

**Newburyport Public  
Library Board of  
Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
October 19, 2022**

**Call to Order**

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

**Present:** Mayor Sean Reardon, Kathy Carey, James Connolly, Marcia Edson, Steve Moore, Susan Shefte, Sarah Spalding, and Elizabeth Valeriani

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

**Absent:** Councilor Heather Shand, Gary Gorski, Christian Hansen, and Sarah Holden

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

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 21, 2022, meeting were approved.

**Next Meeting:**

Next meeting: November 16, 2022

The November meeting will take place in the Program Room on the first floor of the Newburyport Public Library (NPL).

**Head Librarian Report**

**Library Story**

A recent visitor was surprised and delighted to hear that the Library offers seasonal outdoor seating on the patio adjacent to the Children's Activity Room on Harris Street, and took advantage on a lovely fall day to read a recent selection from the stacks.

**Budget**

The City's Department of Energy and Recycling has advised all public buildings of anticipated increases in energy costs for the winter. The City has a contract with a third-party energy supplier to cap these increases. Additional money can be shifted to the heat and electricity line item in the municipal budget closer to the end of the fiscal year if necessary.

The fiscal year 2023 (FY2023) annual financial report to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) was submitted by Ms. Kelso in September 2022, ahead

of the October 7, 2022, deadline. Ms. Kelso will advise on forthcoming fall state aid payments distributed to libraries by the MBLC in response to this required annual report.

### **Building and Grounds**

Light fixtures in the Archival Center work room, storage area, compact shelving area, and Reading Room were replaced with new energy-efficient LED fixtures by the City electrician during the week of October 13, 2022. Retrofitting of Reading Room dome lights will likely take place during the winter months, according to the Department of Public Services (DPS).

Staff parking signage was installed in the back lot on October 13, 2022, by DPS at no cost to the Library. Unauthorized vehicles are an ongoing problem in the staff parking lot, which already has fewer spaces available than are needed for staff.

Installation of carpet for the Reading Room and first-floor hallways has been scheduled for November 15–16.

The Library was awarded \$6,500 by the Commonwealth Department of Energy Resources through the Green Communities Division as part of a larger City award. This money was designated for “Motors and controls,” which would replace the variable-frequency drives for building air handler units in the current HVAC system. Ms. Kelso is meeting with Ms. Ettenborough of the City to discuss appropriate allocation of these funds to necessary projects under this designated category.

Ms. Kelso will be coordinating the 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 the City’s Special Projects Manager, Kim Turner, and Katelyn Sullivan in the Office of Planning and Development to start working on drainage repair plans for the exterior of the building, which are causing the front steps and retaining wall to shift. A project to restore the wall and stairs will likely happen in FY24 after this issue is addressed.

Mr. Moore included a discussion point on the importance of banks as a source for donation funding. Ms. Kelso agreed and affirmed a continued interest in the established relationships with local organizations.

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

### **Personnel**

Ms. Lacey resigned her part-time Library Technician position on September 30. This position has been posted and interviews are underway with an anticipated start date for a new candidate sometime in early to mid-November.

Ms. Ladebush started on September 26 as an Adult Services Staff Librarian. Ms. Ladebush joined the NPL from the Ogunquit Public Library and is getting acquainted with other staff and her role.

The Library is currently reviewing applications for an open Staff Librarian position in Adult Services. Interviews will be scheduled the first or second week of November, with the intent of filling the position by the end of November.

An opening for a Staff Librarian in the Children's Department remains vacant as two previous candidates withdrew after offers were extended. The position has been reposted on several job boards throughout the New England region. Ms. Kelso, Ms. Atherton, and Ms. Privitera of the Children's Department continue to discuss possible modifications to the position and recruitment posting. Applications are still being accepted.

Library staff have been incredibly supportive of one another, and very flexible in filling needs amid current personnel shortages. On-call staff have also been used to reduce the burden on regular staff.

Discussion ensued on job descriptions and union requirements.

## **Policy**

The Gifts/Donations/Memorials Policy, last approved in January 2013, was presented for review and revision. Discussion ensued on the intersection of tax guidelines and donations. According to the general consensus, the Library does not appraise the value of donated items.

## **Staff Training**

All-staff training will take place at the next scheduled all-staff meeting on Wednesday, October 26, and will include materials challenges procedures.

Staff librarians continue to receive additional cross-training in other departments in an effort to lend additional flexibility for offering expanded services.

## **Friends of the Library**

The Friends of the Newburyport Public Library voted to fund phase 9 of the *Daily News* newspaper microfilm digitization project. This phase consists of 150 reels and will encompass most of the remaining materials in need of digitization. Materials were sent out in early October 2022 to the vendor. Digitized content should be available sometime in January or early February 2023.

The Friends held a successful annual membership meeting on September 28 in the Large Meeting Room, which was attended by more than 50 people and featured a special guest performer.

The Friends have been working hard to promote the upcoming Fall Great Old Book Sale, which takes place this week. Donations were accepted last weekend and early this week.

### **Old Business**

The Library's FY24 action plan has been submitted to the MBLC. This is an annual requirement and part of the certification process for the Library with the Commonwealth.

### **New Business**

#### **Outreach & Community Partnerships**

Ms. Kelso attended "Whitman on Walls," a community literary and arts event featuring several speakers and nonprofit organizations. The Library set up an informational table and offered handouts and Walt Whitman books for checkout at the event. One library card was issued and books were checked out to members of the community.

Ms. Kelso attended a virtual diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) meeting on September 28 to learn more about current DEI initiatives throughout several Commonwealth municipalities. Ms. Kelso followed up with Ms. Los, who represents the Newburyport DEI alliance to share ideas for how the Library might expand its efforts to implement DEI strategies within the community.

The Children's Department hosted several class tours in September and October from local schools including the River Valley Charter School and Immaculate Conception School. Visiting students learned about library resources. Ms. Young also met with the Newburyport High School librarian on October 14 to discuss ongoing collaborations between institutions.

Portable furniture and a large banner have been purchased using Friends and municipal funds as part of an "outreach kit" currently being assembled for offsite events. This outreach kit will include library cards, informational handouts, and display materials. Library staff will also have access to a laptop and hotspot when attending offsite events.

Drop-in social service support with city social worker Ms. Boateng has been successful in the initial trial period, with several visitors receiving direct assistance during drop-in hours over the last four weeks. This initiative will continue for the foreseeable future, and Ms. Kelso and Ms. Boateng will continue discussion to make necessary adjustments moving forward.

Susan Shefte inquired about how to anonymously connect interested parties with Ms. Boateng's service location and hours. Signage and alternative methods were discussed.

### **Programming**

The Library hosted a successful “Cat Café,” on Saturday, October 1, which was attended by 40 people. This event featured adoptable animals from the Merrimack Valley Feline Rescue Society.

Story times for children resumed in mid-September and have been well attended. After-school drop-in programs have also resumed.

The Library is also offering a four-part knitting series, and several Halloween-themed programs for October.

Book groups, the movie matinee, and the art history group continue throughout October.

### **Calendar**

The Library was closed Monday, October 10, in recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

The Library will open at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 26, due to all-staff training.

The Library will again serve as a polling location for Ward 2 residents during the November state elections from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on November 8. The Library will remain open for normal operating hours. Ms. Kelso will be onsite for the duration of polling hours to ensure appropriate access to the building.

The Library will be closed on Friday, November 11, in recognition of the Veterans Day holiday.

### **September 2022 Statistics**

With the exception of volunteer hours, statistics are down across all categories for September 2022 in comparison with the previous month. As families return to school-year routines, summer happenings dwindle across the city, and cooler fall weather settles in, the downward trend in the statistics is a regular pattern at the Library. In year-over-year comparisons between September 2021 and September 2022, statistics are significantly higher in almost every category, from circulation to attendance and museum pass usage.

### **Other New Business**

Discussion ensued on articles in the *Daily News*, a flyer, and relevant policies.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.