

DRAFT  
Bloomfield Public Library  
Board of Trustees  
Conference Remote Meeting  
<https://youtu.be/nvIM27RYRfQ>  
January 12, 2023

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

**Absent:** Maxine Ursery

Quorum present? Yes, 5 of 6

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

*Roll Call* – A. Biffer noted the absence of M. Ursery and T. Cooper. T. Cooper joined the meeting during Board Comments.

*Citizens' Statements and Petitions*

**Robert Berman** – Robert Berman, 8 Hiram Lane, noted that he is speaking as one member of the building committee. R. Berman spoke about the increased costs of the project, as well as the current budget of around \$37 million, and emphasized that things are tight. He stated the building committee will work to get the library what it needs, but that it may be advisable for the library to hold onto shelving and furniture for potential use within the swing space and the new buildings. He ended by noting that the building committee is required to stay within the budget and reiterated that there may be financial constraints.

*Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries*

**Farewell Parties** – P. Pearson noted that the Friends are funding the two upcoming building farewell parties, and that Friends' volunteers will be at both events to celebrate and look ahead.

*Chairperson's Report*

**Farewell Parties and Staff Celebration** – A. Biffer will not be able to attend the farewell parties or upcoming staff celebration, but had comments she wanted to share. She spoke about the importance of the Prosser Library to her family, and noted that, despite how wonderful the new building will be, Prosser as it was will always hold a special place in the heart as “our library.” A. Biffer read a statement thanking the library staff for their hard work these past few years, especially in light of the stressful challenges of COVID-19 and the building project. She noted that the library has brought in more than 21% of the funding for the building project, and that they have done all this work, including operating two buildings, with fewer than 20 full-time equivalent staff members. Ava ended by describing the BPL staff as the “living definition of a skilled, committed, and caring library staff.”

*Director's Report*

**Town Manager's Retirement** – E. Lane noted that the theme of her report is uncertainty, since the library is facing uncertainty on a number of fronts. One example she gave was the announced August retirement of the town manager. E. Lane stated that the town manager's leadership has benefitted the library.

**Swing Space and Timelines** – The library is still waiting on a swing space location, though there is now a document outlining the current options. The swing space options will be on the agenda for tomorrow night’s building committee meeting. E. Lane is still pushing for more specific and clearer timeline documents with milestones. Downes has agreed to present seasonal milestones at least.

**Staff Celebration** – E. Lane noted that all the uncertainty was impacting staff morale, so she is looking forward to the staff party this Thursday morning as a time to gather without pressure. She reminded the board that they are invited to the celebration.

**Organizational Realignment** – E. Lane spoke about the importance of the assistant director promotions six months ago in helping accomplish the work that needs to be done. The library is waiting on the next phase of the organizational realignment to be implemented, which should further help with delegating.

**Library Building Project** – The library is preparing for moving out of the buildings, despite not knowing the destination. BPL has stopped sending out holds to other libraries. The building farewell parties have been scheduled: McMahon Wintonbury on 2/2 (4-7 PM) and Prosser on 2/15 (4-7 PM). E. Lane thanked the Friends for supporting the parties. The library is asking daycare and preschool children to make drawings of things they associate with the library. The drawings will be featured at the farewell parties and potentially on the scrim that goes around building construction sites. Lastly, the library has new “I Love My Library” refrigerator/car magnets to hand out.

**330 Park Partnership** – BPL is still in talks with department heads at 330 Park about a partnership during construction. There are still details to be finalized before anything is released publicly.

**McMahon Construction Grant** – The McMahon construction grant didn’t make the Bond Commission agenda in December. The library is talking to state representatives and hoping it makes it on the next meeting agenda.

**MetLife Campus** – A large space at the MetLife campus is being considered as a potential swing space option. It is a nice location that is easily accessible, including by bus. An inspection of the HVAC system, which hasn’t been used in some time, is scheduled for tomorrow.

**CIF Grant** – E. Lane stated that the library specifically asked that the amount requested during the CIF grant application process be significant enough to cover all expenses going forward, and that she will be disappointed if we continue to have budget issues after having obtained that grant funding.

**Take Your Child to the Library Day** – February 4th is Take Your Child to the Library Day. There will be programming at both libraries, including a goodbye to the fish event, featuring a Rainbow Fish costume, at Prosser. E. Lane asked the board to spread the word.

**BPL Online Camp** – The library’s first BPL Online Camp was a success, with both patrons and staff coming away having learned something new. One example is the participant who learned how easy it is to access BPL Online services, such as Kanopy, on their home television.

**Northstar Digital Literacy** – The library is planning to roll out the Northstar Digital Literacy platform, a partnership with the state library, for patrons in the next month. The library plans to offer this service while we’re in the swing space.

**BPL Program Feedback Form** – The library just completed its first year of using the program feedback form for adult programs. We received over 640 responses, with 89.3% of programs being rated 5 out of 6 or higher. One clear positive from the feedback is that it generates ideas for future programs. Many respondents expressed gratitude for the virtual option and wanted it to continue, while others wanted more in-person options. E. Lane thanked the BPL programming staff for their hard work and read some of the anecdotes. The plan is to focus more on children’s programming next year and to introduce a QR code to make parent feedback at in-person storytimes easier.

**Teen Advisory Group (TAG)** – E. Lane thanked Senator Slapp for featuring BPL’s Teen Advisory Group in his newsletter. TAG continues to attract more teens and will likely help shape services and spaces in our new buildings.

**FY24 Budget** – The first round of numbers for the FY24 budget is due on Friday. E. Lane noted that the library is forecasting more hours of service during construction while in swing space since our staff and services will be spread out more broadly.

**IT Director** – The town has a new IT director, David Weathers, as well as a new assistant IT director, Warren Plummer, an internal promotion. The library is excited to see leadership in the IT department, since IT-related matters impact the library’s daily operations, as well as the building project. It has been a challenging time of transition, which has impacted relationships with partners such as CEN and required the assistance of outside contractors such as Novus.

**Board of Education** – BPL continues to deepen its relationship with the Board of Education. One recent example is that schools will now include the library as part of the onboarding process for new families.

**Building Issues** – The police department and fire department recently had to come to the library to attend to a locked bathroom situation, which thankfully resulted only in a broken door. Prosser continues to have leaks, recently near the adult public PCs.

**Book Sanctuary City** – Stamford recently declared itself a book sanctuary city, a response to the book banning and challenges public libraries have been facing. E. Lane is notifying the board of this because she would like to bring this idea to the town council as a way forward on this issue for Bloomfield.

**LBC Communication Issue** – E. Lane is creating an agenda for a meeting with LBC leadership and key stakeholders to address communication issues. Items for the agenda include regularly updated timelines, a project communication plan, a record of deliverables and requests and their status, the role of the risk manager in this project, and how technology plays out.

*Old Business* – There was no old business to discuss.

#### *New Business*

**Request for Letter of Support for Peggy Barber Tribute Grant** – As part of BPL furthering its relationship with the University of Hartford, the library is looking at a grant for shared programming during Black History Month. The programs will be hosted at the University of Hartford, with the grant going towards buses to provide transportation from the library to campus and speaker fees. As part of the grant process, E. Lane is seeking a formal endorsement letter from the board. A. Biffer will write and send a letter following support from the board. **MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to support the library applying for the Peggy Barber Tribute Grant**; seconded by B. Merritt and passed unanimously.

**Discuss and possibly take action on the Library Board of Trustees signing the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Civility Pledge** – E. Lane read the civility pledge being sponsored by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and said it would be a nice idea for library board members to sign the pledge. Some library staff, along with A. Biffer, have already done so. The board would be the first in Connecticut to sign the pledge.

**Discuss and possibly take action on book sanctuary city designation** – This item was added to the agenda during Board Comments. Prior to the item officially being added, E. Lane and A. Biffer noted that they thought it would be a good idea for the board to endorse the library staff to move forward on steps to designate Bloomfield as a book sanctuary city. A. Biffer said it was a freedom of speech issue centered on protecting choice. P. DeLorenzo asked what exactly is meant by being a sanctuary city for books. E. Lane referred to the Ferguson Library and Stamford’s language on this topic, which focuses on the freedom to read and providing opportunities for learning, thinking, and growth. P. DeLorenzo and A. Biffer noted

that the values supported by the designation have already been embedded in library policies, but that this initiative will extend support for those values to the entire town. E. Lane will reach out to Stamford for more detail on how to formalize the designation. **MOTION by L. Farrell to ask library staff to move forward in support of the book sanctuary city designation;** seconded by P. DeLorenzo and passed unanimously.

#### *Approval of the Minutes*

The board discussed minor corrections to the minutes. **MOTION by P. DeLorenzo to accept the minutes of the December 13, 2022 meeting as corrected;** seconded by L. Farrell and approved with B. Merritt abstaining.

#### *Board Comments*

**Book Sanctuary City** – L. Farrell asked if the board could move forward now in supporting the library staff in their efforts to have Bloomfield designated as a book sanctuary city. **MOTION by L. Farrell to add a discussion about moving forward with the book sanctuary city designation to New Business;** seconded by B. Merritt and approved unanimously.

**Civility Pledge** – P. DeLorenzo said he read the civility pledge and will sign it and send it in soon.

**Building Documentation** – P. DeLorenzo asked if there were photos documenting the buildings for historical preservation purposes and suggested a possible photo documentation project before Prosser is demolished and McMahon is renovated. He suggested a potential partnership with the Wintonbury Historical Society, as well as asking Dennis Hubbs, who often takes photographs of the town and town events, to assist. E. Lane said a member of the public, Michael Taylor, reached out on this topic and took photos of both buildings. E. Lane said she will send the photos to the board.

**Historical Preservation** – A. Biffer discussed the idea of preserving and repurposing parts of the building with historical value. As an example, she spoke about potentially using bricks from Prosser for walkways from Prosser to Filley Park. Bob Berman, a member of the public, spoke about a walkway easement from the Riley lot to Filley Park and said that this idea could be brought to the Filley Park committee.

**MOTION by L. Farrell to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 PM;** seconded by B. Merritt and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac  
Assistant Director