

Minutes
Great Barrington Board of Library Trustees Meeting
September 13, 2023 Mason Library

Board Members Present:

Patrick Hollenbeck (Chair)
Lauren Clark
Sandy Pantorno
Rob Shaeffer
Ruby Chang

Friends of the Library Members:

Ed Abrahams
Holly Hamer

Library Interim Director: Donna Brown

Community Member: Michelle Loubert

Meeting called to convene at 5:01 p.m. by Chair.

Approval of August Minutes: Motion called by Lauren and second by Sandy. No discussions. All voted “aye” to approve.

Friends Report: Ed noted the book sale was phenomenally successful at the front of the library. We had a boost from two huge book donations from the Sheffield Library because they are not doing sales anymore and also from the W.E.B. Du Bois Book Center. We raised more than all last year, about \$8000. We are now out of books. We gave 5-6 boxes that we were giving away, mainly paperbacks. “We love your donations but we would like you take the books because it is your last chance!” Ed noted that he does not need to publicize for more books. We are able to take Venmo for payment. The phone number used is Holly’s number. We have had donations up to \$50. Pat asked about 501C3. Friends are happy to receive and hold onto any money you raise. You can do it through the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires (Liana Toscanini), they will charge a percent and handle the thank you notes. Lauren noted they will take 7%. If you do not need the service, then Friends can handle the money. If there are major moneys involving audits, we will let you know. If you are not a nonprofit, people can still write checks to Friends.

Director’s Report:

Pat indicated if director has turned in a report, they do not go through the whole report. If you have questions can earmark for next meeting. Donna can answer simple questions for now.

Sandy asked about any problems with the building.

Donna: nothing new. Elevator is operating.

Ed: Door of pantry not working and need adjustment. Donna will contact DPW.

Pat: part time position search?

Donna: position is posting by desk and MBLC, quite a few applicants. Part-time positions as well as one full time downstairs services tech position. Looking at base level.

Sandy noted she loved all the museum passes that get used. Consider more passes.

Donna: The Clark need the physical pass. Get on phone and print it out. Cancelling is possible. Friends have to pay for the passes. Some are \$10.00 off. 67 people have taken out the passes. Not broken down to which museums.

Ruby: Air Filters, School Study noted changing them regularly will decrease rate of Covid Infection. Not sure about procedure of getting DPW to change more regularly? Rather than 6 months would be better to change every 2-3 months.

Sandy noted this recommendation should come from the Health Department.

CPA Application Request, Discussion and Vote:

- Pat: There was an out of round money available left from the last Town Meeting. It came all of a sudden, there were only 4 applications for the money. We are one of them. Ruby and I spent hours writing for the application. It is hard. We made it to Round 2 and application is much longer with more questions with the same four groups. We are keeping the request at \$200,000. The MBLC requires \$150,000 and another \$50,000 for the studies including the building program that need new stipulations and condition assessment. Covid has changed things, want everything mobile and nothing stationary. Robust focus groups by consultants and not in-house. Heavily weighing on that. DEI(Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and ADA accessibility (Sandy said). They up the money from 50% to 60% (for the construction project.) If we get through Round 2 then it will go to the Town meeting on October 23. There is another round for next fiscal year coming up end of October. Somerville West Branch is the sister library to Ramsdell and they used CPA money to pay interest to a bond. They got 2.5 M dollars in chunks over 5 years. Amherst did it for Jones Library asking (CPA) for \$300,000 five years in a row, using the CPA money to pay for interest on the bond. It is imbedded in the CPC laws as to ways of funding this stuff.
- Sandy: If money comes in, who would you use.
- Pat: Rob Cullin would be consulted, Foresight, maybe, MBLC has list of consultants with great examples. The second round will be December and no funding from the town till vote in the Town meeting in May. If we get these consultants, they will take over with getting focus groups in the spring. If we don't get the CPA money, the town can put it into the budget or a bond. The taxpayers will pay for the interest. Hopefully we can get this before the school issue. There is no guarantee for pricing now.
- Sandy: The money will provide for the writing as well? Nice to be able to hand it off.
- Pat: Yes! If we do not get the whole thing, there is another proposal for \$80,000, will take care of the consultants. We have been in touch with FDA (Financial Development Agency) in Amherst who have a good track record in helping libraries to raise money. Such as Stockbridge and Roejan Library, Triplex. They do short feasibility study. They did Pittsfield Y. The initial feasibility study is about three to five thousand. They start foundations.
- Sandy: Nonprofits also bring people in to raise money like galas. Not unusual.
- Pat: Roejan had to raise everything. That is the process.
- Rob: What is the alternative?
- Pat: They may give the fifty and we have alternative proposal. They may negotiate tomorrow night. We have written up another proposal for \$80,000. Donors need real commitment from the town. If town gives \$150,000 then we could get matching money through donations. We are volunteers that care about people with disabilities.
- Rob: are they taking account the ramp? Disability issue?
- Pat: The assessed value of Ramsdell is somewhere around 1.7 to 1.8 M. If you spend a third of that value or \$600,000 on some of the stuff that triggers everything has to be done. They do not want to work piecemeal for ADA, want it all fixed. All of the codes have to up to code, like electrical, fire code. The state building grant will not pay for things already done like the ramp. ADA ramp will not count toward the trigger. Once you get into the building then will need to do everything.
- More discussion on requirements for ADA accessibility for building renovations and other candidates for CPA Application for tomorrow.
- Pat: Back in March of 2023, Trustees asked about this stuff and now we are onto Step 2. We would like to refresh that and need a vote and sign this so that we could present this vote as part of the package for the application Step 2 tomorrow. The letter was read by Pat.
(enclosed at appendix to the minutes.)

Vote for CPA Application for Step one and Step Two:

Motion made by Sandy for vote to go forward with the CPA Application Step 2. Rob second the motion. No discussion. All in favor raised hand, all five members present. Carol was absent. Letter passed around for signing. All five members present signed and voted yes.

- Ruby: the minutes from this meeting will not be available by tomorrow and we need evidence that everyone agreed with this application.

Strategic Plan Update:

- Sandy: Present results from OLLI Focus group meeting and RSYP Focus groups. Responses passed around and reviewed including "InterGen" from RSYP. The responses were written onto the poster paper and then transcribed. RSYP were a smaller group and kept repeating the library was one of the two places that they feel safe with the other being Railroad St. They would like to keep the library safe and areas that they can feel comfortable. Safe means not being harassed
- Ruby: reviewed the process and people involved in the OLLI Group. People were free thinking and willing to help even beyond the meeting such as help with fund raising.
- Sandy: plan for more informal meeting at Railroad St. get bullet list. One young man just graduated from college and interested in connect youth to the library. They wanted outdoor drive-in.
- Donna: They used to have meeting here.
- Sandy: Joan at the Senior Center noted some seniors cannot get to the library due to not driving. The SP can be seen as a wish list as aspirational. Getting a grant like the Southern Berkshire Grant that could share a van with other communities. Doing more research on that. Also areas that are underserved or elderly are included.
- Lauren: Tate Coleman who worked on Cultural Project together while he was in high school started a bus/shuttle service/Tri- town connector(pay by sliding scale) Request to pick up with central site. Get picked up at home.
- Donna: noted they are starting to branch out to go back to church.
- Rob: like the book mobile model similar to the Farmer's Market Food Mobile starting to go to food desert areas in Pittsfield and Southern Berkshire towns with all free vegetables, where markets are at least 30 min. drive away.
- Sandy: This is tentative SP stuff, not here are specific elements like year 1, year 2, year 3. No timeline. Need tangible goals, like increasing programs by one. Goals that can be completed. This is draft. Can make comments nothing personal. Also, foundations were discussed at OLLI.
- Ruby: reviewed recent webinar about setting up foundations. The Parish was in Louisiana and hired a fundraiser to raise money for fund raising and get people on the board that are needed such as people with bankers or in communications. Each board member give \$500.00 per year. Able to raise money over time. Newton Library has 2M in Friends and get \$45,000 each year.
- Sandy: welcome recommendations to the draft. She mentioned "InterGen" and stream-line effective governance. Many SP write the governance of the library since people do not know. This would be a good opportunity to write what the library director, trustees and Town Manager each does. Many people are not aware the Town Manager is involved in the library. If we have limited funding, it is not good. Ollie members indicated a foundation would be good.
- Pat: Goals are all our priorities. Our last SP, number six was the building and now is number one. The staff should be number 2 and then community is 3. This is so we could get money for ADA compliance at the Ramsdell. Increasing staff training (cheaply?) Like webinars. How does the libraries do it?
- Donna: not sure.
- Sandy: How would we know how many programs over 5 years? Guesstimate?
- Pat: look at ARIS report and we are category C by population and can see what other libraries are doing. Ramsdell is under "Outlet" for branch libraries. Baseline/benchmark of

what they are doing. Big in Eastern Libraries are pooling money and doing Zoom programs with library sponsors by one library. Bring the cost down. One about plastic in the oceans.

- Sandy: Anything you want to add ...programming? Atheneum connected with business of the area, If you renew or new (library card), you get something off. This is connecting the businesses with the library. September is Library card sign up month and starting next year in September could be a community connection.
- Pat: on the survey, people are interested in doing movies again, not sure if you guys (Friends) are interested in doing that again?
- Ed: waiting on better air circulation.
- Donna: Circulating some but only on the older part of the building. They have one unit that is working. Where we sit is the good part.
- Pat: If we put castors on the furniture could we move it?
- Holly: would have so many people that we would need to turn people away.
- Sandy: why don't we limit it. Up to 75 people?
- Holly: will need to move all these furniture away.
- Donna: the legs are very wobbly.
- Ed: can we re-discuss this at the next meeting.
- Sandy: Just try to think of ways of solving the problem, not being critical. I am never critical.
- Holly: This is not simple... not just need better motivation or determination, needs cooperation between all the different factors and one of the big ones is staff.
- Sandy: First page is acknowledgements, then land acknowledgement. Then, welcome letter, any thoughts? Library overview, this would go to Patrick, get some photos, (Facebook page), hours of service, personal, governance, Methodology, surveys, focus groups. SOAR, 1:1 conversations. Then Goals in the pie chart , outcomes and objectives, then governing board approval. Then Appendices : community survey, focus group results, anything else gathered.
- Pat: MBLC is looking for the User Needs Assessment that is most critical. Community Survey gives information.

***More discussion between Pat, Sandy and Rob about the the SP including assessment of goals. ALA has assessment mechanisms. Minimum of semi-annual assessment.

- Sandy reviewed the Mission statement as a draft "Great Barrington Libraries empower and bring all of our community together to positively transform their lives and strengthen our community." Also using Reflect, Reimagine and Reconnect.
- Pat: We will need to vote on this. We also need to bring forward our past plans to review.
- Sandy: Values, 5 values; welcoming DEI, Serving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Everyone has a seat at the community table. Open mind, in our collections and programming. Evidenced based utilizing data and research in making library decisions to align our resources and support systems. Last one is Flexible and forward thinking, being open to new ideas and quickly adjust to changing times, using guidelines to be library-ready. Safe place to get information in times of crisis.
- Pat: newest is DEIB with B for belonging. Also question mention of creativity? The site from ALA is called project outcome to evaluation of impact. Knowledge, Confidence, Application, and awareness. Seven key areas of library services.
- Rob: Mission statement, first to define core attributes to incorporate into the mission statement and build it in. In publishing as benchmarks. Does not have to be more than 3 statements. Not like bullet points. More sentences.
- Sandy read several samples from other SP. One from Ipswich.
- Ruby: What are single words that would represent the library,
- Community, life enrichment, empowering (Sandy), transforming(all agree), vote of these words. Then made into sentences. Learning, Ruby mentioned Third space reviewed definition. Relaxed welcomed space other than home or work/school. Information another word. Life long learning is different. Everyone voted and the three that stood out was community, life-long learning, and transformation. Sandy would like "safe place" "refuge" "safe haven". Rob mentioned community space for all, tone to speak to all. Welcoming space for all.

- Pat: Hannah Van Sickle will be putting this together. She is a great writer and story teller. Need one week to polish it up. Most important is the needs assessment.
- Sandy noted we will need one week to polish and bring back for a vote. More discussion on timeline. Would like deadline at 9/21.

Motion made to adjourn the meeting by Ruby and second by Pat at 6:56 pm.