

DRAFT
Bloomfield Public Library
Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
https://youtube.com/live/KM6AeN_h48I?feature=share
February 14, 2023

Attendance: Elizabeth Lane (*Library Director*), Ava Biffer (*Chairperson*), Leah Farrell (*Vice-Chairperson*), Todd Cooper, Patrick DeLorenzo, Beverlee Merritt, 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 6:07 PM.

Roll Call – A. Biffer noted the absence of M. Ursery.

Citizens' Statements and Petitions – There were no public comments.

Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries – The Friends had nothing new to report.

Chairperson's Report

McMahon Farewell Party – A. Biffer noted that it was good to hear that the McMahon building farewell party was a success. Ava thanked the Friends for their generous support for both farewell parties.

Agenda Format Change – The regular Citizen's Statements and Petitions item of the agenda will now appear twice on each agenda, once at the beginning and again later. A. Biffer initiated this change as a way to broaden opportunities for members of the public to be heard and respond to board decisions.

FY 2024 Budget – A. Biffer encouraged board members to attend town council budget meetings and support the library during the process. She stated that there are misconceptions about the library's need for resources and staff during the transition. The library is not planning to slow down during the transition and will be spread out at many service locations, which is going to be staff intensive.

Town Manager's Report – A. Biffer was glad to see a long list of BPL accomplishments and activities included in the town manager's report. She found the thank you notes from our Bloomfield neighbors especially heartwarming, as it shows the value of the library to the community.

Civility Pledge – A. Biffer encouraged board members to sign the Council of Connecticut Municipalities's Civility Pledge. It will be nice to see the library board strongly represented on it.

Director's Report

Staff Celebration – The library had a wonderful staff celebration. E. Lane thanked the library board for supporting the party and B. Merritt and L. Farrell for attending it.

Staff Training – BPL's mission statement prioritizes lifelong learning, which includes a commitment to staff development. Last week, the library hosted the West Hartford Bloomfield Health District for staff training on using Naloxone (Narcan) to reverse an opioid overdose, as well as training on suicide prevention. The library now has at least 18 staff members who have received training on these topics. E.

Lane stressed that Bloomfield has been lucky so far in not having to deal extensively with opioid overdoses.

Book Sanctuary City – E. Lane reached out to the mayor and deputy mayor about declaring Bloomfield a book sanctuary city and is waiting to hear back from them.

DEI Study – The town’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) study was released last month, and the library was mentioned multiple times, in both good and bad ways. E. Lane reiterated how seriously the library takes DEI initiatives and how intentional the library is in using a DEI lens on services and operations. One recommendation from the study was that the library can assist other town departments with DEI training. E. Lane read a section of the report that noted that, although the library has the least diverse staff among the town’s largest departments, the library’s employees showed the best understanding of DEI principles. E. Lane pointed to professional development as one reason library staff understood the topic better. E. Lane is looking forward to the DEI recommendations that will emerge from an upcoming town council retreat.

Sick Leave – The library is trying to get paid sick leave for all its part-time employees, in accordance with state law on paid leave for service workers. The HR department currently differentiates between the status of librarians (who accrue sick leave) and library assistants (who do not). This sick leave is an accrued benefit based on hours worked that caps at 40 hours per year. Many of the library’s part-time library assistants have served the town for years, and the library believes they deserve this benefit.

Organizational Realignment – The library is also working with HR on the last two promotions in the first phase of the library’s organizational realignment. E. Lane hopes for good news on that front soon.

ITI Department – The BPL leadership team had a successful meeting with the new leadership team of the Information Technology & Innovation (ITI) department.

HR Department – The town hired a new assistant director in the HR department, but that hire did not work out as planned, so that is still a position that will need to be filled.

ESL Services – Michael Bailey, who oversees continuing education for the Board of Education, reached out to inform the library that many English as a Second Language (ESL) students see the library as their primary referral source. BPL will be even more conscious of this role going forward.

Library Consortiums – E. Lane shared a color-coded map of the state that shows which libraries belong to which library consortiums, as these consortiums are a crucial way for libraries to share services and resources. Bloomfield belongs to Library Connection, which comprises most of the libraries in the Hartford region, while the other two large consortiums in the state are Bibliomation and LION. In general, there is a regional component to the consortiums. E. Lane also pointed out well-funded independent libraries – such as Hartford and Westport – who do not necessarily need a consortium. E. Lane stressed that BPL will rely heavily on Library Connection during the building project.

Library Building Committee (LBC) – Last night the council approved moving forward with a lease for the MetLife swing space. As of now, the library’s move out date is April 17. E. Lane is anticipating two weeks of downtime during the move. The library is also finalizing plans with 330 Park about a tech presence in that building during the building project. Both MetLife and 330 Park have costs associated with being open on weekends, so weekend library hours may not be an option. The library is working with TSKP on how to layout the MetLife space, as well as calculating storage needs. With MetLife, the plan is for it to serve as both the swing space and the storage location. E. Lane noted improved communication between the library and the LBC, which is appreciated by library staff. Elizabeth thanked the chair of the LBC for this improvement.

CSL Construction Grants – The McMahon Wintonbury construction grant was not on the last bond commission agenda, but the library is hoping it is added to the February or March meeting agenda. E.

Lane stated that the town is working with the state library to ensure that we are in compliance with the mandates for both the Prosser and McMahon Wintonbury grants.

Prosser Farewell Party – The farewell party for the Prosser library building will be held between 4 PM and 7 PM this Thursday and will include food and a harpist. E. Lane thanked P. DeLorenzo for attending the McMahon farewell party. Most of the questions from the public at the McMahon party focused on library services during construction, which is a reminder of the importance of a good communication plan as the projects move forward. E. Lane thanked the Friends for funding the parties and the library lover magnets.

FY 2024 Library Budget – The budget process is moving quickly. E. Lane and C. Siloac recently attended the initial budget meeting with the town manager last Friday, and the library’s formal budget presentation to the town council will be on Thursday, March 30th at 6:00 PM.

Library Bookmark and Usage Statistics– E. Lane thanked librarians Joni Celmer and Rachel Tonucci for their work on a new library bookmark that features a snapshot of library statistics from FY 2022. E. Lane read some of the statistics and noted the importance of showing what the library is doing, since she does not believe the library is getting the credit it deserves for how it serves the community everyday. She shared an anecdote from BPL librarian Sara Ray that shows the depth of technology assistance BPL staff provides to the public as compared to other libraries. Statistics do not accurately reflect this depth of service. E. Lane thanked the library staff for their efforts and mentioned that this year’s town budget will contain statistical comparisons with the towns of Rocky Hill, Windsor, and Wethersfield. As an example of the work that staff is doing, E. Lane showed that library program attendance is up 45% in FY 2023 when compared to the same period last year.

State of the Library Address – E. Lane will deliver a state of the library address, via Zoom, at 6 PM on Monday, February 27. She hopes the library board can attend. The address will show how the library is functioning, spending tax dollars, and serving the public. A written report will accompany the address.

Swing Space Weekend Costs – P. DeLorenzo asked E. Lane to describe in more detail the costs associated with operating out of swing spaces on weekends. E. Lane said at MetLife it is operational costs, including HVAC, since the building isn’t typically open, and that the current figure is \$150 per hour on weekends. The library is still working on the possibility of weekends at 330 Park. Elizabeth spoke about the importance of other spaces in town being used for programs and services and said the library is pursuing BPL on Wheels funding again this budget season. In response to a question from B. Merritt about operating hours in the swing spaces, E. Lane said the library is still working on finalizing operating hours.

Library Consortiums and Sharing – T. Cooper asked about sharing materials and resources with other consortiums. E. Lane explained that patrons can borrow materials from any library in Connecticut, but that the consortiums provide additional services, material lending, and contract assistance and savings to their members. E. Lane said the library’s self-check solution – MeeScan – is an example of a Library Connection initiative that has benefited BPL, and that different consortiums provide different benefits to their members. T. Cooper asked if E. Lane thought we were in the best consortium for our needs. E. Lane said she did, especially since the consortiums are partially geographically-based. Since Hartford does not belong to a consortium, T. Cooper wondered if BPL should look to partner with them directly. E. Lane stated that Bloomfield is looking to do that more, especially since the libraries share patrons. E. Lane stressed that there is a lot to learn from Hartford, and that she will send a message to Hartford’s director about ways in which the libraries can work together.

Anecdotes for Budget Hearings – T. Cooper said it would be nice for board members to have anecdotes or examples to use as talking points during budget season. E. Lane said many of them would revolve around the digital divide. She gave an example of a blue collar worker who needs to submit timesheet information digitally, and the staff assistance available to help them with the process. E. Lane spoke about

the importance of the ScannX service to patrons completing important business. C. Siloac noted that in the last quarter BPL averaged over 1,000 pages of public faxing per month, and that these faxes are often related to essential services and tasks, and that they frequently require staff assistance. E. Lane said that this type of technology assistance, and the impact it has on patrons, is difficult to fully capture with numbers. A. Biffer gave a further example of the online job application process, which often involves difficult to navigate websites and unclear information. Library staff provide a crucial service by assisting with this process.

Old Business – There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

Discuss and possibly take action on Paid Sick Leave for Part-Time Staff – E. Lane reiterated that the library is asking that its part-time library assistants receive the same sick leave benefits as the part-time librarians, in accordance with Connecticut’s paid sick leave law. E. Lane noted that this law allows sick time accruals of up to 40 hours per year based on the amount of hours an employee works. She spoke about the importance of part-time library assistants to the library’s daily operations, including during COVID-19, when BPL was the only library in the state to offer continuous service. Letters on this issue have been sent to the town from previous and current employees. E. Lane said it is a social justice issue that affects staff morale, and that it may also impact staff hiring and retention, due to the fact that many neighboring towns offer this benefit. The Town of Bloomfield’s HR department is not recognizing library assistants and pages as service workers, since the state law does not explicitly list those positions by name.

E. Lane read the town attorney’s interpretation of the policy and the state law. The attorney’s interpretation coincides with the library’s understanding, which is that an employee may be a service worker by state law even if the job title is not explicitly listed, especially if job duties overlap with positions that are defined in the law, as is the case here. T. Cooper stated that the exclusion of library assistants doesn’t make sense and this provides an opening for changing the policy. A. Biffer said the library board cannot make this change on its own, and nor can Human Resources, since the charter indicates that the decision to change employment terms or classification belongs to the town council. In response to a question from P. DeLorenzo about whether part-time workers in other departments, many of whom are unionized, were receiving this benefit, E. Lane said she did not know, but she believes the library has the most part-time staff, of any department, that works regularly scheduled hours year round. P. DeLorenzo wondered if a good next step would be to get the issue on the agenda of the Administration and Education Subcommittee, who can determine if it should go to the full council. The board thought this was a good approach, and A. Biffer suggested that the library start by bringing the issue to the town manager and Mayor Wong. E. Lane will get back to the board as the issue moves forward.

Discuss and possibly take action on Privacy Policy – The library newsletter goes out to over 7000 email addresses. These emails are seen as a valuable commodity for communication purposes. When other departments recently asked for this email list for their communications, the library had to say no, due to the library’s own stance on patron privacy that embraces an opt-in approach to communications, as well as a state statute that says libraries cannot share user information with other parties. For these reasons, it is important that the library have a formal privacy policy in place. E. Lane sent a draft policy to the board for initial review, though the policy is not ready for adoption. The policy combines state law, best practices, and is informed by the American Library Association’s (ALA) recommendations. The plan is to have the privacy policy on the agenda for adoption at the March meeting. A. Biffer recounted the way privacy statutes arose from librarians fighting the FBI’s attempts to gather library patron data after 9/11. E. Lane said that ALA recommends attorney review of privacy policies, so the policy will be sent to the town attorney upon completion.

Board Comments – There were no board comments.

Approval of the Minutes

The board discussed minor corrections to the minutes. **MOTION by T. Cooper to accept the minutes of the January 12, 2023 meeting as corrected**; seconded by P. DeLorenzo and approved unanimously.

Citizens' Statements and Petitions – There were no public comments.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac
Assistant Director