

# **Minutes Meeting LIVE in person only at MASON LIBRARY**

**Thursday October 12, 2023**

**Libraries Board of Trustees**

**Mason Library**

**231 Main St.**

**Great Barrington, MA 01230**

## **Call to Order 5:15PM**

Roll Call:

Trustees Members : Patrick Hollenbeck(Chair)  
Carol McGlinchey  
Lauren Clark  
Sandy Pantorno  
Ruby Chang (absent)  
Rob Shaeffer (absent)

Community Members: Donna Brown (Interim Director)  
Ed Abrahams (Friends of the Library)  
Holly Hamer (Friends of the Library)  
Bobby Houston (Scout House)  
David Gilbert (Interior Design, just finished degree at NYSID)  
Gail Grollen

Approve Minutes- skipped

Friends Report-

- Ed-Busy as summer, lots of books are moving but people are less generous. Friends asked Bobby to figure out space upstairs to try to do movies again. Plans are made for moving things around.
- Bobby- Review of Reading Room indicates artifacts from different efforts that have not gone well together. Lost a bit of class from mixture of metal and wood furniture. In a library, we ideally like wood furniture with upholstery. We took a quick inventory of what we had on hand that needed to be brought back and put into more harmony. There are lots of good stuff. Tables match with even number. Tables can be brought forward for bigger conference table. Re-arranging and bring back furniture that has been retired. Treat the library as an academic libraries in small liberal arts college. Floor plan of the Great Room with ideals of how to make it symmetrical and settled looking, more uptown, not blocking the view of both fireplaces with big heavy tables and computer stations. Capitalize the windows by bringing back upholstered chairs after deep cleaning and if not enough slip covers.
- Questions about when chairs were last cleaned (before 2020) and how this would fit in having movies. ( huge challenge if the room is full, if 40 people, you could work with 2 zones.)
- Bobby— To continue, the computer desks are large and blocks the room and view of the fireplaces. Back to back benches from the Clinton Church, they are in Ed's barn and can be used without heavy partitions. They could be moved for seating and take 7-8 person each.
- Carol- questions about having movie screen high enough for beyond the first 2 rows to see.

- Bobby- Guest chair (can serve as a desk as well) comes on wheels and about \$115.00 for two. Pretty steady, on castors and give mobility.
- Lauren- can try using heavy duty castors for the round tables. Concern about the wood since we had placed glass on top. Floors also have tiles.
- Bobby- Acoustics is an issue. Get a rug that runs the room to cut down on the sound would help. Right now, the rugs are quite skimpy. They are there but not doing the work. Sight lines and lighting: Fixed brass lamps now, light the work but obstruct your conversation. Another generation of lamps with both USB and power outlets in their base so every computer can plug in without the heavy charging stations that are sprinkled around.
- Sandy— is there a budget and who will pay for it.
- Ed- Friends are paying for it.
- Bobby- Work is pro bono. Get a day when things can be laid out and see what will work for everyone. Pharmacy lamp can also be used on the tables. The ones on the glass are fused onto the glass right now.
- Sandy—recommend placing chairs on wheels,
- Ed -recommend sitting down time line in the next month, Donna noted need to down size the audiobooks.
- Donna —concerns about sight line, need to have a visual, such as people sleeping and smoking in the library.
- Bobby- 6 foot tables and display cases can be moved.
- Carol—question Feng-shui?
- Lauren—feeling this space was not designed like this originally and moved for more logistic reasons
- Pat- accessibility —to think about accommodation for those in wheelchairs etc.
- Bobby—window treatments are expensive, commodity fabric for window dressing can also be available to pull over the windows. This will also help with acoustics with movie watching. Bringing back the upholstered furniture would help as well.
- Pat—Mr. Makuc bought casters from Amazon and able to clear a room in under 10 min. at the Monterey Library.
- Pat- We can do what other libraries do which is to put out our wish list out and see what happens.

#### Director's Report-

- Donna—Visitors were down because door count fell off the door frame. This was put back up using Velcro. Ramsdell numbers down. Numbers up on Mondays there.
- Circulation was down because of staff sick and library was closed, no funding requests. September was busy with interviews for staff. We have hired part-time people with good customer service experience. Sam will be full time youth technician to get him trained and be help with new children's director. Another person to start Tuesday next week. Director search process is open again. We had some applicants. Strategic Plan was filed and accepted by MBLC. Financial reports were filed with support from Talya Leodari who did the report last year and filed on time. Ramsdell is open Sundays and Mondays. Ramp is couple weeks behind due to the rain. We are working on new display including Banned Books. We cannot locate sizable carts for the audiobook collection and plan to downsize the collection. Not as popular as the DVDs. Boiler at Ramsdell has been inspected and working. HVAC has arrived and DPW is working on control at the Mason. Fran also did great job on the Banned Book display.
- Sandy- Fran is doing a great job with Facebook posting.
  - Carol—292 likes which is great. Encourage people to post.
  - Pat- recommend (ERATE)Federal Grant for hard and software for use in library. Even for Telehealth in discrete locations. Pat had reached out to them, Paying up to \$55,000 a year. The library will get reimbursed. When asked, about \$1-2,000.00 average. Counter if off we could do the counting by hand so we have accurate numbers.
  - Carol-does not feel number count by hand is not feasible.

- Donna- Financial Report, Expendable trust are not updated since it is only the interest we can use. Donations can be used for furniture. Thursday Morning Club for the parking lot will get letter clarifying can be used for general use at Ramsdell. Kathy Plungis will change the designation. With staffing it has been hard to order books and Talya has been helpful.
- Sandy-Budget goes to next year June
- Donna- We are hoping to get together and make gains on Children's Director, Director and Assistant Director. Then can start ordering. Without staffing, I had to cover the front desk.
- Pat- Do we have line item for programming? We would like to have some idea on the budget for programming. Does computer budget come out of town budget? Can you share that info with me as far as computer needs?
- Donna- I think we got that out of state aid for programming and will try to get data from John the tech person. Town will be doing updates on their schedule.
- Pat— As far as State Aid, is the number on the financial report the full amount or just what we have been given so far? We should be getting State Aid in Fall and February and will check with MBLC. I will share with you cost of designer and editor/writer work on the Strategic Plan at the next meeting, which should come out of State Aid. These people should get paid. We also need funding for printing of the plan. The writer was \$2500 and Designer was \$600. We will be eligible for LSTA grant now that the Strategic Plan has been approved. The trustees decides where the money comes from and we submit a requisition and where the money comes from. The town will issue a check ultimately.

## Trustees Update

CPA discussion/vote: Pat noted will wait till next meeting on Monday October 16.

## ARIS Report/Programming:

- Pat noted the ARIS (Annual Report Information Survey) form is basis of everything that the state does. We are in population group C (Small to Mid-sized Library), we can see comparison of all libraries in our population group such as staff working less than 35 hours per week and number of staff working more, full time/part time staff, total attendance to adult programs and young adult programs, etc. Donna and Talya did the report. If you google MBLC Stats and at the bottom of the page can pull up for about a dozen years. Ramsdell is called an Outlet (Branch). You will need to pull Ramsdell separate. Our best numbers are 2019 which was our normal data and now we have to go back to those numbers. We do not have a physical copy at the library. The last report is from year 2022 to 2023. Now Covid is out of the way, we need to look at it again. Total adult programming at Mason Library 2019 was 134 with attendance of 1251 persons.
- Donna- Talya noted that the numbers were much better when counting in the Zoom attendance.
- Pat- FY7/1/22-6/30/23, total number of adult and young adult programs at 19, (no YA program,) with adult attendance at 468. Donna confirmed that we had some programs in the winter due to transition. Some libraries will start an advisory group including students looking for extra credits for citizen duties (community service? RC). We can find out through the school.

## By-laws:

- Pat: To change the charter, such as which day we meet, we have to go to the Selectboard and request a change and then it goes to the State. The state has to vote on this. The

Charter is the rules and regulations of our town to the state. D360 is on the town website and information on the library is in there. This process can take a long time, up to 6 months. We will talk about it on Monday. We are not the only the changes needed.

- Carol: what needs to be changed.
- Pat: our meeting time. We did make a change without correcting on the Charter.
- Lauren: if there is anything else we want to change we should state that now?
- Pat agreed.
- Lauren: would like to change the position of the Town Manager and Trustees so the Trustees will have a bigger role.
- Sandy: Other trustees rotate their positions such president and vice president, treasurer etc, so everyone will have opportunity to be in a position.
- Lauren noted that we vote on those position every time we have an election.
- Sandy: Concern about the Strategic Plan. One reason I did not sign off on the SP is that I had to see a copy of the plan before signing off.
- Pat noted Sandy was not at the meeting.
- Sandy: going forward, I cannot sign off on anything until I see it. I can trust the ethos but I need to see and read it. Calendars are important, looking back is important. The other issues is programming. Trustees should not be taking on the jobs of the staff. This is from Maura Deedy MBLC and Rob Favini, both have said it and sent me an email. I don't want to do anything that will be stepping on toes, yours or staff, staff- to-be. "Programming and its' operations is under the purview of the library director and staff. Trustees should not be involved in developing for and running of library programs and events." [Pat would like the email and will talk to them about it. Were they fully aware that we have zero programming and were they okay with that?] Yes, It takes away the hiring of staff because we are filling in of their spot.
- Pat-The union insist that we do not do that and I will talk to them.
- Donna-HVAC not on line yet [Pat: we can do the programming on line.] Talya was doing the programming in the past since we were in transition with Samara. [Pat: From the ARIS report, if the programming are there, the numbers don't show it]
- Carol: We should not be putting pressure on the staff and give time for staff positions to be filled.
- Pat: It affects everything, people come for books and then programming. We have books but no programming. We get people in the door with programming, even the kids, then they might even pick up a book on the way out.
- Lauren: It seems like the trustees are trying to usurp the jobs of the staff and I do not think that is where Pat is going with this. We are looking at a time that is very different, coming out of Covid, no staff, no director, no HVAC, whole different thing. I honestly think he is thinking in terms of getting this all back. [Sandy: and how do you do that?] I feel a lot of defensive resistance, not just constructive resistance. We just want to help
- Pat: Ed and Holly did all the programming years ago at Ramsdell. Friends are doing enormous part of the programming in a lot of other libraries. I was thinking of Sunday afternoon Jazz at Ramsdell. That is programming.
- Sandy: They are not talking about special events or one-of events, but young adult or senior programming or movie event. They are talking about section 4 of SP, cannot meet up with seniors, kids and ask what they want and then develop it. Should not be the Trustees are planning for and developing the programs.
- Lauren: There got to a point where we were filling in Staff, Staff, Staff, Staff. We were trying to help.
- Pat: At the end we did say that everything is flexible and subject to change depending on leadership.
- Sandy: When MBLC see trustees claiming 2 programming a month, plan and program. [Lauren: did they red flag that and get in touch with you?] No, I spoke with Maura and told her Donna and my concerns and how do I move forward and do the right thing? The SP was approved but she said "don't do it!" There are levels of programming and they work with the

Lenox library. We do some things is fine but not ongoing programming. Not just a laddi-da kind of thing, some people need background checks.

- Pat: let me talk to the state and get clarification.
- Lauren: I don't think anyone is trying to keep people from getting hired because the trustees are helping with programming. Actually we are not doing anything. The first thing is to get staff.
- Sandy: I am talking about the role of the trustees, staff and I don't want to mix it up. We have specific roles according to the Town Charter. We don't want to step on their position and their role. We want to be supportive of people. We don't want to do the wrong thing and we want clarity, right?
- Donna: Sandy started the conversation with we need to get programming going and that is where it came from.
- Carol: I would like us in the next 6 months to be patient and understanding and not worry about our stats at the State. We need to keep the library open. They had staffing and morale crisis and still have structural issues with the HVAC. I would like to say as trustees that you are doing great. We should not be comparing what we are doing with what other libraries of our size are doing. I don't want the staff to be demoralized more. We need to support them and say they are doing an amazing job considering the circumstances.
- Pat: The Strategic Plan was suppose to involve the library director. It was a lot of work. The example is we are trying to make things better to best we can and have fund raising. We are not in a vacuum and we are trying to get things moving. This has nothing to do with the staff. Some trustees will divvy up the responsibilities and come back with report. It is labor intensive. We have a town manager. Maybe we could have Maura or Rob phone in at the next meeting. I understand what you are trying to say. At the basic level, the staff is protected by a union and cannot fill union spots with non-union people. It is impossible. [Sandy: I had concerns!] We are trying to fill in when the staff does not want to work at night with volunteer support. If we can stretch the hours by open and close the library with director giving permission.
- Carol-How do you determine when the library is open, determined by popular times?
- Donna- we do need to open a certain amount of evening hours which is after five. If short on staffing it is hard to keep it open till 7pm. The director drives the hours which is approved by the Trustees.
- Sandy-question whether we could still do edits on the Strategic Plan? The graph was wrong and do not have any explanation.

## **Citizens Speak/ Media Time Board Speak :**

Gail- I find the meeting interesting. I do a book club on zoom and felt I could do more. I purchase the Zoom account and that way we could be effective. Recently, we had a large meeting close to 18 people on Zoom, It is easier because they do not need to drive anywhere. I tried to meet second or fourth Tuesday of the month. When I first came to the Mason Library, there was nobody who knew what was going on and was chaotic. When I was working, I did corporate training development. I said this need some organization. So, I started emailing all the participants and getting their feedback what they wanted and did not want to do. So that it is consistent and reflective of their interests rather than be composed by somebody else. It seem to be working. It is not just people, they wanted to participate, no droppings. When people first move into town, they check the libraries. It is not just reading but meeting people. They prefer zoom and occasionally if smaller group, we remind them one or two weeks before. If just 5-6 people are coming they can meet in person and that is fine.

Carol—recommend zoom during the winter months for our meetings. We are going through a rough patch but we are still here and townspeople love it. People are not up in arms because

of staffing issues or no programming. They appreciate post-Covid we are back at the library. So I am being patient and passionate and is important to do that.

Gail; There are lots of activities for town which has changed radically in the past 10 years. It has become more wealthy. The Library at Stockbridge have things going on, they have a lot of money and lot of support. They have concerns and programs with sophisticated people presenting. People go there. You live in Great Barrington but can still go to the Stockbridge Library and enjoy their programs. But, you want people to come home. Maybe we can do it

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Ruby Chang