

FINAL
Bloomfield Public Library
Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
April 13, 2021

Attendance: Elizabeth Lane (*Library Director*), Ava Biffer (*Chairperson*), Leah Farrell (*Vice-Chairperson*), Todd Cooper, Beverlee Merritt, Maxine Ursery, Penny Pearson (*Friends of the Library Representative*), Christopher Siloac (*Library Staff*)

Absent: Ann Leavitt

Quorum present? Yes, 5 of 6

A. Biffer called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Roll Call – A. Biffer performed roll call and noted the absence of A. Leavitt.

Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public

Gift Cards – The Friends provided funds for gift card prizes as part of winter reading.

Phone Campaign – Five members of the Friends will be helping with the building committee’s phone campaign.

Book Sale – The April book sale will not take place this year, though the Friends are hopeful that they will be able to have the October sale in some fashion.

BPL Masks – A. Biffer thanked the Friends for the BPL masks that they provided for winter reading and exhibited one of the masks.

Friends and Building Committee – A. Biffer passed along that Greg Davis, chair of the library building committee, wanted to emphasize that the Friends are always welcome at building committee meetings.

Chairperson’s Report

Praise for Library – During a recent visit to the doctor, A. Biffer met a nurse who lived in Bloomfield and praised BPL, singling out the friendly and skilled staff and the library’s decision to go fine free. The nurse had missed the survey window but plans to call the library and provide her feedback.

Board and Building Committee – Greg Davis wants the board to know that all board members are welcome at building committee meetings. The next regular meeting will be held on 4/21 at 6:00 PM. A. Biffer will send out the Zoom link ahead of time.

Public Works Department – A. Biffer has written a letter of thanks to the public works team for helping keep the library buildings functioning. Ava will email the letter to the town manager and the head of public works, and will include the board on the email.

Director’s Report

National Library Week – In honor of National Library Week, which was last week, E. Lane praised BPL for going above and beyond during the pandemic.

Town Manager Recruitment – The town manager recruitment process has begun. E. Lane urged the board to reach out to the firm conducting the search and advocate for a candidate with an understanding of libraries. When advocating it helps to remember that 90% of survey respondents considered the library very or extremely important to the town.

Building Issues – The library buildings continue to have significant issues on a steady basis. Last week at Prosser the lights went out for a period of time due to old wiring.

New York Times Online – The library continues to focus on information literacy and the importance of providing accurate information. Towards that end, BPL subscribes to the New York Times online. Unfortunately, the New York Times has restricted its pricing in a way that is cost-prohibitive to many libraries. BPL was able to extend for one more year at a favorable price, but E. Lane has been discussing this issue at a statewide level as way to push for better pricing for all.

Usage Numbers – At the request of the building committee, E. Lane assembled a few years of annual usage numbers for both locations, which she also shared with the board. She stressed that some of the differences in the numbers do not reflect a lack of need at both locations.

E-Newsletter Feature – The e-newsletter for each week features the face of the library, usually a staff member sharing something of their choosing. E. Lane invited board members and P. Pearson to sign up to be featured. Board members can choose what they wish to share.

Fine Free Process – The back-end/technical aspect of going fine free is now complete, meaning fines will no longer be assessed to BPL items. Another important part of this process is the retroactive clearing of fines. The adoption of a fine free policy allows for a clean slate, and divorces money as much as possible from library services. BPL will promote fine free more extensively later this fall.

Social Media – E. Lane urged the board to follow the library's social media feeds and showed examples of the content. Nearly all staff members are involved in the creation of social media content.

Building Committee Update – The building committee continues to be busy. On 4/28, the committee will host an information session, which, like all meetings, is open to the public. The results of the public survey have been posted on the building committee's website.

Budget Appropriation Transfers – Due to pandemic-related changes to the library's service model this past year, E. Lane recently requested budget transfers from the full-time to the part-time budget. Any remaining funds will be used for collection development and display space, particularly at McMahon Wintonbury.

Expansion of Services – Recent service expansions include vaccine card lamination at both locations, and browsing on a trial basis at Prosser. After the staff is vaccinated and the bathroom on the adult level is finished, browsing at Prosser will expand.

E-Newsletter Stats – An added benefit to conducting the survey is that it added 500 people to the e-newsletter mailing list. Constant Contact provides extensive data about how the e-newsletter is used. Early analysis shows that programming, new books, and library building updates receive the most clicks.

Patio Furniture – Patio tables and umbrellas have been placed outside at both buildings. This coincides with the recent upgrade to the outside wi-fi, which provides 24/7 access to all.

Construction Grant – E. Lane recently attended a state construction grant info session, which is required as part of the application process.

Social Justice – BPL continues to focus on social justice issues and barriers to access, especially in terms of staff and programming. This is an issue that all Connecticut libraries need to focus on.

Budget Presentation – E. Lane reported that the budget presentation to the town council went well and thanked the board for their feedback.

Finance Director Search – The search for the new finance director has closed. E. Lane expressed her hope for a good hire.

Vaccination of Staff – All staff members who requested a vaccine have received at least one shot.

Winter Reading – 72 people participated in this year’s winter reading program. E. Lane thanked the Friends for their funding of prizes.

March Statistics – E. Lane shared March stats with the board, including record high digital circulation (1,692 checkouts) and strong virtual programming numbers (50 programs, 1,397 attendees). The strength of these BPL Online numbers is a testament to strong work by the staff. A. Biffer has started to attend more virtual programs and noted the fruitful partnerships the library has established with other groups in town.

Friends and National Library Week – For National Library Week, the Friends sent thank you notes to all library staff members. A. Biffer thanked Penny and the Friends for their acknowledgement of the staff.

Old Business – There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

BPL Building Project Timeline – E. Lane shared a staff survey that analyzed and voted on the three proposed building project timeline options: build Prosser first, build McMahon Wintonbury first, or build both at the same time. Elizabeth reviewed the pros/cons list that the staff worked up for each option. After weighing the pros and cons, over 60% of the staff chose option three, which is to build both buildings at the same time. Advantages of this option include the following: least expensive of the three; quicker timeline for completion, minimizing disruption; funds available for swing space.

The board discussed the options and whether or not they needed more time to make their own recommendation, as well as the reasons that option three would be the least expensive. After discussion, the board chose to move forward. **MOTION by B. Merritt to recommend that both library buildings be constructed simultaneously**; seconded by L. Farrell and passed unanimously.

Prosser New Build or Renovation – The building committee is holding a special meeting tomorrow night to decide whether the Prosser building should be renovated or newly constructed, and it is important that the library board make a recommendation. L. Farrell presented a document created by the program and space planning subcommittee that outlines the advantages and disadvantages of renovation versus new construction. The main advantages for renovation were slightly lower cost, front building access, and aesthetic considerations. The main advantages of new construction were superior building systems, more functional and flexible space, and a layout allowing for efficient staffing.

L. Farrell also showed the board the architect’s sketches for each option. The board discussed the clear advantages of new construction but also wanted a design that takes into account the affection for the current building and its architectural style. **MOTION by M. Ursery to recommend a new build for Prosser, with the understanding that the existing character of the building be preserved**; seconded by T. Cooper and passed unanimously. E. Lane commented on how important a functional and flexible building is to serving everyone in the community.

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

MOTION by B. Merritt to accept the minutes of the March 9, 2021 meeting as presented; seconded by M. Ursery and approved unanimously.

MOTION by M. Ursery to enter executive session at 6:56 PM for purposes of a personnel matter; seconded by B. Merritt and approved.

MOTION by T. Cooper to return to public session at 7:36 PM; seconded by L. Farrell and passed unanimously.

MOTION by B. Merritt to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 PM; seconded by M. Ursery and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac,
Technology & Administrative Coordinator