

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

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, Gary Gorski, Sarah Holden, Sarah Spalding and Elizabeth Valeriani.

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

Absent: Marcia Edson, Christian Hansen, Steven Moore, Mayor Sean Reardon, Councilor Heather Shand, and Susan Shefte.

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting will be reviewed at the January meeting.

Next Meeting:

Next meeting: January 18, 2023

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

Head Librarian Report

Library Story

A number of visitors have graciously donated food, a poinsettia, and kind words of gratitude for the work of the library staff this holiday season.

Budget

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

Ms. Kelso is currently assessing the budget at mid-year for expenditures and preparing budget information for FY24, as the process begins in January. Mr. Gorski asked where we were in the fiscal year. Ms. Kelso indicated that we were midway through the year. Ms. Spalding inquired about the status of audio-visual materials and most popular formats.

Building and Grounds

Exterior building cameras and surveillance equipment have been installed. These three new cameras provide a video feed to the existing interior building camera system. One of these three cameras is connected to the existing surveillance monitoring hardware and software, and the other two will be brought online in early January by the vendor. The exterior building cameras will be accessible by the police station. The Head Librarian has access to both interior and exterior cameras.

The Children's Activity Room is currently undergoing renovations with removal of the carpeted stadium-style stairs. The stairs in this area have occupied valuable space in the Activity Room and have been a safety hazard for young people. Renovations will include flooring repairs for areas previously covered by the stairs, new trim, drywall repair, painting, and the addition of electrical outlets along the back wall. The Friends of the Library will support the purchase of custom built-in storage for this room.

Carpet on the back staircase leading to the second-floor Reference area will be replaced in January, completing current projects for first-floor carpet replacement. The Program Room retains the old brown carpet for now, but is in satisfactory condition and will be evaluated for replacement at a later date as needed.

Replacement of 128 smoke detectors that are at end of life will start in January. Fall 2022 state aid payment monies will be allocated to this project.

The project for replacement of variable frequency drives (VFDs) on the HVAC system and new air handlers (AHU 1, 2 and 3) was approved and Ms. Kelso is coordinating with vendors and DPS to schedule the equipment replacement in late spring.

Ms. Kelso has decided to wait to pursue Community Preservation Act grant for repairs to the retaining wall, front stairs, and grounds drainage issues, as some engineering studies, cost estimates, contractors, and other stakeholders must still be identified. This will remain in the FY23-FY27 Capital Improvement Plan, and will be revisited at the start of FY24 for the next grant cycle. Ms. Kelso will consult with the City's Special Projects Manager and the Office of Planning and Development to pursue this project.

Personnel

Interviews for two Adult Services Staff Librarian positions were conducted the first week of November. Ms. Crowley started a position as a full-time Staff Librarian for the Adult Services department on Monday, November 28. A new full-time Staff Librarian for the Adult Services department will start on Tuesday, January 3. This leaves one staff opening in the Children's department.

Active recruitment for the Children's Staff Librarian position will be revisited and reposted in the new year.

Department heads met with the Head Librarian and Assistant Head Librarian in December to identify departmental goals for the remainder of FY23, with the fiscal year action plan and current strategic plan as a guide. These goals will include digitizing and cataloging additional archival collections, updating some cataloging standards and collection classifications, improving marketing, expanding museum passes and the Library of Things, expanding home delivery, adding in-house technology lending, centralizing technology updates, and more.

Policy

The video Surveillance policy last approved in April 2014 was presented for review, which updates sections relating to the new exterior building cameras.

A new policy for Community Postings was presented for review. Mr. Gorski inquired about the option of a community posting bulletin board, resulting in a short discussion. Ms. Carey asked about other libraries and their handling of these situations. Ms. Kelso will contact local libraries for more information.

A new policy for Photography, Audio, and Video Recordings was presented for review.

Staff Training

New Staff Librarian Ms. Crowley began at the library on Monday, November 28, and has been successfully training in all areas of the library.

Staff Librarians continue to receive ongoing training in the Archival Center and Technical Services areas.

Ms. Kelso attended a meeting for the Newburyport Literary Festival on December 8. Presenter lineups, social events, and reading locations for this April festival are making progress. The library has traditionally acted as a venue for some of these events, and materials are purchased for the collection featuring speakers from the festival each year.

Ms. Kelso attended a virtual workshop through the Massachusetts Library System on December 14, "Recovering from Burnout Together in the Library," which offered some useful techniques for managing workplace burnout. Ms. Kelso has shared the resources from this workshop with staff.

Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Library launched their annual membership appeal in December and have offered for new messenger bags with updated branding for sale at the library. Both the membership drive and the sale of bags have been very successful.

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. One of these projects includes refurbishing the Children's Activity Room for improved safety and functionality. Demolition of the old stadium-style carpeted stairs in the Children's Activity Room began on December 14. Building maintenance and custodial staff from the Department of Public Services (DPS) began this project, and are assisting with drywall repair, paint, new electrical outlets, and flooring restoration. Ms. Kelso will be working with the Friends and DPS to determine whether a contractor will be needed to address remaining renovations, which will include new storage solutions for the Children's Activity Room.

The Friends of the Library will also be supporting the purchase of newer furniture and fixtures for the front lobby. Ms. Kelso is in the process of obtaining quotes from local vendors for a large book case and seating for the lobby, to be approved by the Friends Library Board.

Old Business

A community member letter to the board was brought up for update. Union guidance was reviewed. Mr. Gorski brought up City Hall and salaries. Ms. Kelso informed the board of the union's current wage scale review.

New Business

Outreach & Community Partnerships

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton attended the City's BEACON Coalition meeting on Thursday, December 1, to discuss mental health issues and parenting needs among recently surveyed community members.

The library has communicated with local educational institutions regarding the scheduling of class visits to properly accommodate students and ensure adequate staffing and space. Schools and educators have been responsive and this request has been mutually beneficial.

Ms. Kelso and Ms. Atherton met with new City IT director James Pope on December 6 to discuss library infrastructure and potential future collaborations with the City in addressing ongoing technology needs and new initiatives.

Programming

Morning story times for babies and non-walkers continued through mid-December and are on a pause until mid-January during the holiday season. Several holiday-themed programs were offered in person and virtually in December, including "Decked Out for

the Holidays,” which offered a virtual tour of decorated conservatories, mansions and beautifully lit gardens, attended by 47 Newburyport patrons. Other holiday and food-themed programs were well-attended in December. The in-house art history program offered by Staff Librarian Mr. Siamak continues to be popular, with an average of 15 attendees at each monthly program.

Teen Librarian Ms. Young has also started offering a “BookUp” Teen Subscription bag in December, which personalizes a selection of materials and supplemental items like crafts and treats for teens and tweens. Each month offers a theme. Eight teens signed up in the first offering. This program will continue into 2023.

The Archival Center will be partnering with a local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to offer a genealogy workshop in January. If interest is strong, this group may meet quarterly.

The Library will continue offering a number of book groups in January, as well as movie matinees, yoga and mindfulness, and a new arts and crafts program on found art and poetry.

Calendar

The Library was closed Thursday and Friday November 24-25, in recognition of Thanksgiving.

The Library will also be closing at 12:00 pm on Friday, December 23 and will be closed Saturday, December 24 and Monday, December 26 in recognition of the Christmas holiday.

The Library will be closed on Monday, January 2, 2023 in recognition of the New Year’s holiday.

A short discussion on the library closings and their effect on community members took place.

November 2022 Statistics

Total attendance is down slightly for November 2022 compared to October 2022, with the library open fewer days due to the holiday season. The number of new library cards issued continues to rise, with 93 new registrants in November. Print, DVD, and audio circulation remain stable, while periodical and overdrive circulation decreased slightly. Museum pass usage is up 71% from October 2022. Volunteer hours also continue to increase. Room usage, programs, program attendance, and technology use is down compared with October 2022.

Comparing November 2021 to November 2022, attendance, archival center visitors, new cards, and total circulation all saw significant increase, as did meeting room usage, technology use, program attendance, and volunteer hours.

Ms. Carey shared a story about patron interest in using the study rooms.

Other New Business

Starting January 3, the library staff will begin a new peer recognition program, which was one of the techniques discussed in the MLS workplace burnout workshop. This program is called "Bright Spots," which offers staff an opportunity to recognize positive actions in the workplace through a short, written vignette that will be posted in the staff break room. These monthly kudos will be forwarded to Ms. Kelso for personnel files. Additionally, a random-selection monthly drawing for a \$5 coffee gift card will be held for staff. Coffee gift cards will be paid for by the voluntary employee-funded "Sunshine Fund," which enables library staff to recognize special events for colleagues such as graduations, retirement, etc.

If board members have yet to complete annual state ethics compliance training, please contact Ms. Kelso for information. Ms. Kelso will email the board a link to complete this training.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.