

FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
February 9, 2022

Zoom Meeting

Trustees present were: Chair Mathew Bruun, Robert Favini, Mary Rice Hurley, Joanne Huse, Cynthia Jones, Jacalyn Kremer, Eric Mbunwe, Dennis Pierce and Jim Walsh. Also present were Director Sharon Bernard and Assistant Director Jean Tenander.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jacqueline Wehtje attended the meeting to speak about the mask mandate. She wished the Trustees to pass a motion stating the Library would never adopt a rule more stringent than any adopted by the Board of Health. She said she was unable to wear a mask for medical reasons.

Chair Bruun thanked her for coming before the Board and said the Trustees had various circumstances to consider in making their policies. They must balance the health and safety of a cross section of the community while still attempting to make the library as accessible to as many people as possible.

The latest figures show only 60% of the population of Fitchburg is vaccinated. The Library is used differently from other City buildings. People often come and stay for long periods of time. The use of our space makes social distancing difficult. The staff has many interactions with patrons throughout their shifts which require close contact. The staff spend up to 8 hours in this same space.

Robert Favini said the Trustees followed the Board of Health requirements as closely as they saw fit but reserved the right to make their own choices in addition for the safety of both patrons and staff. Chair Bruun said the Trustees would not be in favor of adopting any motion that would compromise the Board's ability to make its own decisions regarding any issue. The Director is able to make appropriate decisions and the Trustees will defer to her judgment. He also said the Board would not be in favor of adopting any kind of motion that used the word never. There could be instances in which the Library might choose to step aside from City guidance.

Director Bernard reminded the visitor that books can be ordered by phone with a librarian or on line. They can then be delivered to the patron outside in their car.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES of January 12, 2022

The minutes of the January 12, 2022, were approved as amended, the amendments being to change the designation of Chair Matthew Brunn from Director to Chair in two instances.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Bruun said the Library's request for a portion of the ARPA money given to the City would be considered at next week's City Council meeting. He said Director Bernard's presentation before the ARPA Committee had been excellent. The City Council forwards the request to the Finance Committee, which considers it, and then it is moved back to the full City Council for final approval.

The Director said there needs to be a meeting with the Library, the Mayor, and the Mayor's advisory committee about presenting the entire project to the City Council for approval.

Director Bernard and Chair Bruun will meet with the Mayor soon to talk about the FY23 Library budget.

Chair Bruun said the MBLC had informed him that it would be asking the Commonwealth for the Public Library Construction Program's annual cap from the bond to be raised from 20 to 25 million dollars. The MBLC has been asking for this for several years. He read a letter he had written saying FPL was in favor of the increase. He suggested it be sent on behalf of the Board and shared with the state representative and senator.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Director Bernard said she was settling in with her new assistant. She is interviewing for a 10-12 hour library assistant and posting an ad for a full-time librarian.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee-Joanne Huse distributed the monthly trust fund reports.

Director Bernard said the FY23 budget is basically level funded. She said we will turn back \$77,000 in salary money because hiring did not happen in as timely a manner as had been intended.

A motion was made to approve the proposed FY23 budget. The motion was passed unanimously.

Legislative Committee- Rob Favini said there was no date yet for the legislative breakfast, but that it will be virtual.

New Director Search Committee-Rob Favini said the Committee hoped to start interviewing in 2 weeks. He said the Committee has 5 candidates with whom they hope to have initial virtual meetings. He said it was difficult arriving at a date and time amenable to everyone concerned. In answer to a question he said he did not believe there was a quorum for Committee members.

He said the questions supplied by HR were meant to serve as a guideline and a way of standardizing the questions. The Committee can use any questions they wish to but they must be consistent and appropriate.

Chair Bruun reiterated the Board would not settle for someone whom they felt could not do the job.

Building Committee-Director Bernard said she was spending the MBLC ARPA money on portable shelving in YL and people counters. There is \$14,000 remaining left. She also has \$25,000 from the Commonwealth to go toward the mechanical room improvements.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business. The mask mandate was previously discussed. The Director thanked the Trustees for contributing to the discussion with the visitor.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jean Tenander for
Cynthia Jones