Whiting Library, Chester, Vermont

Special Meeting of Board of Trustees re: Fundraising

Meeting Notes – March 19, 2024 - DRAFT

In attendance at the Whiting Library Community Room: Bill Dakin, Donna McNeill-Hudkins, Lyn Smith, Marilyn Mahusky, Jessie Krust and Gail Zachariah, Library Director. Not in attendance, Matt Gorsky and Lora Cokolot (Lora had communicated that she could not attend)

Bill called meeting to order at 6:35 PM stating that this is a Special meeting to discuss Fundraising. We have an agenda we should get through in 60 minutes. Bill thought it would be beneficial to meet to discuss Fundraising and understand that part of the budget for the Library for funding is from Fundraising. We have not been very successful over the past 24 months, so we should review.

We have been fundraising by letter, asking people to donate. Last year efforts were stymied, the letter went out later due to circumstances beyond our control. The first point should be a fundraising overview. What are the steps we use for fundraising? Annual Mailing, Book Sale, looks like in the past there was a silent auction – gifts from vendors donated. We also have In Memoria gifts, it was significant this year, Will, another person died and asked that donations go toward updating the Suze Forley room. There are also Targeted donations, say for Children's program. Per Gail, she gets some kind of donation every day. Donna: We do have a Database program, "Kindful" that you can "assign" what the contribution is, be it from a general donation, or from a targeted program. In the past it shows that they had done two mailings, one in the spring and in the fall. When the board of trustees left in 2022, it was just before the fundraising mailing, and nothing ever went out. Last year we had a plan and wanted the mailing to go out in June. We got the "grand list" from Chester. Per Nina from the Family Center, they only targeted some people in Chesters. We did not want to target it to larger donors, so we wanted to send to all, to include senior citizens and young families. We thought that this year we would do a Card vs a letter. Last year we mailed to Chester addresses only, (some out of state). We only enter people into Kindful who donate. We do have the database of all the addresses.

What other opportunities do we have other than a mailing. Do we want to coordinate fundraising with another entity, like the Family Center as they are successful. Do we want to do a "Crowd Funding" or have an ongoing funding (which we do on the web site, there is a button to donate at any time). Do we need to make statements to the public via our social media. Jesse asked about a newsletter. We do not have an on-line newsletter. We are getting ready to purchase LibraryWare software that we could do a monthly newsletter. Patrons would have to sign up for the newsletter. We could include an annual or a bi-annual fundraising on the on-line.

We need to discuss what our fundraising goals are (included in the budget submitted to the town. We need to look at what the history is on the past mailings. We can probably get the history from Kindful.

Should decide timing. We do not have a good plan.

We need something like a list of what is going on throughout the year. i.e. Festival on the Green when we have our Book Sale.

If we have a program that is beneficial, what additional information is needed. Identify people on a big list who we can add personal notes to as we will just have address labels. We should also have the board members names on the sides of the letterhead.

We should review the past donations and funds that have come in and why and how we got them.

We did have a very successful book sale in 2022, but in 2023 was not as successful. There were much fewer books in 2023.

Do we make all the incoming funds in one category, like Booksale, Mailing Fundraising, general donations, etc. What are the successful categories. Confusing area is “donations” vs “donations from a fundraising appeal letter” The reason to keep them separate is to figure out where the money is coming from.”)

We should make it a point in the future that we all know how we are categorizing any funds that come in. We need to fine tune. What is our fundraising goal? (the current “budget”). We should review all the budget items.

Will we establish a “fundraising” sub-committee? The entire board of Trustees may be needed to establish a fundraising committee. Something to think about is establishing a “friends of the Whiting Library” may be something what we want. The friends could be working in the library, or people who donate or fundraising. We could do a Friends group as a 5013C separate entity. We can include outside people in the fundraising. We should review our Strategic Plan.

Who can we identify who may want to join us in fundraising? Lyn asked if there was something we had to do legally if we asked businesses to contribute or “adopt.”

Businesses are more likely to give to places that their employees know.

Is there a way we can capitalize on current issues (like book banning). Perhaps in an appeal. Giving for a reason instead of that we just need money. Currently we are making the library more accessible.

Do we collect email addresses? We ask if people want to be added to our mailing list. If people gave their email address, it was entered into Kindful.

We should review current stationary, letterhead, letters, donation envelopes, etc. We do not want to spend more on stationary than what we need.

We have a campaign, appeal, restricted, solicited, un-solicited . . .

We need to know what we are dealing with. We need to fine-tune our budget descriptions. We will not get into how we will use it, that is a different thing.

To Recap: Opportunity to get volunteers to help us in fundraising, Booksale, on an ongoing basis and the annual fall sale. Letter is a source of funds and any random donations, and in memorium funds, other than the town, grants, and states. We need to know what we’re talking about. We need a group to execute the plan.

Where do we go from here?

Need data to make a decision. How do we find out what the history is from the previous mailings. If we can run reports, even if it’s ball park. Do we do something for sustainable donors? Do we establish a sustainable program? Once established, we can present it to the public.

We should have a sub-committee of fewer people to come up with logistics and plans, and bring it to the rest of the Board for approval.

We should to try to meet once a month for this special fundraising meeting in addition to the regular meeting. We understand that everyone could not attend all meetings.

Normally the Spring Fundraising appeal would go out in May. Too close right now. We might have to wait until June.

We need to review the costs to mail etc. Will look for the history.

Next regular meeting is Tuesday, April 9th.

Maybe have a sub group to put together a draft of a letter, Bill asked Marilyn and Jessie, they agreed to write something in case we do a Spring campaign.

Action Items -

Kindful info to Jessie (Donna) DONE.

Copies of past appeal letters (Donna) – sent zipped files for 2020 & 2021, still looking for 2019.

Need date for Chester Festival on the Green (Donna) – September 21 & 22, 2024 per Ruthanne Batchelder - DONE.

Future Agenda Item. Review Strategic Plan. What Marilyn has is not the final. We did finalize and approve. We will make sure all have the current. It should be reviewed annually.

Motion to adjourn approved. Adjourned at 8:00 PM

Submitted by Donna McNeill-Hudkins