

DRAFT
Bloomfield Public Library
Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
<https://youtu.be/tk9u6HsrFBE>
March 8, 2022

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

Absent: None

Quorum present? Yes, 6 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 L. Farrell. L. Farrell joined the meeting at 6:16 PM.

Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries

Book Sale Plans – The Friends’ book sale leaders are working with BPL staff on planning an early June book sale that will approach the event in a new way. More details to come.

Chairperson’s Report

Budget Advocacy – A. Biffer encouraged board members to advocate for the library during budget hearings. A. Biffer and L. Farrell recently spoke at a council meeting. Speaking on the library’s behalf helps make the library more visible to the council.

BPL Visibility – A. Biffer acknowledged BPL staff as leaders in Connecticut’s library community. Staff and board members are planning or participating in multiple presentations in the next few months, including at the annual conferences of the Connecticut Library Association (CLA) and Connecticut Education Network (CEN).

Electronic Books Legislation – A. Biffer thanked E. Lane for testifying before the state’s Planning and Development Committee on a proposed senate bill regarding electronic book licensing. If this bill passes, it would represent significant savings for taxpayers and libraries. This bill relates to an ongoing problem for libraries: electronic books are more expensive, and their usage rights more restricted, than print books. A. Biffer encouraged library supporters to send their legislators an email in support of the bill.

Director’s Report

Digital Circulation – The library had 1,728 digital circulations in January, which is the library’s highest ever monthly number. E. Lane reiterated the point from A. Biffer’s report that electronic books are more expensive and that the state law would benefit taxpayers.

Masking Rules– With CREC now going to masks optional in two weeks, it seems like a good time for the library to follow suit. The library was originally planning for April 4th for a masks optional policy, but it might be good to change policy sooner. E. Lane is seeking feedback from the board on this issue.

Expanded Hours – The library is planning to change its opening hours to 10:00 AM everyday at both locations, starting on April 4th. This expansion of hours had been planned for the start of the year, but the rise in COVID-19 delayed things.

Library Cards – The library continues to have a high number of library card sign-ups each month, for example, 57 cards in January and 67 cards in February.

Programming – The library continues to be responsive in its programming. An example: the library recently hosted an Outlander fan fest event. E. Lane thanked Librarian Melanize Bazer for leading this program.

Staff Resignations – Two library staff members recently resigned: Time Kreiker, a library page, and Jane Romanos, a library assistant who worked for the library for six years. The staff will celebrate Jane as part of a staff appreciation celebration this Thursday.

Daycare Visits – The library will resume daycare visits in April. Mara Whitman and Sheila McCallum will rotate visits to BELC, Creative Hearts, New Creations, CREC Headstart, First Academy, First Cathedral, and First Congregational.

Board Advocacy – E. Lane thanked A. Biffer and L. Farrell for speaking about the library at recent town council and finance meetings.

Library Leaders – As an example of BPL staff becoming leaders in the Connecticut library community, E. Lane pointed out that Librarian Sara Ray is currently the chair of the Millennial Programming Roundtable. The library is focused on engaging Millennials, and Sara has been helping with that effort.

In-Person Storytimes – The library has rolled out in-person storytimes at both buildings: Fridays at Prosser and Wednesday at McMahon. E. Lane showed the board a flyer and asked them to help get the word out. These storytimes are recommended for ages 5 and under.

Strategic Plan – The library will be posting its strategic plan at both locations. This document continues to guide the library, including plans for a swing space.

Dignity Grows – The library has partnered with Dignity Grows and the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, which provides bags to handout that include personal hygiene items for anyone who asks. There are bags for men and women, and they include items such as tampons, pads, deodorant, body wipes, shampoo, toothbrush and toothpaste, and soap.

Building Committee – The building committee continues to be very busy. Last week TSKP provided project updates that included 3D models. Around 30 people attended an open house, featuring the models, at McMahon Wintonbury and asked good questions. The LEED certification process has formally started, with a kick-off meeting at TSKP that included staff, building committee members, and consultants.

Bond Commission Agenda - The release of the library's \$1 million construction grant may be on the agenda for the bond commission on 3/25/22. E. Lane has emailed Representative Gibson and Senators McCrory and Slap to encourage them to ensure that we make it on the agenda.

University of Hartford Visit - E. Lane, C. Siloac, and Allison Wilkos toured the library at the University of Hartford with its director, Elizabeth Dill, to look at their technology offerings.

330 Park Visit – The library’s tech team, C. Siloac, Allison Wilkos, and Quincey Gill, toured 330 Park with IT Director Scott Sharlow to look at the pros and cons of how they rolled out technology in that building.

Windsor Federal Building – Library staff toured the old Windsor Federal building as a potential swing space.

Bloomfield Schools – The library is looking to deepen its relationship with Bloomfield Public Schools. Library staff and board members recently met with representatives from the schools to discuss how the library can better reach students and create lifelong learners and library users.

Comics Plus – The library is rolling out a new electronic resource, Comics Plus, which greatly expands the sequential comics and titles that the library offers.

Women’s History Month – The library is celebrating Women’s History Month with a slate of programs, including a recent program featuring docents from the Wadsworth Atheneum, and one with a female beer enthusiast on the history of female brewers. There are program offerings for all ages.

Conference Presentations – E. Lane and M. Ursery had their proposed presentation accepted for this year’s CLA annual conference. It is entitled *How We Did It: Three Successful Referendum Campaigns*, and will occur on May 3. E. Lane and C. Siloac will be part of a panel presentation at the CEN conference on the laptops and hotspots that the library received with state funding.

Electronic Book Testimony – E. Lane testified on behalf of the Connecticut State Library and CREC at the appropriations committee public meeting on February 17, and testified for Ebook licensing on February 25.

Budget Workshops – The town manager will be presenting his budget at 330 Park on March 10 at 7:00 PM. The presentation will be in-person and streamed. E. Lane, C. Siloac, and Allison Wilkos will present the library budget to the council on March 24 at 7:00 PM.

Hours/Staffing Questions – E. Lane read a response from C. Siloac to B. Merritt concerning library hours. Prior to March 2022, Prosser was open 55 hours per week, and McMahon was open 42 hours. Currently, both libraries are open 43 hours per week, though with the forthcoming 10:00 AM opening, both will be open 48 or 49 hours. Going forward, the plan is to have the same hours at both locations. E. Lane anticipates 55-60 hours per week at each location, including Sundays, in the new buildings. Opening on Sundays gives patrons access to technology seven days a week. E. Lane added that delivering services during the pandemic was more staff intensive. She also added that McMahon is now being staffed more robustly.

B. Merritt explained that her questions were an attempt to perform better staffing comparisons with other area libraries. She stressed support for the 10:00 AM opening and the planned expanded hours and said that the hours, along with the expansion of services since COVID-19, help make the case for more staff. B. Merritt also expressed her support for the library going mask optional as soon as possible. L. Farrell reported that, based on state report data, Bloomfield has fewer full-time-equivalent staff than Farmington, Windsor, or Simsbury. C. Siloac pointed out that the library did add Saturday hours at Prosser and Monday hours at McMahon in the past decade without an increase in staffing. In response to a question about volunteers, E. Lane said the library doesn’t currently have volunteers, and that it is better for staff to perform library work, in terms of consistency, efficiency, and timeliness.

Librarians in Bloomfield Schools – Library staff and board members have been meeting with representatives of Bloomfield schools about the possibility of having children’s librarians embedded in schools next school year. There are no professional librarians currently working in Bloomfield schools. E.

Lane hopes to have solid information to share soon. These discussions are part of building a stronger partnership with the schools.

Talking Points – P. DeLorenzo asked if library staff could create focused and factual talking points that he could use when he speaks before the council. Patrick also said he would be happy to reach out to council members individually. P. DeLorenzo noted his support for going to mask optional and in-person programming, as well as his support for the earlier opening time and matching operating hours at both locations.

In-Person Meetings – The board discussed the possibility of returning to in-person meetings. The Prosser community room is not usable, and McMahan does not have a large enough space. The board discussed looking into using space in another town building. The importance of having hybrid meetings that could be recorded was also noted.

Vehicle Requests – B. Merritt asked where things stood with the library's vehicle requests. She thought it might be best to pursue an electric vehicle for the staff vehicle. E. Lane explained that vehicle requests will be included as part of the capital improvement project requests that are being presented to the council. ARPA funds could apply to these requests. As per the town manager and finance director, the organizational realignment and digital technology requests are considered budget modifications. All of these projects are part of the library's budget process. A. Biffer mentioned that she recently attended the LEED certification meeting and that EV charging stations are being looked at as part of the new buildings.

Mask Optional Date – The board said that E. Lane should consult with staff about whether to go mask optional on April 4 or sooner and make her decision based on the feedback she receives.

Old Business

Review BPL's 2022-2023 Budget and Budget Modification/ARPA Requests – The budget was discussed earlier in the meeting. E. Lane reiterated that she would send a single document that includes all the different aspects of this year's budget process. E. Lane, C. Siloac, and Allison Wilkos will work on talking points the board can use at council meetings. E. Lane said that the board can reach out for supporting information and statistics if there is a particular topic they wish to discuss. She also reminded the board that they can email the council instead of appearing in person if that is preferred.

New Business

Consider and Take Action Regarding the Connecticut Library Association (CLA) Intellectual Freedom Statement Against Censorship – In the face of challenges to library materials throughout the nation, CLA has issued a statement against censorship. Some library boards in the state have formally endorsed the statement; E. Lane suggested that the board do the same. T. Cooper stressed the importance of being proactive on this issue. M. Ursery asked how the library board's support will be posted for the public. E. Lane suggested that the library can share in the newsletter and on social media and the website. **MOTION by T. Cooper to endorse the Connecticut Library Association Intellectual Freedom Statement Against Censorship**; seconded by P. DeLorenzo and passed unanimously.

Transition to Mask-Optional Protocol – This item was already discussed as part of the Director's Report.

Prepping for Move – Library staff has started preparing for the planned September 1 exit of the buildings. A. Biffer suggested that the board support the staff in their efforts by providing snacks or

refreshments on designated cleaning days. E. Lane and the board discussed the scope of the cleaning and the challenges, such as no elevator access to the top floor. E. Lane will survey staff for snack ideas and then report back to the board. A discussion ensued about the discarding process. E. Lane noted that there is a town manager policy in place, but that the policy does not work well for the library, nor does it appear to have been followed by departments in the past. Town Manager Hawthorne recently asked E. Lane to come up with a policy that can be used for the library. E. Lane described the current discarding process and emphasized that the bulk of the paperwork and items do not have enough value to store and move. C. Siloac described attempts to recycle and rehome items using Green Monster, Habitat ReStore, and the Connecticut libraries listserv. E. Lane said that one responsibility of the owner's representative for the building project will be to help coordinate decisions around moving and storage. Based on feedback from other libraries, E. Lane stressed the importance of the "less you take the better" approach, because the goal is to open with clean spaces. E. Lane will email the board the town manager's current policy on discarding.

Approval of the Minutes

MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to accept the minutes of the December 14, 2021 meeting as presented; seconded by T. Cooper and passed with one abstention (B. Merritt).

MOTION by B. Merritt to accept the minutes of the January 11, 2022 meeting as presented; seconded by M. Ursery and passed with one abstention (P. DeLorenzo).

MOTION by M. Ursery to accept the minutes of the January 19, 2022 special meeting as presented; seconded by B. Merritt and passed unanimously.

MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to accept the minutes of the February 8, 2022 meeting as presented; seconded by M. Ursery and passed with one abstention (T. Cooper).

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Board Comments

In-Person Meetings – P. DeLorenzo emphasized his support for returning to in-person meetings.

MOTION by T. Cooper to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 PM; seconded by B. Merritt and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac
Technology & Administrative Coordinator