

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Scarsdale Public Library
October 4, 2021
Scarsdale Public Library

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Scarsdale Public Library was held on October 4, 2021 in Meeting Room South.

The following participants were in attendance: Felicia Block, President; Gary Katz, VP; Laura Liu, Financial Officer; Robert Jeremiah, Secretary; Pedro Ladislau, Trustee; Margot Milberg, Trustee; Jordan Copeland, Trustee; Ekta Sahni, Trustee; Beth Bermel, Library Director; Catherine Callegari, Assistant Director of Patron Services; Justin Arest, Village Trustee Liaison; Michelle Lichtenberg, FOSL.

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm.

Approval of Minutes of the September 13, 2021 Meeting: A motion was made by Jordan Copeland, and seconded by Margot Milberg, to approve the September meeting minutes with an adjustment of the adjournment time, which were unanimously approved.

Friends of the Scarsdale Library (FOSL) Report: Last month all members of the Friends of Scarsdale Public Library had an opportunity to submit ideas for landscaping around the Library. The Friends look forward to seeing the proposed plans and are eager to help make those plans become a reality through fundraising efforts. The Friends are in the process of forming the following committees:

- Major Gifts Committee who will do individual donor solicitations
- Fundraising Event Committee for a spring fundraiser (Co-chairs: Janet Han and Ali Gordon, Location: Wendy Kleinman's backyard)
- Naming Opportunities Committee to help price and designate various spaces for donors to name
- Speaker Series and other smaller fundraising activities (including something for children)

Director's Report: As reported in the Director's Report circulated to all Trustees, the new Staff Assistant, Ricki Goe, is starting two weeks from today after a 5-year vacancy of the Staff Assistant position.

The shades are up and parts will be installed to adjust the controls. Catherine commented that the temperature and glare are improved with the addition of the shades.

Catherine reported the public catalogues are up and running and patrons are very pleased. We are the first library in Westchester to have this access via tablet.

Jordan commented about the analytics from the Director's Report. He made observations about the email marketing performance versus the social media performance. Gary asked a question about social media reach and its success. Beth commented about the changing algorithms of social media influence its success while email does not have that issue.

The Marketing Librarian position currently held by Teya Lechuga will be vacant as of this Friday. Teya was the person who compiled the analytics provided in the Director's Report. Pedro commented that he wants the analytics reporting to continue. Beth mentioned the skills required for that task are unique because the compilation of the statistics is very involved and complicated - and Teya's skill set was a match for that task.

With Teya's departure, the newsletters, social media posts, and keeping up with the website will be prioritized over analytics. It is acknowledged that there is a gap in the skills of the staff to continue with this work until a person is hired to fill the Marketing Librarian position. Felicia acknowledged we can make the analytics report a part of our goals.

Felicia noted that the Library staff has been much more involved with the community citing examples of PTC connections, engagement with librarians from the public schools and involvement with the Seniors meeting.

Etka asked if there was a way to increase attendance in programs based on sign ups. Unfortunately, attendance, or lack thereof, is the nature of free programming. Beth commented that it is not as egregious as it looks in the reports. Email reminders are sent prior to events. Beth also commented that in the time of COVID, attendance numbers are not typical. Zoom vs. in person programming also influences attendance.

Margot commented that Jennifer has been working on college topic meetings and these meetings are very well attended via Zoom.

Pedro had questions about the elevator and sump pump. Beth said the bills are being charged to an Ida account and we hope to get the money back. Paul Z. is working on those details. The problems are solved and the mechanics of the building are working well.

Pedro asked for an IT report given the outages encountered during Ida. WLS IT completed some updates and will return this week to update software. It might be an issue of wifi access points fighting each other with the comment made that maybe we have too many access points.

Pedro asked about the transition from Teya to someone new. Beth and Catherine reported there are four applicants so far with the application closing on October 18th. Once again, there are challenges to filling a Civil Service position. Testing, grading and posting of the scores will dictate the hiring of a candidate who is not already a librarian in the WLS system. We can offer a provisional position to start if the Civil Service exam is the issue. Consultants cannot be hired to fill this role long-term.

President's Report: Felicia attended the landscape meeting mentioned in the Landscape Master Plan Committee update included below.

The discussion turned to the Financial Officer's role of the Library Board. Last spring, Laura and Gary had a detailed transition meeting for this position. Previously, Laura reviewed paper invoices and she would go through a checks and balances process in person. Currently, with the Village's new process, she will get a PDF with a reduced level of detail (versus the details included with the paper invoices) and she can sign off on those bills electronically. The new process via computer report makes sense and the Village takes care of the clerical end of the process.

As a Board, we will need to look at the by-laws again in the near future to update the description of the Financial Officer. To that end, Felicia asked for volunteers to join Gary to clarify the language in the bylaws so that the position is accurately described.

There was a discussion of the value added by our Financial Officer. Specifically, there was a question about the Financial Officer's ability to adequately act as an informed part of the checks and balance system given

reduced information received via the electronic report. Beth assured us there are many checks and balances in place.

Building Update: Margot updated us on the wall covering outside of the meeting rooms. We have a vendor and we are close to installation. It is a self-healing product so no paint or patchwork will be needed as the exhibits change. The installation should happen in late October. The final details of the color and trim are being discussed with the architect.

Landscape Master Plan Committee: The Landscape Committee met with Louis Fusco and Associates last week. Feedback has been given to the designer by stakeholders. An initial plan was presented and the stakeholders were able to clarify the possible phases of the project. Louis Fusco and Associates will present to FOSL on December 8th (9 a.m. -11 am) and the Library Board will see a presentation at our December meeting. If Board members cannot attend the December 13th meeting, they are invited to attend the FOSL presentation (and FOSL members are invited to the public meeting of the Library Board on December 13th if they cannot attend their December 8th meeting). The entire process will take time (from design, to fundraising to implementation). The designer understands the budgetary restrictions to use low-maintenance plants to reduce future expenditures.

Pedro asked about the flow of traffic as people transition to the land on the west side of the exit driveway. Margot confirmed that our land is on the east side of the exit; however, Pedro's comment was acknowledged and it was agreed that it needs to be safe to cross to the Village owned land.

Discussion: Going fine-free Catherine shared her experience of going fine-free at her previous position. As she shared her historical perspective, she mentioned that our mission does not include teaching the morality of returning items. Satisfaction with coming to the library, however, is important.

Beth commented that we have been fine-free since the start of the pandemic and the Library is not running into issues with timely return of popular books.

Following, there was a discussion of lost and stolen items - something for which patrons will be responsible in order to keep their library privileges.

There was a comment by Beth that revenue from fines should not be a driving factor in our decision making process when considering a fine-free library. Fines account for .8% of overall budget - but that has been eliminated during the pandemic. Staff time to work through the details of fines is a concern and has been a savings of money during this fine-free period. Furthermore, patron-staff interactions are more positive in the fine-free environment. Locally, White Plains is fine-free but eight libraries have gone back to charging fines after being fine-free during the pandemic.

A concern was expressed that taxpayers will need to cover this newly created loss of revenue; however, with reduced staff time to address all of the details of fines, there is less of a concern as an efficient process has been realized. Also, the Library can offset some of the lost revenue with new revenue sources like renting out space.

From a historical perspective, the elimination of fees for holds improved relationships with patrons and resulted in better use of staff time.

Specifically, to move this conversation to an action item three things are needed:

1. A clear understanding of the process of fines going forward for lost and stolen items;
2. An understanding of how this revenue will be replaced in the budget;
3. A clear plan for messaging to the community.

Action Item: Changes to February and April 2022 meeting dates: A motion was made by Jordan Copeland, and seconded by Etkah Sahni, to approve the February and April 2022 calendar dates, which were unanimously approved. Specifically, the February 14, 2022 meeting was changed to February 7, 2022 and the April 11, 2022 meeting was changed to April 4, 2022.

A motion to go into Executive Session was made by Jordan Copeland at 8:56 p.m., and seconded by Gary Katz.

At 9:05 p.m. a motion was made by Jordan Copeland, and seconded by Margot Milberg, to exit Executive Session.

Felicia Block adjourned the meeting at 9:05 pm.