
Minutes

Great Barrington Board of Library Trustees August 9, 2023 5 PM Mason Library in Person

Board Members Present: Patrick Hollenbeck (Chair)
Carol McGlinchey
Lauren Clark
Sandy Pantorno
Rob Scheaffer (treasurer)
Ruby Chang (secretary)

Others Present: Donna Brown (Interim Director)
Karen Johnson (resident)
Michelle Loubert (resident)

The meeting of the Board convened at 5:03 PM.

Minutes from July 12, 2023

Motion by L. Clark and second by S. Pantorno. Approved unanimously.

Minutes from July 26, 2023 Special meeting

Motion by L. Clark and second by C. McGlinchey. Approved unanimously.

Friends:

Ed Abrahams not present. Pat reports business as usual. Ed is a "one-man show". He puts out the donated books on weekends. Survey report did indicate those who would like to join. Pat indicated right now there are only a handful of people on the Friends committee. Pat noted from MBLC, a town of our size should have about 80 Friends. Amherst raised millions through Friends for the Jones Library. Pat will discuss membership with Ed. The books out front of the library is not sustainable, even with tarp placed for rain.

Survey Report:

Rob report 260 surveys had 10% people who indicated volunteering and additional people that indicated interest but no contact information. Two people commented that they really liked the free books. Pat recommend Ed put up sign explaining what the book donations mean for the library. Pat noted Williamstown Library had their own bookstore with space donated.

Library Director Report:

Review of the July report was made (included in the minutes packet). Ramsdell usage has gone up.

- Rob: Requesting information on comparison to previous year, same month, so that we could have more contrast. Donna noted she could obtain the information through CW MARS website.
- Pat: Requesting breakdown of the type of materials borrowed to books vs DVD, adult vs kids. This will help determine usage is growing.
- Carol: The hours have decreased and people are accommodating by coming in during opening hours. This is reflected in the usage.
- Rob: We will also need to consider the effect of COVID in past year on usage.
- Donna: Reviewed finance including \$2000 signed by Rob from State Aid for MAPS.

- Pat: Requesting numbers of people who have participated in M.A.P.S., artists in residence. How are they adjusting to not being able to work outside at Ramsdell?
- Donna: Samara has been volunteering her time and had been working on that.
- Sandy: Pointing out, if we get numbers, we would get more State Aid.
- Carol: Questioning the accuracy of numbers since many people will walk up but not necessary participate.
- Pat: Just a guesstimate would be good.
- Donna: \$150.00 from State aid for Accordion Books used at M.A.P.S. for reading programs.
\$294.30 from Ramsdell for New York Times Sunday Subscription. FY 2023 budget was already out and this was in addition paid to Pat who buys the Sunday times and brings it to the Library for public use. This is because NYT stopped delivery of the Sunday paper one year ago. He has receipts from Price Chopper which is \$6.00/week.
- Donna: Museum passes are going well except the Clark Pass need to be hard pass and in person. People need to come in, in person. This is first come, first serve. This has not always worked well since the pass has not always returned in time. This is a free pass from Clark and Friends do not pay for it. Not sure if there is a second pass. Donna will check into it.

Operations

- Donna noted renovations have started at Ramsdell for boiler replacement. There are signage for directions to get into the library posted. Closure is tentatively August 17 to September 5 but not definite.
- Sandy: All using the library should be informed.
- Pat: Expressed concern the time of construction may be longer from 9/5 to 10/5 and will need to prepare for the worse. We need to prepare for access to the library in Housatonic during this construction period so that people can read the NYT and get books from CW MARS on mobile carts One place would be the Housy Dome which has Internet service.
- Donna: Brought up concern about carts needed and staffing to move the books.
- Sandy: requested clarification these are minimal stuff and not all books. Making a reading room with a lock. It is a good idea to help the community during this transitional time. Can we get volunteers to help? Moving things like magazines, newspapers and books that have been ordered.
- Lauren: question staff that are scheduled to work at Ramsdell, would they be working at Mason?
- Donna: There are 4-5 boxes of books that are normally delivered to Ramsdell and would need a secure place for delivery. However, there would need to be a key needed and personal.
- Lauren: We need to examine if this is all feasible, then figure out details.
- Donna: Those who get books delivered to Ramsdell had expressed they could come to Mason during this period. Would consider asking volunteers to deliver if needed.
- Pat: recommend services continue with the Ramsdell hours in mind.
- Donna: This would mean setting up a remote laptop with scanner and changing the dates that are open. Consideration with too much change for people, would keep hours at Sunday, Monday and Tuesdays.
- Sandy: Is that difficult to have all that equipment? Would need to have equipment that worked or cannot do it.
- Lauren: Personally, feel this is a difficult process and would ride through this, especially not knowing the dates.

End of conversation is to look into feasibility of having a room at the Housy Dome that could be a temporary place and if it works that is great.

2024 Fiscal Budget

- Pat: This budget started July 1, 2023. The Budget is approved by Selectboard and Planning Board. We have money now. The fines that have been voted out does not effect the Library but goes to the town and does not effect us.

There are line items such as for children's programming. This is an excel sheet. Does not include anything else that the Friends may contribute.

W. E. B. Du Bois Statue

- Lauren: The news of the chosen finalist Richard Blake will come out in the Globe this Friday, August 11 and in the Eagle today. None of the finalist statues were as we saw them since we requested some changes and same goes with this one from Mr. Blake. The books and cane that were in the original maquette along with the extensive fold of the cloak will be eliminated and the figure will be welcoming to those who would like to sit next to it with extending his hand. It was a very hard choice. The statue should be in place in one year. We received funding for Mr. Blake to do a lecture at Chesterwood in the spring. Sandy requested updates in the future

Strategic Plan Update

- Pat: We need to do a SOAR (Strength, Opportunity, Aspiration, Result) analysis. This is a tool that has been around for at least a decade from the Aspen Institute which MBLC endorses. It has been done with previous Strategic Plans. Rob Collins has been involved in this since 2016 and then 2020. This would involve trustees and staff. This tool will help the planning committee analyze current and future conditions which affects the library and its' ability to provide the services it deemed necessary. Moderator will collect ideas from the audience. It will be about one hour on zoom. There are no bad ideas and everyone will have a chance to speak. Last time this was done here was Feb 16, 2013. We saved the archives.
- Rob: It would be helpful to have a schedule of benchmarks so we would know what has been achieved, what we are working on and what is coming up in the future. This will be beneficial for everyone to know.
- Pat: There is going to be a meeting in Shrewsbury in the near future where the MBLC staff will be available to speak with. This SOAR analysis does not need to be done every year but needs to be reflected upon yearly to see what has been done.

Survey

- Rob: We have collected about 260 surveys from locations from the locations of the Farmer's Market, BCC, Macony, Town Hall, Libraries, Coop table. The Farmers' Market was 4 Saturdays and got about 50% of the surveys. Pretty diverse crowd and great feedback from the staff at VIM. We created a Spanish Survey with changes made from the VIM staff. Not sure how we are collecting the data from the QR codes. There are 9 from EST.
- Pat: There are about 15 on there and code is still active. People not around during the summer could still fill out the survey. This code is under my name and need to transfer to Excel database. I can send it to Rob.
- Ruby: If you allow others to be an "editor" on the program. Anyone can access it and tabulate it into Excel spreadsheet. This information can be found when you search how to get Google Forms into Excel. Question is how to place the spreadsheet to our existing spreadsheet that Rob has. We have to be careful and could try to do it together.
- Rob: I intend to work with Donna to write up synopsis of the survey and what were people's major concerns and suggestions. This would be publicized in the Edge so we are accountable.
- Sandy: Getting the information out to the public is important.

Ice Cream Social

- Pat: August 19 from 1:30PM to 2:30 PM. Laurie, the Youth Librarian has sent us info on what supplies to bring and will give us update on how many has signed up. We are at this point preparing for about 100 children/adults.

Discussions were about logistics of the preparation. Sandy had arranged for Magician to come. If weather is not good, we can go into the library but the garden is covered partly. Suggest everyone come around noon. This is great per Pat and the kids deserve it.

Other Info

- Sandy: There are focus groups that she has organized from OLLI and Senior Center as well as RSYP. Technology, Accessibility, Programming and Other may come up as topics.
- Pat: Focus group from EST and one thing suggested was having a Sensory Hour. Such as Burlington VT. Library at 9am has Sensory Hour. The families can come in and panels are used to close the area off a bit. We can get a list of things needed and get help raising the money for it. There are robots for people with Autism in California and these kids are fascinated with it.

Citizen Speak

- Karen Smith: I really appreciate having this meeting in person. My concern is how much green space is being taken up by special interest using a courtyard plaza idea. To me, it seem very urban-esk. I am concerned how much green space may be taken away by this courtyard. I have not seen how much is taken away from the taxpayer.
- Lauren: Showed the poster with design of the future W.E.B. DuBois statue and only a strip a little shallower than a chair will be used.
- Karen Smith: I did see that but it takes away from the authenticity of the library. How much are we taking away from the future generations. Has this been approved by the Historic Commission?
- Lauren: We had several meetings and working on it. The stairs that need to be re-grouted by the DPW are also not historic. There are plans to put in another tree for shade. This project is not funded by the tax payer.
- There is a public hearing coming up August 17 for the Historic District Commission at 5:30 PM about the W.E.B. Du Bois statue and the Mason Library steps.

Meeting called to adjourn at 6:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ruby Chang

