

# WHITING LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## DRAFT Minutes - July 13, 2021

Present: Robert Nied, Lyza Danger Gardner, Nancy Shields, Ed Grossman, and Cathy Hasbrouck Trustees.

*Absent:* David Lord, Colleen Garvey

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Robert Nied, Chair, at 8:34 AM on the Zoom platform.

### **AMENDMENT TO AGENDA**

Robert Nied requested an amendment to the agenda. A discussion of appointing Cathy Hasbrouck to replace Lyza Gardner as secretary, thus freeing Lyza to work on fundraising was needed. Donna Shields moved to add this discussion to the agenda as Robert requested. Lyza Gardner seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

### **REPLACE THE SECRETARY**

Ed Grossman moved to nominate Cathy Hasbrouck as Secretary to replace Lyza Gardner. Donna Shields seconded. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. Robert told Lyza a formal letter of resignation from her would be needed for the record and thanked her for her service as Secretary.

### **APPROVE MINUTES FROM JUNE 8, 2021**

A motion was made (Cathy, Lyza) to accept the minutes from June 8, 2021. There was no discussion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **THANK YOU TO COLLEEN GARVEY FOR HER SERVICE TO THE LIBRARY**

Robert Nied read an excerpt from Colleen Garvey's resignation letter, "If you could please let everyone know how much I enjoyed being on the Board with them. The work trustees do is important for our community library. I wish everyone well." Colleen was not able to attend the day's trustee meeting to say her goodbyes. Robert spoke for the board saying they appreciated her service to the board of trustees and to the community. Donna Shields wished her well in her new home in Georgia. Ed Grossman thanked her as well.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Ed Grossman said the finances were in order and similar to the previous month. He pointed out a large figure in the profit loss statement grant category which represented the \$3,000 strategic planning grant. He noted that line 2701, supply expenses, did not have the offsetting entry for the grant yet. He wanted to be sure the board understood there was not a \$3,000 surplus anywhere. He said the pandemic was continuing to reduce revenues by about \$2,000 in book sales. Copier fees and fines were down as well, but those sources could all pick up as the library is now fully open on its normal schedule. He said Deirdre had been very careful with spending which helps offset the revenue loss. Some adjustment may be made toward the end of the year.

Ed said the money market account balance continues to gain less than one percent per month. The Preservation Fund had gained over five percent since the preceding month. There has been no confirmation on the name change process. A decision to execute the investment policy to spend 3 – 5 % on health care costs from the Preservation Fund will be made toward the end of 2021.

Ed gave updated numbers for the June fundraising drive. As of the weekend, \$3,336 had been raised. He said money from the June drive continues to come in. Ed looked at data now available through the new Kind ful database and said in past years, (2018 – 2020) \$6,600 was received during a June drive and \$9,000 to \$10,000 was received during the November drive. He felt there was a push to donate at the end of the year. He thanked everyone for the efforts to write letters for the fundraising drive.

A motion was made (Lyza, Donna) to accept the Treasurer's Report. The report was approved as presented unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR/YOUTH SERVICES REPORT**

Robert Nied said Deirdre was not at the meeting because she was taking a vacation day, but she had sent the Director and Youth Services reports as usual. The reports highlighted the re-opening of the library, and progress on the Strategic Planning process. The committee has held 2 meetings to date.

Deirdre's report said 3 Chromebooks had been received by the library and are available for check out. A display for Pride Month was very popular this year. The library also has state park and historical site passes available for check out.

The nagging issue of outdoor lights at the library has been addressed and Chester Electric will be coming within the next week to resolve the issue.

Robert said he was struck by Deirdre's report that the library was open for 18 days in June and had 507 in-person patrons visit in that time. He felt that validated the library as an important part of the community.

Robert noted that Carrie King, the Youth Services librarian, has been working on personal development and took a four-week course on collection development. She earned a total of 26 CE credits in June. He very much appreciated the amount of effort Carrie puts in to her job.

Ed Grossman said he found the social media presence of the library, such as the Crayon Tribune, which Carrie manages, to be very engaging. Lyza Gardner said she noticed that Deirdre and Carrie post on a number of websites, including Front Porch Forum. She felt they were doing an excellent job disseminating essential information, particularly to people who are new to the area. Donna Shields agreed, saying the library was one of the first places she visited when she arrived and it had been very helpful. She particularly recalled that Will was wonderful. Robert said he has seen a lot of new people in town. Newcomers with young children in particular told him they appreciated the enthusiasm and support they received from the library staff. Their children had responded very well to the programs.

Robert turned to the Strategic Planning process. He gave the dates of the two planned community dialog meetings, September 7<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup> (both Tuesday evenings at 5:30 PM upstairs at the Town Hall). He asked that the trustees plan on attending those meetings if at all

possible. Robert said the response rate to the community survey has been rather low, 5% instead of the hoped-for 10 – 15%. Five percent is not a good sample.

Robert discussed maintenance issues which he intends to focus on as soon as this round of fundraising is complete. He said he would be working with Deirdre and with Julie Hance at town hall to address the outdoor lighting problem, and issues with the parking lot and cracking on some of the steps.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Suzy Forlie Memorial Committee update**

Cathy Hasbrouck said the committee had met twice since the last trustee meeting. They had agreed they wanted to redecorate the Fireplace Room and put a photo of Suzie on the wall with a plaque identifying the memorial. They want to bring in comfortable chairs that make it easy to work with a laptop. They could have an arm with a shelf that rotates across the front of the chair over the sitter's lap. Cathy and Deirdre had been looking at possible furniture. Cathy said a painter will be contacted. Stephanie Whitney Payne, a former interior decorator has offered to help. She said the target for completing the project is November 1, 2021.

Ed Grossman asked about ideas for a memorial outside the building. Cathy Hasbrouck explained that the property boundary lines make it difficult to put anything of any size outdoors and the committee felt it was more helpful and meaningful to bring in some comfortable furniture for laptop users. Robert Nied said doing something indoors would be something more permanent and require less maintenance. Ed Grossman said the Strategic Planning process was considering outdoor seating and he wanted to coordinate with the Suzy Forlie committee if they were leaning in that direction.

- **Fundraising**

- **2021 Fundraising - status of mailings**
- **Status of donations received in response to spring fundraising letters**
- **Update on email and digital outreach**

Lyza Gardner said the spring fundraising letters have been sent out. To date Ed and Robert have been writing all the thank-you notes to donors. The next fundraising committee meeting will be Tuesday August 3 at 4:00 PM. The meeting is likely to be in person at the library and has a full agenda. She said the committee has been reviewing the current processes in place with an eye toward improving the November drive. The committee is considering the possibility of making the November drive the primary or even sole mailing.

She said the committee is working on a checklist or action plan for trustees instead of relying on tribal knowledge to let trustees know what they should be doing for the mailing. She said more data is being loaded into Kind ful including information about the current fund-raising process. She said the committee is reviewing the fundraising printed assets including the logo and the return envelope. Once the committee finishes polishing the traditional fund-raising process it will then focus on novel ways to raise funds for 2022, including digital outreach or a live event.

Another action planned in the next week or two was to adjust or excerpt the fund-raising letter copy for use on social media platforms or in a fund-raising e-mail. Deirdre may send the fund-

raising e-mail to the library's emailing list. This excerpting and digital platform adaptation step will be added to the fund-raising drive action plan.

The committee has discussed refining the fund-raising mailing list. This would include removing names of people who have died or moved away from Chester. The committee is also considering using public records such as voter registrations to add names to the list. The new names could be sent a letter that welcomes people to town and urges them to get a library card, with a gentle pitch for a donation. The letter could also offer a place for people to write in their e-mail address so they can be added to the library's mailing list.

Donna Shields asked if the trustees were supposed to personalize the letters that were sent out. Lyza said yes, the intent was to personalize the letters, but no one had communicated that message to the trustees, so no trustee should feel guilty if they didn't do so. Lyza said one goal of the committee was to document the process and explain the expectations the fund-raising committee has about the letters. Lyza said that in the past, every letter has been personalized with a sentence or two.

Robert thanked Lyza for her great job of summarizing the fund-raising activity. He emphasized that, while the fund-raising committee is talking about many changes to the fund-raising approach, they realize the basics of the mailing drive need to be documented and affirmed to build a foundation for the newer ideas. He said ultimately the committee will make recommendations that the entire Board will need to approve.

Robert said that currently Ed writes the thank-you letters for all donation under \$100 and he handles the donations over \$100. He said that in the future more board members will be asked to write thank-you letters.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Staff vacation schedules, coverage & cross training**

Robert told the board Deirdre brought up the issue of what happens when both the director a person on the staff wants time off at the same time. Would the trustees consider closing the library or hiring a temporary library fill in person? Donna Shields asked if a board member could fill in. Ed Grossman said either a library volunteer or a staff member needed to fill in and that volunteers had filled in when Sharon was the director.

Lyza Gardner said, "let's not close the library" and many board members agreed. Robert said he thought the library needed to come up with a plan for such a situation, where two of the three staff members have compelling personal reasons to need time off on the same day. He did not want to hire someone to fill in. He felt that asking a volunteer or a trustee to fill in was more appropriate. He agreed with Ed that there should be more than one person staffing the library when it is open. There was general agreement. Robert suggested adding an agenda item to come up with a policy for the situation where 2 staff members need time off on the same day to the next month's agenda.

Cathy Hasbrouck agreed it was important to have more than one staff member in the building when it is open and that the duties and responsibilities of the person filling in should be made clear. Robert said the director has responsibilities for emergencies that would need to be covered

by this policy and it needs to be determined whether a trustee or volunteer can safely and reasonably fill in for the staff.

- **Discussion of returning to in-person trustee meetings**

Robert asked the Board members whether they would feel comfortable having in-person meetings. He said allowing remote meetings was a temporary measure undertaken because of the pandemic. The temporary measure may be revoked at any time. He thought there will be some sort of change to the state open meeting law in the near future which will address remote meetings going forward. He then asked the other Board members how they felt about in-person meetings.

Cathy Hasbrouck said the town planned to continue to allow remote attendance and they had invested quite a bit of money in the equipment that makes that possible. The town did not expect remote attendance to be disallowed. Ed Grossman asked if the capacity for remote attendance would be required in the future. No one thought it would be. He said he has never seen a member of the public attend a library meeting. Lyza Gardner said she thought it was likely there would be a need to have at least partially remote meetings in the future. She suggested a phone bridge to support a partially remote meeting. That would allow a trustee who had to be out of town to join a meeting. Both Robert and Lyza thought a hybrid system was impractical for the library.

Robert outlined three choices: the board continues to use Zoom, the board switches to an in-person format or the board plans on switching to an in-person format at some point in the future. Ed said he liked Lyza's suggestion that a way be found to allow the public to attend remotely. He would support either in-person or remote meetings. Donna Shields was ready to have in-person meetings. Cathy Hasbrouck was OK having in-person meetings while it was possible. She said the set up for hybrid meetings at the town hall would be available for the library to use if it chose to do so. Ed Grossman and Donna Shields said they would prefer to have in-person meetings at the library.

Robert Nied proposed that the board plan on having in-person meetings in September or October and that in the interim the board explore the practicality of using the town hall for hybrid meetings or of using a phone bridge for access to an in-person meeting. He felt research for a long-term solution was needed. The item was tabled until the August meeting.

- **Promotion of Whiting Library/Town of Chester brochure, social media, etc.**

Ed Grossman said he noticed that the Whiting Library will come up on different websites promoting Chester, but the library is not listed anywhere on the printed brochure. He felt the library should somehow be added to the brochure. Robert said he would contact Bill Dakin to find out how the library could be included in the brochure. Ed Grossman said he knew that businesses paid a fee to be included in the brochure. He did not know if the library would also have to pay a fee to be included. Ed Grossman suggested that the library put together a brochure about itself to be available in the Welcome Center.

- **Search for new trustee**

Robert Nied said the library needs to make a recommendation to the Selectboard for someone to fill out Colleen Garvey's term, which runs to 2023. He said it was important to fill the position promptly. Donna Shields asked whether Wendy Hayward was ever on the board of trustees. Robert Nied suggested that Donna reach out to Wendy about it. He also suggested that young people would be welcome on the Board.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There being no members of the public present, there was no public comment.

### **ADJOURN**

Robert Nied asked Lyza to show Cathy Hasbrouck how to set up a Zoom meeting. Lyza said she was fine to continue setting up the meetings on her professional Zoom account. She said she would send Cathy a link to the Zoom recording. Lyza Gardner moved to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Shields seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hasbrouck, Secretary