

**Newburyport Public Library**  
**Board of Directors**  
January 17, 2024  
IN-PERSON MEETING

**Minutes**

Call to order at 5:17 pm.

- I. Roll Call:
  - a. Present: Councilor Ed Cameron, James Connolly, Marcia Edson, Gary Gorski, Christian Hansen, Sarah Holden, Steve Moore, Sarah Spalding, and Madeleine Whitten
  - b. Absent: Kathy Carey, Mayor Sean Reardon, and Elizabeth Valeriani
  - c. Acknowledgement: Head Librarian, on behalf of the Mayor expressed appreciation to Marcia Edson for the many years of dedicated service to the Library Board of Directors.
  - d. Public Comment:
    - i. Stephanie Niketic spoke about her concerns with the Archival Center access and guidance.
    - ii. James Roy shared his thoughts on the Archives Center and expressed concern that changes might occur.
    - iii. Linda Harding shared her support for the Archival Center.
    - iv. Mr. Connolly asked Head Librarian Kevin Bourque to speak on this issue. Mr. Bourque responded that the Archival Center will continue to be maintained and patrons will be able to use its resources.
    - v. Ms. Holden asked a follow-up question about staffing and training for the Archival Center. Mr. Bourque shared that Dana Echelberger has a degree in this specialty and has been providing additional training for reference staff, who continue to support the Archival Center.
    - vi. Ms. Harding asked for an apology on behalf of the volunteers, as well as thanks for their work. Jim Connolly shared that the union issue was outside of the Board's purview.
  - e. Minutes:
    - i. The 15 November and 20 December 2023 meeting minutes were approved. Ms. Holden moved and Ms. Spaulding seconded. All present voted in favor, except for Councilor Cameron, who abstained.
  - f. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, 21 February 2024
- II. Head Librarian Report
  - a. Budget
    - i. Mr. Bourque informed the Board that he is still waiting for the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) budget instructions. He expects to receive them by the end of January.
      1. In preparation, Mr. Bourque calculated the FY25 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR).
  - b. Statistics
    - i. Attendance: December, 8,899; FY24 average, 10,696
    - ii. Circulation: December, 21,853; FY24 average, 24,023
    - iii. Commentary
      1. Mr. Hansen asked about the inclusion of various online services

and asked about FY18 numbers. Mr. Bourque illustrated with the chart the growth in circulation over time..

2. Ms. Edson asked if the stats could include the number of days the Library is open in the report. She requested that previously reported circulation details be included in the monthly report.
3. Mr. Gorski asked about the Archival Center walk-in numbers. Mr. Bourque shared that previous data collection methods are currently being updated to industry standards, which are required for the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) report.
4. Councilor Cameron shared commentary on the statistics and suggested various methods for getting constituent feedback, such as surveys and something similar to focus groups. Mr. Bourque shared information on the strategic planning process, which will include focus groups and surveys.
5. Mr. Moore and Ms. Holden asked about phone calls and statistics. Mr. Bourque explained why statistics are collected, such as their use in ARIS reporting.

c. Building and Grounds

- i. Mr. Bourque followed up on Mr. Moore's previous question about the Friends of the Newburyport Public Library (FOL) and the historic fencing at the front of the library. The FOL report that the repair and maintenance of the iron fencing on the granite retaining wall work was completed. Additional repairs are ongoing.
- ii. Mr. Bourque discussed Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs) with Facilities Manager, Mike Bartlett and DPS Business Manager, Tom Watkins. Mr. Watkins indicated that he will address the options when FY25 CIP project discussions begin which include the following.
  1. HVAC boiler replacement
  2. Masonry (granite retaining wall and front stairs)

d. Personnel

- i. City Hall has accepted the retirement of Sharon Spieldenner, the former department head for the Archival Center.
  1. There is now a Senior Librarian position vacancy.
  2. Human Resources (HR) has been notified that the position is under review.
  3. Commentary
    - a. Mr. Hansen asked about the allocated budget for this staff salary. Mr. Bourque explained that the position would not be lost and there is no rush to fill it.
    - b. Ms. Holden asked if there was a deadline to fill the position. Mr. Bourque shared that there is no firm deadline.
    - c. Ms. Holden asked if it was a union position. Mr. Bourque confirmed that it is.
    - d. Mr. Moore shared that he would like to see the role remain an archivist position.
    - e. Library Administration team and Senior Librarians are taking this opportunity to review the position and determine an appropriate course of action that ensures the library is best able to meet the needs of the community in the future.
  4. Staff Librarians Emma Crowley and Isabelle Maginnis are making

progress toward the completion of their master's in library sciences (MLIS) degrees. Both report they are approximately at the half-way point

- ii. Three Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) certifications have been processed in December. PSLF is a Federal Loan program designed to reduce Federal Student Loan balances after ten years of repayment and employment in government or public service.
- iii. Mr. Bourque met with a representative from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) to discuss the development of a wellness program focused on library staff needs and schedule.
  - 1. Potential aspects include the following:
    - a. Wellness development half-day events
    - b. Events scheduled at the Library
    - c. Integrating wellness webinars into the scope of staff development efforts
- e. Volunteer Program Development
  - i. Work is under way on the development of the new Library Volunteer program.
  - ii. Work being done this month includes the following:
    - 1. Development of Volunteer Code of Conduct
    - 2. Procedures
    - 3. Recruitment and selection
    - 4. Orientation and training
    - 5. Termination of volunteer term of service
    - 6. Draft volunteer position descriptions are being created by Department Senior Librarians
  - iii. Commentary
    - 1. Ms. Holden asked about the timeline. Mr. Bourque shared that March might be a possible opportunity but cautioned that the final timing would depend on multiple levels of review.
    - 2. Mr. Moore asked about the options within the union limitations.
    - 3. Mr. Gorski asked what sort of Board response would be expected during the review of the volunteer program.
- f. Outreach and Community Partnerships
  - 1. On 23 January, the Library will serve as a polling place for Ward 2 for the Whittier Regional Technical High School funding vote.
  - 2. The Library continues to provide drop-in hours with the City's social worker, Trish Boateng.
- g. Programming
  - i. 31 programs were offered to patrons during December
  - ii. 15 adults (7 in-person, 8 virtual)
  - iii. 16 kids and teens
  - iv. Comment
    - 1. Mr. Connolly asked if there was a preference for virtual or in-person formats. Mr. Bourque shared the benefits of virtual programs for their breadth and depth of service.
- h. Calendar
  - i. Recent Library Closures
    - 1. New Year's Day, Monday, 1 January 2024
    - 2. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, 15 January 2024

- ii. Upcoming Library Closures:
  - 1. President's Day, Monday, 19 February 2024
- i. Strategic Planning
  - i. Created and recruited Strategic Planning Advisory Committee
    - 1. Library admin team (2)
      - a. Mr. Bourque
      - b. Ms. Atherton
    - 2. Library Board members (2)
      - a. Ms. Holden
      - b. Mr. Hansen
    - 3. Library frontline staff (2)
      - a. Ms. Echelberger
      - b. Anna McGrath
    - 4. Newburyport residents (2)
      - a. Leah Hayes
      - b. Cindy Rodrique
  - ii. Met with Barbara Alvarez Strategic Planning consultant with Sage Consulting for the Project Launch meeting on January 10, 2024.
  - iii. As each section of the plan is completed, they will be shared with the Board for review and approval. Goal is to have a final draft of the FY26–29 Strategic Plan for Board review in mid-August.
  - iv. Commentary
    - 1. Mr. Moore mentioned that the board does not meet in July and August. Mr. Bourque shared that documents would be circulated to the Board virtually to enable independent review.

Adjournment: Ms. Edson made a motion to adjourn at 6:19 p.m. Mr. Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.