in just a brief amount of time. We made 9 new cards there. Every opportunity has yielded some good results. Community outreach is definitely a win for the library.

4) Security Guards and Custodians

You might have noticed that we no longer have a security guard stationed up on the 1st floor. We don't have one at Manross either. Westech, the company that was providing security, went bankrupt. So, for the past month, I've been working with Roger Rousseau, the Purchasing Agent, to try to get coverage for both libraries, and it is extremely difficult. The price of security is very high. We were kind of grandfathered in with Westech. We've been with them for a long time. We decided to reduce hours to 4-hour shifts Monday through Thursday and a 4-hour shift on Saturday afternoon. You can't go lower than 4 hours per the state contract. We used to be 6 hours on a Saturday. Apparently, Arrow Security has taken over Westech accounts. I spoke directly with Jim Bernier, the representative for Arrow. He was going to reach out to the 2 security guards to see if they would be interested in coming on board with Arrow. He'd then work with Roger to become a vendor. Unfortunately, I have not heard anything and I'm getting very concerned going into the winter months. Just this afternoon, we had an individual that needed to be moved off of the property without a security guard.

We're also down a custodian. Mark Bolduc is out on extended leave. We had to move one of our night custodians to the day shift. We really are very, very short staffed at night. It's not a good place to be going into the winter months, so I'm very concerned about that situation.

Discussion followed regarding night shifts, safety, staffing, hourly rates, verbal cost quotes, police overtime, etc. Hopefully we'll have something in the works by November.

5) Website Update

As you might remember, a complaint was filed against the library by an anonymous individual in Kansas City. We had another meeting with Attorney Favazza from the U.S. Department of Education. I attended along with Scott Stanton, Attorney Conlin (City Corp Counsel), Andrea Kapchensky, and Valina Carpenter. Attorney Favazza could not provide

us with a written report. We had already started looking at what we could do to make the website compliant. We immediately reached out to UserWay, which is a software company, and we did a free trial. Scott, Seth Ramos (our It staff person), and I did the demo with a representative from UserWay to see how it would work. We actually ended up purchasing the software. So now, if you go to our website, you're going to see an icon in the upper right corner. Clicking on it opens a widget that gives the user control over how they want to view the website. For example, you can select a language. There's a screen reader so if you click on text, it will be read in the language selected. The website can look different, depending on what your needs are. You can change the size of the text, the colors, the contrast, the font, etc. For example, if you have dyslexia, you can select a dyslexia-friendly font. It's got a lot of features.

With UserWay, we also have the ability to scan up to 50 pages at a time to see if they are compliant. We are looking at WCAG 2.2 compliancy with level AA. I highly recommend you take a look at it. It's very worthwhile. It's an overlay of the website. So now, our web designer, Dave at CT Web Factory, is working on a partial rebuild of the website so that the back end will be compliant, and he is going to get us to that 2.2 AA level as well. So, when we post stuff, we'll be able to see if we're compliant or not. By running the scans and using the overlay, we should be at 90% or maybe even over 100% compliant. Both pieces cost under \$3,000. The quote we had to rebuild the website completely was \$24,000, so this is a game changer. We will be able to gather statistics and track use of the widgets.

These types of complaints have been filed country-wide. We opted to through a full investigation rather than sign a lengthy agreement. We have not heard anything further from Attorney Favazza.

f. City Council Liaison Report

No Report.

City Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto said congratulations for receiving the national Department of Defense Award Certificate. That's great news and a great accomplishment for the library. He'll mention this tomorrow at the City Council meeting. He thanked Scott for all the work he does in recognizing veterans.

g. Friends of the Library

Rose Ann Chatfield was present and gave a report. She started by thanking Pina Salvatore for doing an excellent job covering the meetings all these months.

1) Cowley Donation

Deb Prozzo, Beth Martin, and I wrestled with a situation this summer regarding Georgine Cowley, who was a librarian. When she died

in 2015, one of her sons donated money to the Friends' Memorial Wall. We've been buying books with the money as requested. When this son died, his brother Peter contacted Beth Martin because he wants to honor his mother by putting in a memorial garden at Manross. He would like to donate \$25,000 for the design, installation, and future maintenance of the garden. We were taken aback a little bit because there isn't that much land at Manross, just a very small triangle area to the left when you're facing the building. I didn't meet with Peter, but he and Beth had conversations about how this money would be spent. If he donated say \$5,000 to the Friends' Memorial Wall, we could handle the design and installation of the garden, but our volunteers aren't up to managing the ongoing maintenance and landscaping for 10 years or more until the money runs out, and we aren't equipped to invest money to keep money coming in for that. I will not commit to something that I can't guarantee we can follow through on. Thankfully, Scott came to our last meeting and told us about that Centennial Fund and the future of the donate button. Then Deb had an excellent idea that Peter could be a great donor for the Centennial Fund. We could publicize it, too, to get that going. I didn't want to approach Peter with this solution until the Board heard it and provided some input. I've made other realistic suggestions to him like a bench, plaque or book walk at a local park, but he is very intent on recreating his mother's garden in Forestville and incorporating her plants. His mother's name is already on the memorial wall at Manross. Peter lives in Westport now.

Discussion followed regarding the cost to replace plants over the years, putting specific stipulations on money donated to the Centennial Fund, financial record-keeping of maintenance expenditures, personnel needed to do the physical labor of maintaining the garden, union issues, the tree and statue currently on the site, a plaque for the memorial garden, the existing butterfly garden waystation, use of city vendors, authority to make decisions about city property, city council approval of land use, using the donation to start a scholarship fund at Main Street Community Foundation for future librarians from Forestville, unrestricted donations, etc.

2) Library Recognition

Rose Ann Chatfield thinks that it's time for the Library Board and the Friends to join forces and make a big deal about the two awards that the library won. Perhaps, a nice banner out front would help publicize the awards and shine a little light on the library and the hard work they've done. I'm looking for a volunteer from the Board to work with the Friends on this. The Friends will find funding for it.

3) Farmers' Market

Director Salvatore announced that Rose Ann is updating their records. As of September 30th, 446 people had filled out the entry form for a gift certificate to a local restaurant. There's one more

Farmers' Market date on October 19th. It's been a very successful and worthwhile project. As an extra incentive, if they register for a library card, they get an extra entry form.

4) Book Sale

Director Salvatore stated that the annual big book sale is going to start on February 26th and it's going to run through Sunday, March 2nd which is the bag sale.

5) Friends' Donate Button

Director Salvatore reported that the Friends are exploring the possibility of adding a donate button to the website so that folks can donate directly to the Friends of the Library. The good thing about it is that the more money the Friends raise, the more money we will be able to give to the library to support their programs.

h. Community Outreach Committee Report

Director Kanachovski attended the plant swap at Manross on Saturday. It was a little slower than the one that they have in the spring, but it went very well. People socialized. There were probably about 20 people there when I was there. It was a nice little community thing. It was very nicely done. They always do a nice job down there. One lady comes all the way from Newington because she just really likes the whole feeling. It's a very well-run program. They do a good job.

Item 6- Old Business

Due to the time (7:45 p.m.), Chairperson Carpenter recommended postponing the discussion of the use of the library as an emergency overnight shelter during cold weather protocol declarations. She suggested that the Policy Committee set up a meeting prior to the next Library Board meeting to review and discuss the CERT policy provided by Harley Graime. Those unable to attend, can submit their comments and questions by email. Library Director Prozzo will email CERT's policy to the Board.

Director Jakubowski feels that this policy is a good faith effort, but there are some gaping holes regarding procedures, budget and labor issues (working 24 hours), the definition of essential employee, liability coverage, insurance providers, etc. Chairperson Carpenter stated that you can make policies and procedures for your own organization, but you don't have the authority to decide or dictate what other organizations or departments are going to do.

Director Ploszaj stated that when CERT gets activated for a shelter, whether it be cold weather, hot weather, hurricanes, winter storms, the city has to have a plan as to how CERT is supporting the residents in need, as well as a location. CERT members themselves are

covered under the state, as well as FEMA, when certain things are activated. Setting up a meeting with Harley and the mayor would be most appropriate because they have to identify some town entity. The library is the ideal place because it's so close to where the majority of people who are out during the poor weather conditions are located, but I understand wanting to make sure all the "i"s are dotted and "t"s are crossed. Getting that in writing is a good idea, but you know it does fall back on the town as a whole. Chairperson Carpenter agrees that the mayor needs to be involved with the library expectations. Director Kanachovski stated that she attended a city meeting and asked to know what the library's responsibility was.

Director Salvatore pointed out number 15 which says that the shelter will open and close at the designated hours specified in the Governor's Protocol. Director Jakubowski stated that they give the hours when the protocol gets issued.

Item 7- New Business

None.

Item 8- Adjournment

There being no further business, **Director Kanachovski made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m. Seconded by Director Kapchensky. All present voted in favor and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Vontell

This meeting was digitally recorded.