FINAL

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Kilton Library Community Room OR
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
April 25, 2023
7:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Francis Oscadal (Chair), Emma Wunsch, Michael Stebbins, Ann Sharfstein, Phil Bush (alternate), Kim Rheinlander**

MEMBERS ABSENT: **Doug Whittlesey (alternate), Morgan Swan, Jeff Damren (alternate)**

STAFF PRESENT: **Sean Fleming (Library Director), Amy Lappin (Deputy Director) (remote)**

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1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Oscadal called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

Chair Oscadal opened the meeting at 7:00PM.

Phil Bush sat for Morgan Swan.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approve the March 28, 2023 minutes

Mr. Stebbins MOVED to accept the meeting minutes of March 28, 2022, as amended. Seconded by Ms. Sharfstein.

**** The Vote on the MOTION passed (6-0-0).***

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approve the Treasurer report

Mr. Stebbins stated that, regarding the Special Funds, the profit and loss statement was updated recently, but the bottom line only changed by approximately $0.20. There is still about a $3,000 deficit so far in the year.

In response to a question from Mr. Bush regarding a negative approximately $9,000 in long term assets, Director Fleming explained that he believes this occurred when the Trustees drew down their savings but did not draw down the surplus rainy-day funds. There is not actually a negative balance.

Mr. Stebbins stated that, regarding the City budget, this is currently over budget by approximately $2,000. Wages are under budget by approximately $9,000. The Electricity line is still over budget by approximately $15,000. The Small Tools and Equipment line is under budget by approximately $5,000. The management team will need to figure out where money can be saved in the budget to make up for the overage in electricity. The Library is using less power than last year, but the costs are way up.

Chair Oscadal asked if other City departments are encountering same overages in electricity. Director Fleming stated that this is the case. The City Manager recently stated that all departments are dealing with tight budgets. There is not much relief to be found from City Hall at this time.

Mr. Bush MOVED to accept the Treasurer's Report, as presented.
Seconded by Ms. Rheinlander.

****** The Vote on the MOTION passed (6-0-0).***

B. Board statement discussion

Ms. Sharfstein and Ms. Wunsch presented their draft Board statement. They explained that the intention was to keep the statement broad and supportive.

Director Fleming addressed the broad nature of the draft statement. He explained that some members of the community have been aggressive in their statements pushing the Library to not engage with certain programs, such as Drag Queen Story Hour. One individual, from the Upper Valley, recently called the Library asking about the program, made disparaging remarks about the people who attended, proceeded to speak to a couple of staff members, and made vague threats against the Library. Making a broad statement is not addressing this issue head on. Staff should not feel unsupported by a statement that could be seen as too broad when certain staff members may feel unsafe from coming to work.

Ms. Wunsch noted that a more specific statement would likely not make staff members feel safer coming to work or stop threatening phone calls. Director Fleming stated that it may make staff members feel more supported by the Board.

Ms. Sharfstein stated that she supports LGBTQ+ programs but also supports those who do not support those programs using the Library. No one should make threats to staff members about anything. She does not want the Board to seem as though it is more supportive of one side. Director Fleming noted that a statement of support from the Board to the LGBTQ+ community would be specifically to a community that has been marginalized and treated poorly for a number of years. Ms. Sharfstein asked if the Board should then draft a statement for every marginalized community. Deputy Director Lappin stated that this could be the case. While she appreciates the draft statement, it is too vague. She was hoping this statement would make the LGBTQ+ community feel seen and supported. Others who use the Library already feel that support.

Chair Oscadal stated that his intention with this statement was to address support to the Drag Queen story hour program. A Program Policy was also approved by the Board. The Library's Mission Statement and other documents speak to the fact that the Library reaches out to all in the community. This statement was to address a particular program and situation. It appears that, while the situation still needs to be addressed, there may also need to be more included in the broad statement. In speaking to everyone, the statement also seems to speak to no one. There is also no context included as to why the statement is being made.

Mr. Bush stated that he believes the statement seemed to imply that the story hour was for the LGBTQ+ community. He objected to that implication. Chair Oscadal agreed that this was not the intention of the statement.

Ms. Sharfstein explained that she did not want to draft a statement that the Library Board specifically supports the LGBTQ+ community and programming, as then she questioned if the statement also needs to mention all other types of communities and programming. Chair Oscadal stated that he believes this will only need to be addressed if specific situations arise. People are raising their opinions in different ways during this political climate. He would like for the Library to have a baseline statement to lean on to respond to comments. Eventually each Board member may be asked directly to respond to these comments, but this would be a baseline statement from the Board itself. He is not opposed to a broad statement but would like it to be clear that the Library's philosophy includes support for LGBTQ+ programs.

Chair Oscadal presented a secondary draft statement. This refers to existing Library documents. Ms. Sharfstein stated that this appears to be a Board statement regarding Drag Queen story hour specifically. Chair Oscadal stated that he heard that staff wanted a public statement supporting that sort of programming.

Director Fleming stated that staff who attended the special Board meeting regarding the Drag Queen story hour felt that the language used was derogatory toward the programming and the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. Staff would have appreciated more of a rebuttal regarding that language from the Board. There should be a clear statement against the notions being spoken about the LGBTQ+ community.

Deputy Director Lappin noted that this is the Board's statement and needs to be genuine. If there is resistance from the Board to make a more specific statement, that is the Board's prerogative. The second draft statement is stronger in terms of what the staff was hoping for regarding support. Some people and/or staff may not feel welcome in the Library and may require the extra support. The Board could call out those who have said hateful things, both in and out of a Board meeting, and explain that this is not what the Board stands for.

Ms. Sharfstein stated that hateful speech and untruths are not acceptable. She is comfortable with a statement that addresses this. However, there are people with internal prejudices for whatever reason who are also welcome at the Library, as long as they are not using hateful speech. It is impossible to know what prejudices may be in people's minds at any time. Deputy Director Lappin agreed that the Library is for all. She would like for a statement to have teeth behind it, if possible.

Ms. Sharfstein stated that the Library is for everyone, but it is not for hateful speech. The statement could address this. Chair Oscadal stated that this needs to come within a specific context.

Ms. Wunsch stated that the Trustees are elected officials and need to make sure that everyone is welcome at the Library, without supporting hateful speech. By supporting staff who wants to carry out programs such as Drag Queen story hour, that is how the Board is showing its support. The Board supports Library staff in putting on these programs, but are also elected by the community at large, some of whom may not want to support these programs, as is their right.

Ms. Rheinlander noted that the statement speaks to providing people with information and programming which may lead to feelings on either side. It does not speak to support for one side over the other.

Deputy Director Lappin suggested that the word “neutral” could be replaced with a different word.

Director Fleming stated that he would like to have some specific language regarding support for the LGBTQ+ community.

The Board agreed to have Ms. Sharfstein, Ms. Wunsch, and Chair Oscadal rework the draft statement for review at a future meeting.

C. Holiday Schedule Approval

Chair Oscadal stated that staff was not pleased with the Board’s previous vote regarding the Friday before Thanksgiving. The Board noted that it would like to have a conversation regarding opening only one Library for certain holidays.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None at this time.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Director’s report

Director Fleming noted that there have been some issues with meeting technology that he is working to have remedied. He noted that he recently received a letter from the City Manager regarding the budget overage.

C. Deputy Director’s report

None at this time.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Sharfstein MOVED to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by Ms. Wunsch.

**** The Vote on the MOTION passed (6-0-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary