

**Newburyport Public Library
Board of Directors
Virtual Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2021**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:17 pm by Ms. Valeriani. Roll call was taken.

Present: Kathy Carey, James Connolly, Marcia Edson, Councilor Jared Eigerman, Gary Gorski, Christian Hansen, Sarah Holden, Steve Moore, Susan Shefte, Sarah Spalding, and Elizabeth Valeriani.

Giselle Stevens, Head Librarian and Sara Kelso, Assistant Head Librarian and Acting Recording Secretary.

Absent: Mayor Holaday.

Public Comments: There were no additional participants in the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 17, 2021 virtual meeting minutes were approved. Councilor Eigerman abstained from voting.

Next Meeting

The December 15, 2021 meeting is the final meeting with Councilor Eigerman and Mayor Holaday as ex officio board members.

Board meetings will continue virtually in 2022 until further notice. The next board meeting will take place virtually on January 19, 2022.

Head Librarian Report

Budget

No budget items were discussed at the December 15, 2021 meeting. Ms. Stevens will advise the Newburyport Public Library (NPL) board of upcoming budget topics as incoming Mayor Elect Sean Riordan begins his term in January 2022.

Building and Grounds

An in-house lighting project has started. LED replacement fixtures have been installed in the study rooms and Reference office. Additional fixtures have been purchased for the Archival Center and other staff offices. Ballasts were replaced in the co-working space.

Touch-up painting and minor wall repairs are in progress throughout the building. Several stained carpet squares in the Reading Room have been replaced.

Ms. Valeriani inquired about the status of the elevator after a recent inspection failure. October 2021 changes to state inspection requirements caused many libraries to fail elevator inspections this fall. Ms. Stevens hopes to have the elevator certified by the January 90-day deadline.

Personnel

Ms. Gutierrez has been selected for the open Staff Librarian position in Adult Services. She has been working as a Library Technician and is completing her Master of Library Studies (MLS) degree this month. She begins her new role at NPL on December 20.

After five years as a Staff Librarian in Technical Services, Ms. Bald finished working at NPL last week. This Staff Librarian position has been posted internally. There will be some shifting of duties and departments by a current Staff Librarian to fill the Technical Services role. An external posting for a Staff Librarian will be made at the end of the month.

Policy

No policies were reviewed at the December 15, 2021 meeting.

Staff Training

In early December, Ms. Stevens and Ms. Kelso distributed an anonymous staff survey to solicit feedback about training, work culture, service improvement suggestions, and a variety of other areas. Results will be shared with staff by December 17, 2021. Several requested changes are already in progress, including building projects and adjustments to public services. Ms. Stevens has invited staff to follow up in person or anonymously, and intends to utilize feedback to improve staff communication, library protocol, and overall service to the community. Ongoing staff feedback regarding library service and workplace relations has been encouraged by Ms. Stevens throughout her tenure as Head Librarian.

Friends of the Library

The Friends of the NPL annual appeal letters have been sent this week.

The Friends received a donation of \$200,000 from the Newburyport Area Industrial Foundation (NAID). The NAID Foundation is dissolving and has distributed their funds to 22 local area non-profit organizations. Potential projects using these funds include added study room space, improved landscaping, hybrid programming equipment, accessibility equipment for the Program Room, and continued microfilm digitization.

Old Business

Lower Level Repairs

The Archival Center has reopened on the Lower Level with regular hours: Monday through Saturday, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Patrons are encouraged to make appointments, but walk-ins are also welcome. In November, the Archival Center received an upgraded photocopier at no charge to the Library through a local contracted vendor.

Archival Center CPA Grant HVAC Project

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant-funded project to replace the Archival Center HVAC units is in process. Old equipment has been removed, and new equipment is currently being installed, with an expected completion date of December 23, 2021.

Board Bios

A number of Board Bios are complete. Ms. Stevens is still gathering initial appointment dates for some Board members.

Building Fund

The fiscal year 2022 (FY22) Building Fund report has been submitted to the Treasurer's Office. Mr. Connolly, Mr. Moore, and Ms. Holden manage oversight and reporting of the building fund as self-perpetuating board members. This fund acts as a reserve for unforeseen building needs not covered by capital monies or other budget line items.

Website Project

The new NPL website completed beta testing and launched on December 1, 2021. Ms. Shefte inquired about maintenance of the site. Ms. Stevens indicated that Ms. Kelso manages the NPL site through an established written protocol, with Head of Adult Services Ms. Atherton serving as a back-up site manager in Ms. Kelso's absence.

Other Old Business

None.

New Business

Calendar

The Library will be closed on Friday, December 24, 2021 and Saturday, December 25, 2021, for the Christmas holiday. The Library will be open on Monday, December 27, 2021 with normal business hours. The Library will also be closed on Friday, December 31, and Saturday, January 1, 2022, with normal business hours resuming on Monday, January 3, 2022.

Book groups and other scheduled adult programs continue to be offered as a mix of virtual and in-person format. There are weekly drop-in programs for children and teens. In-person programming is continually evaluated for safety and adjusted in light of

current public health concerns. Virtual programs are still well-attended. A craft buffet will be offered for children during the week of December 29, 2021.

Ms. Valeriani inquired about the status of children's story hours. Ms. Stevens recently discussed public health concerns with the City Health Department. The Health Department recommends caution at this time, and small children are largely unvaccinated and not required to wear masks at the library. Ms. Stevens intends to revisit this situation with the Health Department again in January 2022 before considering new story times. Ms. Carey commented that it may be wise to wait given current public health concerns and the availability of vaccinations to younger visitors. Ms. Stevens indicated that most area libraries are not currently offering indoor story hours. Ms. Stevens is committed to the health and safety of all visitors and staff and is approaching in-person programming with caution at this time, particularly for vulnerable populations. Ms. Stevens is hopeful about expanding in-person programs later in the winter.

Mr. Hansen inquired about long-term plans for hybrid programming given the ongoing nature of public health concerns. Ms. Stevens indicated that the library is exploring this and intends to utilize the Friends of the NPL NAID monies to fund the purchase of technology equipment to facilitate hybrid participation. The Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC) has formed a hybrid programming committee. A Staff Librarian from NPL participates at these committee meetings to strategize and discuss with other libraries hybrid programming models, successes, and potential challenges. Ms. Stevens also noted that hybrid programming expands the potential for attendance to outside communities and populations that cannot physically visit the library. The NPL is able to claim attendance for all virtual attendees regardless of physical location in its statistical reporting to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). This type of resource sharing is in the spirit of library missions and equitable access. Ms. Stevens also indicated that hybrid programming offers an opportunity for multiple libraries to collaborate and offer otherwise unavailable or unaffordable presenters to a potentially larger audience.

Mr. Moore inquired about whether the purchase of additional HEPA air filtration units would help visitors feel more comfortable visiting the building. Ms. Stevens shared details of the existing building HVAC controls and air quality to assure the Board of measures already in place to account for air purification throughout the building. Ms. Stevens acknowledged the possible advantage of utilizing additional HEPA air filtration units at story hours where unmasked participants might be concentrated in a space together.

November Statistics

November is a short month with an annual decrease in many areas of measurement. Foot traffic and long-term stays appear to be increasing this month. Public computer usage sessions have been extended to four hours. Study space use is increasing, as is use of the co-working space and individual study carrels.

Other New Business

Mayor Holaday will depart her role at the end of the year, and incoming Mayor Elect Sean Riordan has reached out to City department heads via a transition team. Ms. Stevens completed a transition report, the NPL FY22 and FY23 action plans, MBLC certification requirements, the Head Librarian resume, an organizational chart, and annual reports with the mayoral transition team. Ms. Stevens will be meeting with transition team member on Friday. Ms. Stevens intends to continue building a strong relationship with the Mayor's office, emphasizing the importance of the library in the community and its accountability requirements with the MBLC. Ms. Stevens also intends to encourage the need for communication among City Department Heads, strong human resources support for personnel issues, and facilities maintenance for ongoing building projects.

Ms. Stevens announced her intent to retire in July 2022. She announced this decision at this time in order to assist in the transition process, particularly with a new Mayor taking office in January. Ms. Stevens reminded the NPL Board members of the process for the selection of a future Head Librarian. Ms. Stevens expects a search committee to form in January or February 2022, with a job description and/or posting completed by March 2022, interviews in April 2022, and an official transition in July 2022.

Adjournment

Ms. Valeriani introduced a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 pm. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 6:24 pm.