

**Newburyport Public  
Library Board of  
Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
September 21, 2022**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 pm by Elizabeth Valeriani. Roll call was taken.

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

Sara Kelso, Head Librarian, and Jessica Atherton, Assistant Head Librarian and Acting Recording Secretary.

**Absent:** Mayor Sean Reardon, Councilor Heather Shand, and Sarah Holden.

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

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the June 15, 2022, meeting were approved.

**Next Meeting:**

Next meeting: October 19, 2022.

The October meeting will be held in person in the Director's Room due to the Friends of the Newburyport Public Library fall Great Old Book Sale taking place in the Program Room in October.

**Head Librarian Report**

Ms. Kelso presented her vision for the Newburyport Public Library (NPL), highlighting an interest in building community and increasing accessibility. This vision is a work in progress and she expressed her commitment to developing the vision in conjunction with input from the board, community members, and staff.

**Library Story**

The Library participated for the first time in the bed race this year and was named the "most creative" entry. Staff voted to use the prize money to purchase ice cream scoops from a local business.

The community puzzle table has also brought together two people who have become friends beyond the walls of the Library as a result of their shared time puzzling within it.

**Budget**

The fiscal year 2023 (FY23) Library budget was approved by the City Council on June 21, 2022, in the amount of \$1,468,263.33. Approximately \$1,090,809.33 is allocated to personnel services, and \$377,454.00 has been allocated to purchase of services.

The FY22 Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) has been submitted. Statistics are higher overall this year due to eased COVID restrictions. The FY22 financial report due to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) has also been submitted to satisfy spending compliance guidelines and qualify for FY23 state aid payments.

**Building and Grounds**

Tiles were replaced and repaired in the front lobby after defunct security gates were removed in the spring.

The exterior building camera installation project started in July 2022. Three cameras will be installed: one focused on the back parking lot, one on the Prince Place–State Street corner, and one near the patio on the Harris Street side of the building. Installation is still in progress. The Video Surveillance Policy will be presented for review at an upcoming meeting in light of this technology upgrade.

New carpeting was successfully installed on the first-floor staircase and second-floor landing areas leading to the public computers and second-floor restrooms, as well as on the stairs leading to the Archives and the lobby area adjacent to the Archival Center Reading Room on the lower level. Replacement of carpet tiles in the first-floor Reading Room, adjacent hallway, and media area near the elevator is scheduled for November 2022.

Plexiglass barriers were removed from all service desks on Monday, August 15, after a staff-wide poll was taken.

A second-floor arched window was replaced by B&R Glass on Tuesday, August 23, due to a broken seal that was causing vapor condensation between panes.

Ms. Kelso will be coordinating upgrade and replacement of fire alarms throughout the building in FY23 as designated in the City's current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Ms. Kelso will be working with Kim Turner, the City's special projects manager, and Katelyn Sullivan, from the Office of Planning and Development, to start working on grounds drainage repair plans. Problems with the current drainage system are causing the front steps and retaining wall to shift. A project to improve the drainage situation and restore the wall and stairs will likely begin in FY24 after this issue is addressed.

A study of energy efficiency and boiler replacement options in FY24 will also begin this spring.

## **Personnel**

Five applicants were interviewed for the position of Assistant Head Librarian by Ms. Stevens, Ms. Kelso, and Ms. Drelick, from the City's Human Resources department, in July 2022. The pool included two internal applicants. Ms. Atherton was promoted to the position of Assistant Head Librarian on July 25. She served almost 10 years in the Adult Services/Information Services department, first as a librarian and then as a department head. Ms. Atherton has almost completed the necessary training for the role and is thus far managing her new responsibilities successfully.

Internal applicant Ms. Echelberger was promoted as an American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) member to the role of Head of Adult Services. This created a Staff Librarian vacancy in her department. This position involves handling technical services and was assumed by Ms. Rubinstein on August 22. The Staff Librarian Adult Services Programming position was posted on August 4. Several candidates were interviewed, and an offer was extended to a candidate on Thursday, September 8, with an anticipated start date of September 26.

Initial interviews were conducted for the open position of Staff Librarian for the Children's department after Ms. Oxton retired on July 13. Two offers were extended to candidates who subsequently withdrew. Ms. Kelso, Ms. Atherton, and Ms. Privitera are revisiting the job description and posting and may revisit previous applicants as the search continues.

Ms. Lemuth resigned on September 9, for a promotion opportunity at another library. Ms. Geller also resigned for a promotion opportunity at another library and her last day will be September 16. Advertising and recruitment for these positions will begin in mid-to late September 2022. Ms. Lacey has resigned. Her last day will be September 30. Advertising and recruitment for this 20-hour-per-week Library Technician position will begin in early October 2022.

Discussion ensued on the following topics: the possibility of negotiations with the City for higher pay for staff and substitutes, how the Library is managing staff coverage in the Children's Room without a Children's librarian, and the benefits of cross-training staff for additional coverage, camaraderie, and flexibility.

## **Policy**

The Gifts/Donations/Memorials Policy, last approved in January 2013, was presented for review and revision. Further review will take place at a future meeting.

## **Staff Training**

Staff training for the one-year Commonwealth Cybersecurity Awareness grant is now 75% complete. Staff will complete this program by early November 2022.

All-staff training for additional topics will take place at the next scheduled all-staff meeting in October 2022. This training will most likely include procedures related to materials challenges.

With new administration and new department heads in some areas, Library staff and administration are revisiting some best practices and streamlining documentation for continual improvement of service. Staff librarians are also receiving additional cross-training in other departments in an effort to lend additional flexibility for offering expanded services.

Discussion ensued around the resources for trustees on the subject of book bans and challenges and use of outside resources for Library staff training on book bans and challenges. Library board members were invited to attend the upcoming staff training at the October all-staff meeting.

### **Friends of the Newburyport Public Library**

The Friends partnered with a long-time patron who donated time and plantings to a fall refresh of the curved garden area in front of the ramp walkway on August 28.

The Friends will be holding their annual membership meeting September 28 at 7:00 pm in the large meeting room.

The Friends are still in the planning stages of a spring landscaping project funded with Newburyport Area Industrial Development (NAID) donation monies.

Missing fence posts were contracted for new castings courtesy of the Friends. Updates are coming soon on the physical replacement of these components.

### **Old Business**

#### **Archival Center CPA Grant HVAC Project**

The HVAC units have been completely installed and the HVAC vendor has assisted with ongoing fine-tuning of settings for optimal preservation conditions on the lower level.

### **New Business**

#### **Outreach and Community Partnerships**

Ms. Kelso & Ms. Tansey participated in the City's inaugural "Know Your Community Day" at the Council on Aging on August 4, where over 50 local agencies, City departments, and social organizations gathered for a community information fair. The event was a success, and the Library issued several library cards during its 4-hour session.

Several NPL staff members worked together to create a “bedtime story”–themed bed for the 2022 Yankee Homecoming Bed Race on August 4. Staff dressed as book characters and distributed free prizes and information about the Library along the way.

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton met with Ms. Los, who represents the City in its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative on August 17, to discuss current Library efforts to address DEI, learn about city-wide DEI efforts, and to strategize ways in which the Library can form productive partnerships related to DEI topics.

The Library served as a primary election polling location for Ward 2 residents on Tuesday, September 6. The process went smoothly for both the City and for the Library, resulting in many new faces visiting the building and a number of library card registrations. Federal and state-wide election polling is scheduled to take place at the Library on Tuesday, November 8.

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton met with Ms. Boateng, who is employed by the City as a licensed social worker, to discuss a partnership that will provide drop-in hours to residents seeking to address their social service needs. The partnership is expected to begin on September 13. This program is being launched as a one-hour-per-week trial, lasting 30 days. The partnership will be reevaluated afterward to determine the level of interest.

Ms. Kelso will be attending the Whitman on Walls event on September 22 at the Central Congregational Church. This event featured a number of speakers and poets from Newburyport celebrating the works of Walt Whitman. The Library was one of a handful of local non-profit organizations invited to share information with attendees about their offerings to the community.

## **Programming**

The Library hosted several Yankee Homecoming programs between July 30 and August 7, including local history talks and a program on miniatures of notable Newburyport buildings presented by David Vine on August 2.

The Library collaboration with the Parker River Wildlife Refuge (PRWR) has resumed with Children’s Room staff offering a monthly story time in the PRWR Visitor Center garden.

The Summer Reading program was a success again this year, with 350 participants at the kickoff event on June 11. To the delight of many patrons, the kickoff featured farm animals on the lawn. A total of 498 children, 81 young adults, and 37 adults participated in the program which ended on August 13. Nearly 15,000 entries were submitted for summer reading prize drawings, with nearly 10,000 hours of reading logged by participants.

## **Calendar**

The Library was closed Saturday, September 3–Monday, September 5 in observance of the Labor Day holiday.

Primary election polling for Newburyport voters in Ward 2 took place at the Library from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Tuesday, September 5. The Library remained open for regular service hours while polling was taking place.

## **FY22 Annual Report**

The FY22 Annual Report was presented for review. This report details statistical information regarding the building, circulation, programming, attendance, the budget, and delivery of services.

## **FY22 and Summer 2022 Statistics**

Overall, the monthly attendance continues to increase, with an average of 430 visitors per day in July and 435 visitors per day in August.

## **FY22 Statistics**

Statistics for circulation, attendance, new library cards, programs, and most other areas were significantly higher in FY22 compared to FY21. Some of this may be attributed to an easing of COVID restrictions effective at the start of FY22, with increased access and service offerings.

## **June/July/August 2022 Statistics**

Attendance increased in June, as did circulation. June brought a slight decrease in cataloged items as the end of the fiscal year ordering closed. Archival Center visits were up 79% in July compared to the previous month. Meeting room use increased during July, as did overall circulation. Museum pass usage was up 64% in August compared to July. Attendance increased roughly 10% during August compared to July.

## **Summer Statistics**

This summer, the Library circulated 67,560 print, A/V, and digital items. Museum passes were used 216 times. The Library recorded 32,178 visits. The Library website was visited 29,072 times. A total of 616 people participated in the summer reading program

## **Other New Business**

The FY24 Action Plan, which is largely derived from the current FY21–FY24 Strategic Plan, is due to the MBLC by October 1. Department heads are reviewing the action plan for any final input before Ms. Kelso submits the document to the MBLC.

An August 10 opinion piece in the *Newburyport Daily News* regarding the Library's collections was presented for discussion.

Discussion ensued on opinion pieces in the newspaper and when they require a response.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.