

FINAL  
Bloomfield Public Library  
Board of Trustees  
Conference Remote Meeting  
<https://youtu.be/yerN6JXp4uM>  
December 14, 2021

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

**Absent:** Beverlee Merritt

Quorum present? Yes, 5 of 6

A. Biffer called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

*Roll Call* – A. Biffer performed roll call and noted the absence of T. Cooper and B. Merritt. T. Cooper joined the meeting at 5:41 PM.

*Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries*

**Update on Friends** – Friends remain active, especially with receiving donations and managing book carts. The Friends have been promoting the book carts for the holidays as an “Everyday \$1.00 Book Sale.” P. Pearson thanked library staff for assistance with online marketing.

*Chairperson’s Report*

**CLC Panel** – A. Biffer congratulated E. Lane and L. Farrell for being invited to serve on a Connecticut Library Consortium panel.

**ACLB Director’s Evaluation Session** – A. Biffer attended the director’s evaluation session of the Association of Connecticut Library Board’s (ACLB) conference and found it to be a positive experience. The board’s evaluation instrument is in line with their recommended best practices.

**Staff Recognition** – A. Biffer requested that staff recognition be added under New Business.

*Director’s Report*

**ChromeKit CARES Act Report** – The library recently submitted a required report on its ChromeKit service to the CT State Library as part of the CARES Act funding. BPL was one of the first libraries in the state to roll out this service. C. Siloac read part of the report, which describes the varied ways that patrons used the laptop/internet kits at home this past year. C. Siloac emphasized the need to continue this type of technology-at-home program as the library shifts to a swing space. From the report:

“We had patrons who used the kits to attend court dates, look for jobs, manage their investments, attend virtual library programs, access BPL Online resources, and attend class and do school work. Some patrons took them on vacation. Many patrons used it for email, streaming video, social media, and general internet research. Patrons often expressed surprise that we offered such a service. We also know that some

of the patrons who used this service were experiencing homelessness. This service was essential for helping to bridge the digital divide during the pandemic and remains an important part of our ongoing effort to make technology accessible to all.”

**Tech Team** – Around the same time as the library piloted the ChromeKit service, it also launched the tech team to provide one-on-one technology support to patrons. The ChromeKits and the tech team require considerable staff attention and are a part of the library’s ongoing efforts to bridge the digital divide.

**Departmental Presentation to Council** – On November 16, E. Lane and C. Siloac presented an overview of library services to the town council, as part of the council’s orientation. Included in the orientation was the library’s contribution to a book/PDF for the council and public that provides an overview of what each town department does.

**First Amendment Auditors** – E. Lane emailed the board about the incident with the first amendment auditors at the Bloomfield post office. Library staff has already prepared for the possibility of auditors coming to the library to film, since libraries are usually a target.

**FY 21 Annual Report to State Library** – In November, the library submitted the FY 21 annual report to the state library. E. Lane mentioned that FY 21 was a full year of contending with COVID, unlike FY 20, which only featured four months of COVID impacts. The report shows that the library now has a much cleaner collection, from 138,000 to 107,000 items, as well as a dramatic increase in BPL Online usage, with digital downloads increasing from 15,000 items to 29,000 items over a two-year period.

**Organizational Restructuring**– A priority of Town Manager Stanley Hawthorne, and a focus of Elizabeth’s performance review, is the need to restructure library staff to move from a flat structure to one with middle management.

**Library Connection** – BPL’s consortium, Library Connection, Inc. (LCI), is welcoming two new members: Farmington Library and Russell Library (Middletown). Additionally, the libraries in Berlin and Plainville are going fine free. 13 of 30 LCI libraries will now be fine free.

**Acoustics Project** – Bob Celmer, Director of Acoustics Program and Laboratory at the University of Hartford, has reached out and asked to have his acoustical engineering students work on a project to help with sound in the new buildings. The library will begin collaborating with the lab next semester.

**Connecticut Library Consortium** – With the exit of Jennifer Keohane, Ellen Paul is now the new executive director of the Connecticut Library Consortium. Her legislative knowledge, as well as extensive library experience in multiple states, should help libraries at the state level.

**CLC Panel** – L. Farrell and E. Lane, along with Leticia Cotto from Hartford Public Library, presented to the Connecticut Library Consortium on action steps relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

**New Library Assistants** – Two new library assistants, Dejah Murray and Victor Giner, recently started at BPL.

**COVID-19 Protocols** – The library continues to adhere to its COVID-19 protocols, such as mask mandates, cleaning, social distancing, and no in-person programming.

**Community Room** – Following the flood damage, the community room at BPL is still not finished. Facilities staff is working to resolve the problems.

**Bloomfield Job Fair** – Library staffers Mara Whitman and Quincy Gill assisted with the Bloomfield Job Fair, demonstrating library resources such as JobNow, which helps with resume creation.

**All Staff with TM** – Town Manager Stanley Hawthorne attended the all staff meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Virtual Programming** – BPL’s virtual programming continues to receive a strong response for the public. There are many wonderful upcoming programs.

**Building Project** – Staff continues to brainstorm ideas for swing spaces and to work with TSKP on designing spaces in the new buildings.

**Building Committee** – Following his election to the town council, Greg Davis has stepped down as chair of the building committee. Mark Wiseman, formerly the vice-chair, is now chair.

**Public Spaces** – The town manager is not satisfied with the presentation of public spaces at town hall and has asked that all staff step up and work on making areas neater.

**Pride Stickers** – In response to the recent hate crimes at the library, the library now has Pride stickers at all entrances at both buildings.

**Beautification Committee**– E. Lane thanked the Bloomfield Beautification Committee for providing the door wreathes at both buildings.

**Library Cardholders** – BPL now has over 7000 library cardholders, an increase of around a 500 cardholders, which is the biggest increase in a decade. Library cards are a key indicator of library success and will continue to be a focal point. E. Lane thanked the staff, library board, and Friends for helping spread the word on “free” library cards.

#### *Old Business*

**ACLB Membership** – The board’s membership in the Association of Connecticut Library Boards (ACLB) has expired and needs to be renewed. **MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to renew the board’s ACLB membership for the coming year, using Prosser funds to pay the \$100 fee;** seconded by T. Cooper and passed unanimously.

#### *New Business*

**Consider and Take Action Regarding History Collection Management Policy** – E. Lane and Allison Wilkos spoke about the need for a formal History Collection Management Policy and updated Deed of Gift Form, especially after recent discussions with the Wintonbury Historical Society about the potential housing of their materials in the new Prosser building. A. Wilkos guided the board through aspects of the policy and form. One question raised with the gift form was how to handle anonymous donations. The library will consult Town Attorney Marc Needeleman on that issue.

The board discussed ways to promote the history collection in partnership with Bloomfield schools. E. Lane described the current history collection at Prosser. Hopes for the future of the collection include grant funds to pay for organization and digitization of materials, as well as volunteers to assist the public with the collection. The library is waiting to hear from the historical society about having their papers integrated into the library’s collection, which could affect the building design. Despite questions regarding anonymous donations and other matters, the board agreed it was best to adopt the documents as is, with the understanding that revisions may need to be proposed in the near future. **MOTION by M. Ursery to adopt the History Collection Management Policy;** seconded by L. Farrell and passed unanimously.

**Consider and Take Action Regarding Deed of Gift Form** – A. Biffer noted that the town attorney has already reviewed the Deed of Gift Form. **MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to adopt the Deed of Gift Form;** seconded by T. Cooper and passed unanimously.

**Consider and Take Action Regarding Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy** – E. Lane introduced the documents under consideration. The Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy, along with the Request for Reconsideration of Material From, deal with censorship issues, which have been in the news lately, including book challenges at libraries in West Hartford, Avon, and Simsbury. The policy was drafted from American Library Association (ALA) best practices, as well as with input from Sam Lee, Chair of the Connecticut Library Association's (CLA) Intellectual Freedom Committee, and pertains to both physical and digital materials. E. Lane noted what was entailed in the policy document, including resources and passages aimed at parents, and explained the role that the request for reconsideration form has in the formal complaint process. Due to the organized nature of these challenges, and a possible flood-the-system approach, the town attorney is currently considering if the reconsideration process can apply to Bloomfield residents only. E. Lane showed the board how to find reviews in the library catalog.

M. Ursery raised the question of what criteria the board would use to determine if challenged material should be removed. E. Lane pointed to the BPL's Social Justice Mission Statement, Library Bill of Rights, and professional reviews as a basis for decisions. M. Ursery stressed the importance of a standard of practice for the sake of consistency. The board discussed the idea of a working procedural document with steps, standards, and resources. E. Lane noted that the town attorney is still reviewing this document as well.

The board discussed the "Message to Parents and Guardians" section of the policy, which is aimed at problems around computer use in the library. The section emphasizes the role of parents and guardians in monitoring their children's use of the internet in the library. The idea of publicly posting this section in the youth department was discussed, as well as information literacy for parents around evaluating resources. P. DeLorenzo suggested adding a line to the policy that states that "library staff do not monitor computer use." E. Lane said this type of language could be posted near youth computers. E. Lane and C. Siloac noted that the computers are filtered and that a computer use agreement pops up before each session. The board talked about the need for a proactive rather than reactive approach on this issue. E. Lane stressed the idea that works will be evaluated as a whole when considering removal.

**MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to adopt the Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy, with the addition of the line that "library staff does not monitor computer use,"** seconded by M. Ursery and passed unanimously.

**Consider and Take Action Regarding Request for Reconsideration of Material Form** – Discussion on this item occurred as part of consideration of Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy. **MOTION by T. Cooper to adopt the Request for Reconsideration of Material Form;** seconded by P. DeLorenzo and passed unanimously.

**Town Website** - The board discussed ongoing problems with inaccuracies and dysfunction on the town website in relation to the board and library. The town council has also discussed the need for a website overhaul. A. Biffer will reach out to Town Manager Stanley Hawthorne about the need to make changes to the town website. A. Biffer noted ongoing confusion with town hall about the name of the board and how it appears on the website. The town attorney has confirmed that, due to state statute, Library Board of Trustees should be the official name.

**Staff Recognition** - In recognition of staff appreciation, E. Lane presented the idea to give a Dunkin Donuts gift card to each staff member, as well as to have staff enjoy pastries from Pasticceria at a casual meeting in January. Public Works employees that work closely with the library will be part of this appreciation. **MOTION by M. Ursery that board will provide \$500 from Prosser Funds to cover staff**

appreciation initiatives; seconded by T. Cooper but no vote held due proposed amendment. The board discussed the amount of funds needed for the appreciation and decided to make an amended motion with a more flexible limit. **MOTION by T. Cooper to make the appropriation of \$500 funds as amended to allow library director to spend up to \$700 to provide for both appreciation events**; seconded by P. DeLorenzo and passed unanimously.

*Approval of Minutes*

**MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to accept the minutes of the November 9, 2021 meeting as presented**; seconded by T. Cooper and approved unanimously.

*Public Comments* – There were no public comments.

*Board Comments*

**Presentation to Council** – P. DeLorenzo apologized for not attending the library’s presentation to the town council, due to a conflicting meeting commitment. He thanked E. Lane for the shared orientation materials.

**Construction Grant** - P. DeLorenzo congratulated the library on being awarded the \$1,000,000 state construction grant and looks forward to seeing how those funds impact the project.

**Town Website** - P. DeLorenzo offered A. Biffer his assistance in talking to the town manager about the website. The website is an outstanding issue from Patrick’s tenure as a town council member.

**MOTION by T. Cooper to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM**; seconded by M. Ursery and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac  
Technology & Administrative Coordinator