

FINAL
Bloomfield Public Library
Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
<https://youtu.be/9q-vIda2ZcU>
January 19, 2022 (Special)

Attendance: Elizabeth Lane (*Library Director*), Ava Biffer (*Chairperson*), Leah Farrell (*Vice-Chairperson*), Todd Cooper, Patrick DeLorenzo, Beverlee Merritt, Maxine Ursery, Christopher Siloac (*Library Staff*), Allison Wilkos (*Library Staff*)

Absent: None

Quorum present? Yes, 6 of 6

A. Biffer called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Roll Call – A. Biffer performed roll call and noted that all were present.

Review BPL's 2022-2023 Budget and Budget Modification/ARPA Requests

E. Lane stated that she, C. Siloac, and A. Wilkos are attempting to complete an organizational overview that keeps in mind everything coming in the future, including the new buildings. She also described how responsive the library has been to the impact of COVID-19, which has led to new services. The library has also been impacted by the continual changes in leadership at the town hall.

E. Lane explained the structure of the budget and noted that 2.83% of the budget increase is predetermined by HR, which includes cost-of-living and step increases. One big change in this year's budget is the collapsing of the McMahon Wintonbury part-time staff line into a single part-time staff budget line that includes all part-time employees. The McMahon Wintonbury part-time staff line has been zeroed out. This change more accurately reflects the way staff works at both locations.

With the exception of personnel lines, every single budget line has been flat for many years. Employee benefits are estimated, since HR and finance are still finalizing those numbers. The main change this year concerns the library's organizational realignment, a priority of the town manager that was also touched on in E. Lane's performance review. The library currently has an overly flat structure, with all 33 employees reporting directly to the director. This is the first phase of the restructure, which includes three promotions in the full-time budget line to accurately reflect work that is already being done by current staff members. The education budget is being increased from \$1000 to \$4000, reflecting the importance of professional development, especially in light of the library's Social Justice Mission Statement. Utilities lines have been estimated by facilities for a full year, but with the need to leave the library buildings in the first half of the year as part of the construction project, it is unlikely those funds will be used in full.

Budget modifications include new requests to be added to the base budget, as well as requests for ARPA funds. Bloomfield is receiving \$6.2 million in ARPA funds; E. Lane noted some of the rules governing ARPA funds. Although additional full time staff is part of the budget modification requests, E. Lane explained that this request had been part of the proposed budget in FY21, but then cut due to COVID-19.

The request for full-time staff reflects a need for continuity of service across locations, which can be more difficult to achieve with part-time staffing.

E. Lane shared her screen and reviewed four budget scenarios with the board. Scenario one was submitted to the town manager as the proposed budget, and includes promotions and increased education spending, reflecting a 6.42% increase, which means the library is asking for 3.59% in new spending. Scenario two is the same as one but with halved utility costs. Scenario three is flat, including only the 2.83% increase set by HR. Scenario four includes everything in scenario one plus two new full-time positions.

E. Lane gave examples of how closely the library's projects and priorities coincide with the town manager's six budget themes: organizational realignment, workforce development, DEI, community investment plan, strategic planning, and strategic communications. BPL is laying the foundation for where the library needs to be when the two new buildings open, in terms of staffing, service delivery, and efficiency.

The board discussed the four scenarios, with a focus on deducting the predetermined 2.83% from each scenario, as well as reducing the utility costs for all scenarios. In response to P. DeLorenzo's question about identifying any potential budget decreases, E. Lane reiterated that the library tends to spend down its material and personnel budgets. A. Biffer noted that the current budget is not sufficient to adequately build the collection, especially with the various material types, so cutting the budget further is not prudent. M. Ursery expressed concern that the education budget for professional development is still too low, and recommended that the library look at increasing education funding in the future.

In response to L. Farrell's question about the names of the budget accounts/lines, E. Lane and C. Siloac stressed that a restructuring of the budget to better reflect library spending priorities is planned for next year, as part of phase two of organizational realignment. A discussion of ARPA funds and what they could be used for ensued. E. Lane pointed out that the library was submitting three ARPA-related requests: a bookmobile, a staff vehicle for deliveries, and digital resources. The board discussed the idea of formally requesting a set amount of ARPA funds for the library, which is what some libraries in the state are doing. It was noted that the town's ARPA distribution process, which includes surveys, could move slowly. The board and Friends could be part of the "other stakeholder" phase of ARPA feedback. E. Lane indicated the ways the board can support the library: be vocal, educate the public, and share the work that the library does. The board strategized on ways to present the budget, including historical comparisons to show flatness and state-wide comparisons.

E. Lane discussed the problem of staff burnout and the difficulty of sustaining current high levels of service without additional staffing. The full-time to part-time staff ratio is part of the problem; there are currently 13 full-time staff members and 21 part-time. Staffing issues also affect the library's ability to pursue grants. P. DeLorenzo suggested converting current part-time positions to full-time. E. Lane talked about building an ideal staffing model for delivering services in the new buildings, as well as the need for management positions to facilitate delegation of work.

P. DeLorenzo said the importance of hiring a grant writer for the town has been discussed for years at the council level. The board thought it was important to pursue the subject of grant writing with the town manager. L. Farrell stressed the importance of having the town invest in staffing in a way that supports the town's investment in the new buildings. The board discussed how the library's organizational and budget structure are outdated and seem more suited to a smaller operation. L. Farrell proposed using Farmington

Library as a point of comparison. E. Lane noted that the organizational structure does not accurately reflect the responsibilities that library staff have already assumed.

The board explored how to create a culture of advocacy, something concrete and practical that can be passed down. The idea of forming a subcommittee to work on this topic was floated. The board needs to take full advantage of the resources and training provided by other professional organizations, including sharing opportunities with each other.

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Board Comments – There were no board comments.

MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM; seconded by L. Farrell and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac
Technology & Administrative Coordinator