

**Newburyport Public Library  
Board of Directors  
Virtual Meeting Minutes  
September 15, 2021**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:16 pm by Ms. Valeriani. Roll call was taken.

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

Giselle Stevens, Head Librarian and Sara Kelso, Assistant Head Librarian and Acting Recording Secretary.

**Absent:** Councilor Jared Eigerman, Mayor Holaday, and Steve Moore.

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

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the June 16, 2021 virtual meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**Next Meeting**

The next board meeting will take place October 20, 2021. The October meeting will be held virtually due to space and scheduling constraints. Subsequent fall meetings will be held in the Program Room at the Library. Mask use is currently required in the library. Board contact information updates will be shared at the October meeting after review in the September 2021 meeting.

**Head Librarian Report**

The Library has offered a “Community Puzzle” since reopening without restrictions. A few regular visitors work on the puzzle and recently completed one together after becoming acquainted.

Children’s Librarian Ms. Driscoll has been collaborating with the Parker River Refuge for story times in September and attendees have already made calls to the Head Librarian to praise the program and staff.

**Budget**

The FY22 library municipal budget is \$1,445,978.20. This budget is 1.63% of the City budget and meets the Municipal Appropriations Requirement (MAR) set by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). Ms. Stevens has completed

and submitted the Massachusetts required FY21 Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) and the FY21 Financial Report and 2022 State Aid Application and Compliance form to the MBLC.

### **Building and Grounds**

Three windows in the Program Room were broken on Sunday, June 13, 2021. The police reported a number of vandalism acts took place in the city that day and on previous weekends, which included damaged storefront areas and vehicle windows. An additional window was broken in the Program Room again in July. Graffiti was painted on the side of the Prince Place steps over the Labor Day weekend. Police were notified and have an active investigation open relating to numerous acts of downtown area vandalism from this summer. Two temporary surveillance cameras were installed on the Prince Place side of the building in early August, where the majority of vandalism has occurred. Signage was added to the emergency exit alerting passersby not to sit on the Prince Place portico steps. Mr. Gorski suggested adding signage about the current use of surveillance in this area. Relocation of the existing bicycle rack has been considered, but will remain as long as it continues to be used appropriately. Ms. Stevens shared a plan for the library to coordinate with the City to install permanent networked cameras with assistance from the police department, although the timeline is still uncertain. Ms. Carey inquired about repercussions for vandals observed painting the Prince Place steps in September. Ms. Stevens suggested that an order of “No Trespass” for library property be imposed on the individuals if apprehended.

A water event in the Lower Level on July 1, 2021 impacted the Archival Center, Lower Level lobby, Archival Center office and workroom, Archival Center storage, Children’s Room storage, and a non-public hallway and emergency stairwell. Quick action by Library and DPS staff removed standing water and the Archival Center collection incurred no damage. ServPro was called in to dry and dehumidify the space, test impacted areas and remove wallboard in the non-public hallway, Children’s Room storage, and emergency stairwell. Tile and laminate flooring were removed from several affected areas. DPS repaired and painted the walls in the Children’s storage area, non-public hallway, and stairwell. The Archival Center office and workroom was also painted. Concrete floors in affected areas where tile and laminate were removed are scheduled to be polished and sealed at the end of this month. Mr. Hansen inquired about the possibility of a recurring future water event. Ms. Stevens explained the unusual circumstances that led to this incident as a result of a City water main break and opening of a fire hydrant near the library. The Department of Public Service (DPS) Water and Sewer Division and the head of DPS were alerted immediately, and will prepare accordingly with future projects in the adjacent area to help prevent any recurrence. Archival Center services have been temporarily relocated to the Director’s

Room. Staff are assisting patrons by appointment, as well as on a walk-in basis when possible.

DPS is hoping to hire three custodians to fill current openings. This shortage of custodians has impacted cleaning in the Library this summer.

### **Personnel**

Lynn Marks retired in early July 2021, and Joyce Senior retired at the end of July 2021. The Senior Librarian position in Borrower Services has been filled by internal candidate Rebecca Tansey. The Staff Librarian position in Adult Services vacated by Ms. Tansey has been filled by Siamak Samiean. Mr. Samiean recently earned his Master of Library and Information Studies degree and started work at the NPL on September 13, 2021.

The Library Technician position in Borrower Services is in the process of being filled, with an anticipated start date of September 27, 2021 for the selected candidate.

### **Policy**

The Meeting Room policy was updated to reflect changes in available meeting rooms. Study Rooms and the Conference Room are available by reservation or on a walk-in basis. The large Meeting/Program Room is available by application and reservation, and is for non-profit, government or educational groups only. A motion was introduced by Ms. Valeriani to approve changes. Ms. Stevens took a roll call vote. The motion to amend the Meeting Room policy passed.

The Circulation Policy was updated to include the Library of Things collection. Board members requested additional time to review and suggest edits for this revised policy. The Circulation Policy will be revisited at the October meeting.

### **Staff Training**

City department heads, including Ms. Stevens, attended a three-part training series on Racial Equity for Municipal Leaders during June and July 2021.

Assistant Head Librarian Kelso was selected to participate in the New England Library Association (NELA) Emerging Leaders Virtual Cohort, a 12-session program taking place this fall.

## **Friends of the Library**

The Friends of the NPL will hold their annual meeting on Wednesday, September 22, 2021. This virtual event will include a short program on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the renovated and expanded library with retired Head Librarian Dorothy LaFrance, Friends of the NPL President Stacey Brandon, and Ms. Stevens.

The Friends held a membership drive over the summer and currently have over 200 active members. Membership can be renewed or activated online through the Friends' website at <http://www.newburyportfol.org>.

The Friends are planning to hold an October book sale in the Program Room, but are also exploring alternatives if needed due to COVID.

## **Old Business**

### **Library Phased Reopening Plan**

On July 6, 2021, the Library returned to 9:00 am to 9:00 pm hours Monday through Thursday. The Library has returned to pre-pandemic hours and is now open 64 hours per week. Foot traffic is increasing, with an average of 350 visitors per day. As of August 23, 2021, masks are required in the Library, City Hall, Senior Community Center, and all public schools in Newburyport per guidance from the City Board of Health.

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

The CPA grant funded project to replace the Archival Center HVAC units has a contracted vendor. The project was delayed because of the Lower Level repair and flooring replacement. This grant project is now scheduled for October 2021.

### **Other Old Business**

None.

## **New Business**

### **Calendar**

The Library will be closed Monday, October 11, 2021 for the Indigenous Peoples' Day holiday.

Book groups and other scheduled adult programs will be offered as a mix of virtual and in-person formats. Ms. Carey inquired about the status of in-person story times. Weekly drop-in programs for children and teens are being offered to manage capacity and safety for all visitors. The Children's librarian has been offering outdoor story times in collaboration with the National Wildlife Refuge in the Visitor Center garden. Mr. Hansen inquired about the potential for hybrid virtual and simultaneous in-person

programming. Ms. Stevens cited the need for specialized equipment and the ways in which some programs may or may not be suitable for hybrid presentation.

### **Summer Statistics**

A total of 619 children and teens participated in the virtual summer reading program this year. June was the first month without COVID restrictions in place. From June to July there was a 24% increase in attendance, a 23% increase in total circulation, and a 33% increase in public computer use. July and August statistics have only slight changes. Attendance in the building is averaging 350 people per day (One person every two minutes). This is less than half of the pre-COVID average.

### **FY21 Statistics and Annual Report**

FY20 statistics are based on almost nine months of pre-COVID library services with one month of patio pickup service. FY21 statistics are based on eleven months of patio pickup service, nine months of limited in-building services and one month of in-building services with few limitations. In spite of these considerations, total circulation for both years was similar. The NPL continues to be fifth among the 36 MVLC libraries in total circulation.

### **Other New Business**

An organization highlighting the travels of General Lafayette recently approached Ms. Stevens about placement of a Lafayette Trail marker on Library property. Ms. Stevens shared this with Mayor Holaday, who felt it was not appropriate for the Library at this time. Ms. Stevens shared this information with NPL board members for consideration. Ms. Stevens suggested this organization work with the Historical Society and Museum of Old Newbury for placement of Lafayette Trail markers in Newburyport. The Library may present a future program in collaboration with this organization on the topic of General Lafayette.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Valeriani introduced a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 pm. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.