

FINAL
Bloomfield Public Library
Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
<https://youtu.be/vvYXtq5B9GM>
February 8, 2022

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

Absent: Todd Cooper

Quorum present? Yes, 5 of 6

A. Biffer called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

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

Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries

Update on Friends – The Friends provided funding for adult winter reading and have begun to fund summer reading initiatives. The Friends are open to more funding opportunities.

Chairperson's Report

CLA Session – A. Biffer congratulated E. Lane and Allison Wilkos for having their marketing session proposal accepted for the upcoming Connecticut Library Association Annual Conference.

CCM Training – A. Biffer attended a Connecticut Conference of Municipalities training session on ethics, FOIA, and conducting public meetings. The session was very insightful and helpful. She also attended a session on ARPA rules. She will email slide decks to the board.

Director's Report

Warming Center – The library buildings, along with 330 Park, serve as a warming center whenever the governor issues a cold weather alert. E. Lane reminded the board to spread the word about this aspect of the library's services.

Weather-Related Closures – The library was closed all day due to inclement weather on Saturday, 1/29, and closed an hour early on Friday, 2/4. BPL spreads the word quickly when closings occur.

Great Decisions Series – BPL has partnered with Seabury on the Great Decisions discussion series, which focuses on world affairs and is sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association. Each session includes reading material and a video, followed by a discussion. 26 people attended the first session. There will be eight sessions in this round of programming.

Vox Books – The library has added a new material format, Vox Books, which are picture books that read aloud to children with the push of a button. These books are particularly good for early literacy and ESL.

Masking Policy – Masks are still required at all town buildings, though staff will police it less as cases decrease. The library will continue to work with the health department to maintain a safe environment.

Wintonbury Historical Society – The library received a letter of intent from the Wintonbury Historical Society, regarding their collections. E. Lane read the letter aloud for the record:

To: Bloomfield Public Library, c/o Allison Wilkos, Adult Services Librarian

It is the intent of the Wintonbury Historical Society to transfer the majority of our paper collection, totaling approximately 160 linear feet, to the Bloomfield Public Library on the condition that a History Room will be included in the plans, and will be built to house them in the new BPL Library located in the Town Center.

This letter of intent was approved by the Board of Directors of the Wintonbury Historical Society on January 14, 2021.

Best Regards,

Board of Directors, WHS, President, William Weissenburger

Building Project – BPL staff continue to be very busy with the library building project, including focusing on programming needs so that the buildings contain flexible spaces, as well as technology and electrical needs. The next library building committee meeting is tomorrow night. The new Prosser building design now includes a temperature controlled area adjacent to the conference room to house historical materials. The staff is also working on creating a welcoming Friends space and looking at ways the Friends can use the entire library, including outdoor spaces. There is a soft date of 9/1/2022 for staff to be out of both buildings. The staff has begun to intentionally clean out the buildings.

Black Heritage Program – The Connecticut State Library is featuring a program on 2/17 about black heritage in Connecticut and the state library's related resources, hosted by Adrian Smith.

CLA Marketing Session – E. Lane echoed A. Biffer's reporting that BPL's proposal for a marketing session at CLA has been accepted. E. Lane and A. Wilkos will present on best practices for a team-based approach to effective marketing communications. BPL has other conference proposals being considered, including one planned with M. Ursery on referendum success.

Adult Winter Reading – The adult winter reading program started on 2/1 and goes through 3/31. Patrons receive a free Starbucks coffee and free cookie from Pasticceria Italia for signing up. Any type of reading counts. There are also weekly drawings for gift cards.

Black Future Month – BPL is celebrating Black Future Month with a series of programs, including *Black to the Future: Afrofuturism as a Creative Force* on 2/1, an Afro Beat Workshop on 2/4 (Take Your Child to the Library Day), and *Lessons from Apartheid: How Americans Can Join Across Racial Differences* on 2/8. E. Lane pointed out that the library is supporting student projects and reports and highlighted an online resource – *Black Freedom Struggle in the United States* – which provides primary sources.

Tax Resources – BPL has a flyer for the public that compiles tax resources. This information is also available on the library's website. E. Lane asked the board to send people to the library for tax resources.

Book Page – E. Lane reminded the board about the monthly *Book Page* periodical that the library provides to patrons for free. *Book Page* is a great way to keep up with new releases.

HR Resignation – Cindy Coville, Director of Human Resources, resigned last week. The search for a new director will begin soon. This is a continuation of the big changes that have affected town hall in the past year.

Park Avenue Project – A big Park Avenue project is starting in March that will fully shut down the road after school closes. Closures will occur between March and November.

Narcan Spray – E. Lane’s can of Narcan expired, so she reached out to the police chief for more. She was told that there may be a legal issue with staff having it on hand. This issue will be looked at by legal counsel. In light of the recent overdose at the high school. E. Lane stressed the importance of staff being prepared and having access to Narcan.

Internship Grant - The grant writer at Bloomfield Schools reached out to the library about partnering on a grant that would allow for internships in the library. The library is excited about this opportunity.

Censorship in Libraries - Censorship continues to be a big issue in libraries. E. Lane spoke about a recent *Where We Live* program on Connecticut Public Radio that focused on the issue. The program was described in a headline as “Connecticut librarians brace for tsunami of book challenges.” One of the program participants was Sam Lee, Chair of the Connecticut Library Association’s Intellectual Freedom Committee, who assisted with BPL’s Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy.

Statistical Trends – *Statistical Trends of Connecticut Public Libraries 2020-2021* was just released. Some of BPL’s statistical trends match the reporting, for example, an increase in the use of digital resources. There are also interesting programming statistics worth analyzing. E. Lane will send the report to the board with direct comparison points with BPL stats.

Building Project Process – A. Biffer emphasized all the work that the building committee and library staff are doing to engage with every stakeholder to ensure the best outcome for all.

Old Business

Review BPL’s 2022-2023 Budget and Budget Modification/ARPA Requests – E. Lane reported that she, C. Siloac, and A. Wilkos had a productive budget meeting with Town Manager Stanley Hawthorne and Finance Director Keri Rowley. The town manager requested that promotions be pulled from the base budget and instead submitted as part of Budget Modification 1. This budget modification includes managerial promotions and two new full-time staff positions and is essential for creating a structure and staffing model adequate to providing all the services BPL provides to the community. These changes are key to addressing the digital divide, since end-user technology services and support are staff intensive. Town Manager Hawthorne also asked that the explanation for each modification be more detailed and descriptive. E. Lane briefly described the other three modifications in ranked order: Library On Wheels (hybrid step van), a departmental fleet vehicle, and expanded digital technology. To help inform best practices and advocacy, C. Siloac recently reached out to other libraries about the ARPA funds process in their towns. E. Lane stressed the importance of having the board advocate for the library during this process.

The library sent the proposed budget, minus promotions, to town hall, which includes step increases, COLA, and the \$3000 increase for education. Everything else is included in budget modifications. E. Lane expressed concern over the lack of stability at town hall the past few years, especially in the town manager and finance director positions, and asked for help from the board and Friends with navigating this process and educating the town manager and town council about the library. C. Siloac explained that, in response to questions from the board and town manager about the library budget’s outdated language

and structure, the library plans to restructure the budget next year to make it better reflect where the library is now.

E. Lane asked the board if the budget modifications were clearly articulated. P. DeLorenzo thought the documents were informative and convincing, but expressed concerns over the cost of the vehicles being proposed. E. Lane reiterated that the staffing proposal is the number one priority, and that the other modifications have been submitted with ARPA funds in mind. E. Lane and the board discussed different approaches to ARPA fund distribution, based on set amount, percentage, or direct request, and how the process affects the way in which the board advocates for the library.

B. Merritt asked how materials are being moved between libraries now, and E. Lane confirmed that staff are using their own vehicles to deliver between libraries, make homebound deliveries, and participate in off-site pop-up events. A. Biffer noted that ARPA funds were designed for initiatives like a staff delivery vehicle and digital resources, and that those initiatives are essential to vulnerable populations. The board discussed the potential of liability connected to staff using their own vehicles as another reason a fleet vehicle makes sense. M. Ursery spoke about the importance of understanding the town's timeline and process for spending ARPA funds, so that the library is included in the discussion.

A. Biffer spoke about the need for the library board to work on its advocacy efforts. She has been looking at materials and training from professional organizations and will forward links to the board. She stressed the importance of sharing library information on social media and speaking up at town council meetings. The board can help highlight data, anecdotes and library needs. E. Lane can provide board members with the information they need.

2022 Board Meeting Schedule: July Meeting Date Correction – A. Biffer discovered that the July meeting date was mistakenly scheduled on a Monday, so the board will need to vote to move the date and formally update the schedule. **MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to update the 2022 meeting schedule and move the July meeting date to July 12 instead of July 11;** seconded by M. Ursery and passed unanimously. E. Lane will send the town clerk the updated schedule.

New Business

Late Openings on Select Dates to Prepare for Building Project – The library is proposing a monthly late opening day, on a Wednesday or Thursday at 1:00 PM, to allow staff time to clean out the buildings in preparation for leaving the buildings. The board requested that the library communicate the late openings in multiple ways, including the use of town communication channels.

Approval of the Minutes

The board was not able to proceed with approval of the minutes of the December 14, 2021 and January 11, 2022 meetings, due to the lack of a voting quorum. The approval of minutes from both meetings will be tabled until the March meeting.

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Board Comments

Advocating at Council Meetings – P. DeLorenzo will reach out to E. Lane and other board members for talking points to use at upcoming council meetings. P. DeLorenzo noted all the upcoming opportunities in March for board members to speak on behalf of the library and library budget at town council meetings.

Grant Writing – P. DeLorenzo said he was pleased to hear that the grant writer for the board of education reached out to the library for a partnership.

Building Committee Meetings – P. DeLorenzo asked about building committee meeting minutes and attending the meetings as a board member. E. Lane pointed to the library website for minutes and encouraged Patrick to attend the February 9th building committee meeting.

Budget Hearings - E. Lane said that the library's budget presentation to the town council is scheduled for March 24, and that town manager's presentation to the council is on March 10.

MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM; seconded by B. Merritt and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac
Technology & Administrative Coordinator