

FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes. June 14, 2023

Fitchburg Public Library
610 Main Street, Fitchburg MA

Trustees present were: Chair Matthew Bruun, Sabrina Holley-Williams, Mary Rice-Hurley, Joanne Huse, Cynthia Jones Muna Kangsen, Jacalyn Kremer, Dennis Pierce and Jim Walsh. Also present were Director Deb Hinkle and Assistant Director Jean Tenander.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF May 10, 2023

The minutes of May 10, 2023 Trustee Meeting were approved as amended by changing the word “he” to Tony DiLuzio in the final sentence under COMMITTEE REPORTS.

CHAIR’S REPORT

Chair Bruun said he would defer his report to discussion under Building Committee Reports.

He said he had attended a discussion about civility in public meetings and learned that a patron had sued a Trustee for reprimanding her for not being civil during a debate. The plaintiff prevailed.

LIBRARIAN’S REPORT

Director Hinkle asked the Trustees to look at the proposed changes to the current Meeting Room Policy in the view of bringing it up for a vote at a later meeting. Jacalyn Kremer asked if the Library could actually have a policy that prohibited “racist ideology and hate speech.” She suggested it should be researched before voting on the language. She was not sure if it was too open to interpretation to be a realistic prohibition.

The Trustees voted to accept the proposed Trust Fund budget for the next fiscal year.

Joanne Huse said the front page story about the Library’s refurbishment had been very positive and said the next story should be about the long history of the Fitchburg Public Library in the community.

Director Hinkle reported that the MBLC was gifting us with 1.48 million dollars as a pandemic escalation of our original grant. It will decrease the amount the City will have to contribute. It does not change our fundraising goal of 3.5 million dollars.

The Director said she had spoken to the staff booking the Pages for Peace display. She said the only space big enough to display it was the new community room. The Trustees determined it not wise to make the new community space unavailable immediately upon announcing that we had one.

Director Hinkle said she wanted to discuss the issue of booking library space for political use. Fitchburg Library does not have a specific policy in this regard. The Secretary of the Commonwealth confirmed that it is ethical to hold campaign events and there must be equal access for all.

Muna Kangsen who works at Cambridge Public Library said that library allowed no campaigning activity of any sort after April in an election year. A discussion ensued as to whether any or all or no political meetings or activity should be allowed in the library. It was decided further discussion was needed. Sabrina Holley-Williams and Jacalyn Kremer will work together on researching the issue.

She said the last staff meeting hosted a speaker talking about the use of Narcan in preventing accidental overdoses. Twelve staff members have volunteered to be trained in how to use Narcan.

The Library will be staffing a booth at the block party and offering book bags designed by June Celona and Angela Lopez.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee – Joanne Huse did not meet with Jim Hohman this month but said the monthly Trust report was positive.

Building Committee- Chair Bruun said there were still a few more weeks open for bids to come in for the work that has to be done at the temporary space on Boulder Drive. He said the project managers are optimistic about the design work for the temporary space. They feel work on our building will likely not begin until November.

There was talk about the state of the air conditioning in our current building. It is working at present. The Director can call Chair Bruun or the Mayor's office if it fails.

Chair Bruun said the next press release should be about the funding from the MBLC and then one announcing the fund raising campaign.

NEW BUSINESS

Jacalyn Kremer asked if the Trustees could still legally meet virtually. Hybrid meetings are permissible until 2025. After a discussion the consensus was that virtual meetings are still possible.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jean Tenander for
Cynthia Jones