

**Newburyport Public
Library Board of
Directors
Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2022**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:16 p.m. by James Connolly. Roll call was taken.

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

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

Absent: Elizabeth Valeriani, Mayor Sean Reardon and Councilor Heather Shand.

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 19, 2022 meeting were approved.

Next Meeting:

Next meeting: December 21, 2022

The December meeting will take place in the Program Room on the first floor.

Head Librarian Report

Library Story

A patron returned to the library after many years away had lost materials on their account and left to see if they could find them, but returned offering to pay for the items instead. Ms. Privitera waived this five-year-old charge so the patron could regain access to the library. The patron came by later in the week to thank staff, mentioning how it made a difference and how happy they were to be able to use the library again.

After a recent story time, Ms. Privitera was sitting with a regular 2-year-old visitor and his sitter said, *"I just want you to know how much of an impact you have on him. He had about five tantrums this morning because he was missing M-O-M, but as soon as he sat down for story time he turned to me and said, 'I feel better.'"*

Finally, A patron stopped by and shared some cleome flower seeds she found on her walk to the library. She is always paying attention to the plants around her, and is now

retired and does not have a garden, so when she saw the seeds, she brought them to the library to give to someone else.

Budget

The FY23 fall State Aid payment from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) is expected this week in the amount of \$19,583.59.

Ms. Kelso met with the Peabody Trust fund on November 10 for their annual meeting. There was some discussion on the group about the possibility of moving this trust under the management of the city, which is currently managing all other library trusts. A final decision has not been made.

Ms. Kelso met with the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC) Directors group on November 15 to vote on the proposed FY24 MVLC budget. This budget increases the annual assessment to libraries by approximately five percent, which includes a salary adjustment for support staff in line with current prevailing wages and inflation, an increase in shared system maintenance costs, and an increase in electronic resources. The assessment is determined by a number of factors including the size of the library and its circulation and patron base. For Newburyport, this equals \$55,385, an increase from \$52,985 in FY23.

Building and Grounds

Carpeting was replaced in the first-floor Reading Room and in the hallways adjacent to the Large Meeting Room and Administrative offices.

Ms. Kelso met with Ms. Ettenborough of the City Energy Department and Mr. Manning of the Auditor's office to discuss supplementing \$6,500 in Green Communities grant monies awarded by the Commonwealth for variable frequency drive (VFD) replacement on HVAC air handlers. Discussions with Ms. Ettenborough and city DPS officials revealed that replacement of the air handlers and not just the VFD units is recommended due to the age of the equipment, which was installed over 20 years ago with the building renovation. The total project cost is \$39,045. Ms. Kelso determined that \$10,000 in State Aid can be used toward this project. Ms. Ettenborough and Mr. Manning have committed an additional \$10,000 in city funds. The remaining balance of \$12,545 will be financed through "on bill repayment" (OBR) via a National Grid payment plan for 60 months, at a cost of \$209 per month. Financing will not accrue interest.

Additional work was done by P&H Electric on November 7 to continue the installation of exterior cameras through a city-funded grant. The camera vendor is expected to complete installation and configuration of camera equipment this winter, and Ms. Kelso is in touch with the vendor and the city representatives managing this project.

Ms. Kelso is working with DPS to determine if the Library wants to renew its annual HVAC maintenance contract with the current vendor or pursue another competitive company. Contractual maintenance costs over \$1,000 monthly, and does not cover most service calls.

The first-floor kitchen area is in the process of being repurposed for storage of large specialty items like Library of Things materials, and some equipment will be relocated to this area to serve as an additional workspace for special projects. This centralizes and streamlines some staff workflows, and provides additional security for storage of expensive items. Mr. Hansen inquired about previous use of the space and if staff have additional areas in which to prepare meals and enjoy breaks. Ms. Kelso clarified and confirmed that the staff area in the basement is generally used for such purposes, and the first-floor kitchen had been an underutilized space for some time.

Personnel

Full-time Library Technician Ms. McGrath celebrated ten years with the Library in October.

The Library received an internal city applicant for the part-time Library Technician opening vacated by Ms. Lacey September 30. Ms. Maginnis began with the library on November 14.

Interviews for two Adult Services Staff Librarian positions were conducted the first week of November. A candidate has been selected for one of these openings, and an offer has been extended, with an anticipated start date of November 28. A second offer is pending for a candidate who needs to relocate, with an anticipated start date of January 2.

Active recruitment for the Children's Staff Librarian position will be paused until the new year unless additional viable candidates surface. The postings remain on city and state job boards.

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton are working with department heads to ensure that all current postings are clear and accurate representations of the salary, required skills and education, and roles and responsibilities for each position.

Policy

The Gifts/Donations/Memorials Policy last approved in January 2013 was presented for review and approval with additional markups after input from the board in October. Mr. Moore inquired about the distinction between direct giving to the Library and gifts addressed to the Friends. Ms. Kelso clarified the procedures associated with each organization. A vote was taken and the policy passed unanimously.

Ms. Kelso is interested in revisiting use of the Children's Activity Room for evening meeting reservations. The Meeting Room Policy was revised in September 2021. Demand for meeting space continues to rise, and the Conference Room, which seats five, and Study Rooms, which seat three, cannot accommodate many groups. The Large Meeting Room hosts a number of evening programs and other library-related events and should be available for this purpose.

The library is also seeing an increase in requests to engage in photography or videotaping on premises. Ms. Shefte inquired about the nature of these inquiries and

what specifically people are asking to do in the Library. Mr. Hansen also inquired about past practice for such requests. Ms. Kelso clarified for the board. Ms. Kelso would like to coordinate with library department heads to develop a policy for photography and videotaping at the library. While the library does have a photo release form from 2016 for staff use at library events and other occasions, there is no associated policy attached, and no parameters dictating the guidelines for onsite photography or video. The library has a video surveillance policy in place that outlines use of video recording equipment on premises.

Staff Training

Library staff attended an all-employee training development day on Wednesday, October 26. Topics included a presentation from the Friends of the Library, and handling materials challenges.

Ms. Kelso attended the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) Annual Meeting on November 7. Ms. Kelso serves as an executive board member with MLS. Speaker topics included future-proofing libraries and diversity and inclusion.

Friends of the Library

The Friends held a successful fall book sale in late October, raising nearly \$8,000 for library services and programs.

The Friends were in the initial stages of a spring landscaping overhaul, and have put the project on hold for now. Ms. Kelso is working with the Friends on a few smaller building projects, which may include refurbishing the Children's Activity Room for improved safety and functionality, and installation of newer furniture and fixtures for the front lobby.

The Friends paid for an art display system that will be installed in the Archival Center lobby area next week to display library artwork for rotating exhibits. This will serve as a testing grounds for possible expansion of artwork displays throughout the remainder of the building, but a policy must be developed and approved by the board prior to doing so.

Old Business

Discussion of guidelines for public postings and bulletin board displays for community events took place at the October 16 meeting. Ms. Kelso is working with Ms. Atherton and library department heads to develop a policy for board approval at a future meeting.

New Business

Outreach & Community Partnerships

Ms. Kelso met with Ms. Boateng and Ms. Egmont of Newburyport Youth Services on October 20 to discuss a partnership for a "community parenting read" to supplement a year-long speaker and lecture series on parenting. Ms. Kelso, Ms. Boateng, and Ms. Egmont discussed possible reading selections and potential related programming. Ms.

Kelso, Ms. Boateng, and Ms. Egmont expect to confirm details on this project in November, with programming taking place late winter or early spring.

Ms. Kelso met with Ms. Los from the city's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office, and Ms. Cote from Newburyport High School, and several other library professionals from Newburyport schools to discuss current issues with materials challenges and centralized messaging from all city-affiliated libraries. Discussion is ongoing.

The library has encountered a number of surprise visits from local educational institutions bringing large classrooms of students to the Children's room. These visits can bring between 20-60 kids on average. The Library has developed guidelines for successful visits, which have been posted to the library website, and Ms. Kelso and Ms. Privitera are working on language to distribute to schools as appropriate.

Programming

The Library hosted a successful "Cat Café," with a local animal advocacy organization, with 40 people attending. Cookies and Coloring and other after school craft and social activities for kids 5-11 have been popular, with between 10-28 kids per session. Morning story times for babies and non-walkers have been popular, with an average of 25 people attending each session. Virtual and in-person Halloween-themed programs were also well-attended.

Calendar

The Library served as a midterm election polling location for Ward 2 residents on November 8. A total of 1,510 people visited the library that day, the highest visitor count for a single day in over three years. As with September's polling event, the event resulted in a number of new and re-issued library cards and great conversations with first-time visitors.

The Library was closed Friday, November 11, in recognition of Veterans Day.

The Library will also be closed Thursday, November 24 and Friday, November 25 for Thanksgiving, and will close at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, November 23.

October 2022 Statistics

Attendance increased slightly in October. Sixty-three library cards were issued in October. Print and DVD circulation are down slightly, but periodical and digital Overdrive circulation are up. Library of Things items circulated 28 times in October. This includes hot spots, games, tech gadgets, and more. October was the highest circulating month for these items so far in FY23. Little change overall with circulation, with a four percent decrease from September. Museum passes circulated 61 times in October. Reference

questions, meeting room use, and program attendance are all up significantly from September. Cataloging is up to speed after a late summer backlog and personnel transition in that department, and additional librarian support in that area is reflected in a 52% increase in items cataloged. Volunteer hours are up 13%, with a number of volunteers in the Archival Center working on projects, and two new volunteers assisting with shelving adult materials.

Other New Business

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton met with the MVLC Cybersecurity Team and a liaison from networking and IT vendor Vertikal6 on October 26 and October 31 to assess current technology infrastructure and best practices at the library. These meetings involved a questionnaire about current information security and storage practices, network setup, and other technology-related practices. The assessment resulted in a report with recommendations for improvements across these areas. Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton are starting to evaluate and implement some of the recommendations from the report.

It is time for Library board members to complete annual state ethics compliance training. Ms. Kelso will share a link with the board in the coming days.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.