

DRAFT  
Bloomfield Public Library  
Board of Trustees  
Conference Remote Meeting  
<https://youtube.com/live/EKF9SotKHIE?feature=share>  
October 10, 2023

**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 (*Assistant Director*), Allison Wilkos (*Assistant Director*)

**Absent:** None

Quorum present? Yes, 6 of 6

A. Biffer called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM

*Roll Call* – T. Cooper was not present at roll call, but joined the meeting at 6:46 PM.

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

*Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries*

**Friends Update** – The Friends will be funding refreshments for a series of teen programs that will be held on Fridays. P. Pearson said the library should let the Friends know of any other ways they can contribute at the Atrium or with programs.

*Chairperson's Report*

**Leah Farrell and Maxine Ursery** – A. Biffer noted that this meeting is M. Ursery's and L. Farrell's final meeting as trustees. Ava thanked them for their service, which went far beyond expectations, including their work leading Library Building Committee subcommittees. Ava said they have been valued and extremely supportive colleagues in all that they have done and noted their love for and loyalty to the library and the people of Bloomfield. A. Biffer thanked L. Farrell and M. Ursery on behalf of the library board for their service.

*Director's Report*

**L. Farrell and M. Ursery** – E. Lane thanked L. Farrell and M. Ursery for their service, support, and professional expertise.

**CEN Internet Update** – C. Siloac gave an update about internet bandwidth issues at the Atrium. The library facilities had affordable, robust, and fast fiber from the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), but the Atrium has much slower and more expensive internet, provided through a CEN/Frontier partnership. Frontier caps internet speed in a way that CEN in the library does not. C. Siloac explained how hitting the cap can cause problems, particularly for staff functions. C. Siloac is working with CEN on increasing the bandwidth, as well as discussing alternatives. One good thing is that 330 Park goes through the faster town network, so the public internet in that building is much more robust.

**Spreading the Word** – E. Lane spoke at the September 26 town council meeting, as part of an ongoing effort to better inform the public about the library’s temporary locations.

**Prosser Groundbreaking** – A date for the Prosser groundbreaking has been set for October 23 at 4:00 PM, in the Riley parking lot. E. Lane hopes the board can participate in the event.

**Library Annual Report** – The library is working on its next annual report and hopes to present another State of the Library Address to go along with the report.

**Community Partners** – E. Lane shared her screen to show the full page list of community partners from last year’s annual report. All of the partners were sent a thank you email with a link to the report. The library is planning on inviting the community partners to the groundbreaking.

**McMahon Wintonbury Library** – The future of the McMahon Wintonbury building project is currently unclear. E. Lane reminded the board that the new library buildings were conceived as one system, so the size of Prosser alone is not adequate to space and service needs. E. Lane hopes to continue conversations that emphasize the importance of a renovated and expanded McMahon Wintonbury, with a focus on the need for community spaces and a facility that actually looks like a library.

**Staffing Issues** – The library was the only department hit with a 6 month hiring freeze during budget season. There is now talk of extending the hiring freeze. The staffing shortage, on top of all the disruption, has affected staff morale. E. Lane reiterated that there are no professional librarians in Bloomfield Public Schools, and that BPL staff fulfills that role. At the moment, BPL is down a full-time youth services librarian, which directly impacts what the library can deliver to Bloomfield’s children. E. Lane hopes the town council can help the library fill these positions soon.

**BPL at the Atrium** – The building official and fire marshal have signed off on the Atrium space, so we’re just waiting on the certificate of occupancy. Once we receive the certificate, the library will extend its hours to 6:30 PM. The doors of the building are locked at 7:00 PM, so the public needs to be out before then.

**CT State Library** – On a recent agenda of the state bonding commission, under the state library section, the Southington Public Library was earmarked for \$5 million for their building project. Southington also had to forfeit a state library construction grant a few years ago, so it is interesting to note that they are receiving these funds after construction has already started. E. Lane will continue to attend state library board meetings to convey the importance of the construction grant to the Bloomfield community, and to emphasize that it is a social justice issue that the construction grant was taken away from Bloomfield.

**BPL Everywhere** – The library continues with its BPL Everywhere initiative. BPL staff recently tabled at Stop and Shop, Geissler’s, and the community event for students at Rockwell Park. Upcoming locations include the Auer Farm fall festival, and events at 330 Park, such as Trunk or Treat. These outreach efforts give BPL staff an opportunity to provide information about library services, the building project, and the temporary locations.

**Library Programs** – E. Lane talked about recent and upcoming programs, such as the Portable Planetarium program, with the Children’s Museum of West Hartford, and Observe the Moon Night, with members of the Astronomical Society of Greater Hartford. The Wintonbury Poetry Series kicks off its 26th year on October 19. The library also presented civic literacy programs to go along with voter registration day.

**Holds** – Patrons can once again place holds on Bloomfield materials.

**Monthly Statistics** – E. Lane shared her screen and reviewed monthly statistics for September, including strong programming stats of 47 programs with 1,312 attendees. BPL Online stats for online resources and digital circulation remain strong. There were 715 visits to the tech space at 330 park, while Atrium visits nearly doubled, from 411 to 799. More people are beginning to find the library at the Atrium, thanks in part to recently added signage.

**Response to Director’s Report** – P. DeLorenzo asked E. Lane how long Southington had to wait for its recent grant to come through. E. Lane said that the legislative team seemed to go out and get the funds, and that this type of grant, similar to CIF, shows that the state wants to invest in shovel-ready projects. E. Lane hopes we can continue to explore state funding opportunities. P. DeLorenzo asked how monthly visits to the Atrium compare to Prosser visits. E. Lane said visits are still way down from where they were at Prosser, though usage continues to rise. She said that this is one reason the library is focusing on its BPL Everywhere outreach initiatives, so the library can meet people where they are at. C. Siloac said that BPL programs are largely held virtually or outside of library facilities, and that those attendees do not count as visits, which impacts the numbers. A. Biffer talked about the difficulty of comparing Prosser and the Atrium, due to the Atrium’s more limited hours.

#### *Old Business*

**Discuss and possibly take action on Paid Sick Leave for Part-Time Staff** – At the last meeting, the board decided that A. Biffer should speak to the town manager about this issue, which she did. She has yet to hear from the town manager about any new developments. A. Biffer stressed to the town manager that this benefit would not cost the town additional funds. She also noted that, as long as the issue remains unresolved, employees who should be eligible to earn sick time accruals are unable to earn any sick time. The town manager has administrative oversight of this issue, so she hopes to hear from him soon.

**Discussion and possible action concerning employee appreciation** – A. Biffer said that the library will lose staff if morale issues, primarily caused by the move and staffing shortages, are not attended to. E. Lane said that library manager Carol Walters has taken on the employee appreciation event and will begin by reaching out to staff members about their preferences. Once there are more details, E. Lane will put together a funding proposal to present to the board. A. Biffer spoke about the importance of supporting and treating the staff in a manner consistent with how the staff delivers service to the public. In response to a question by P. DeLorenzo, E. Lane clarified that the library is considering a staff away day, likely to a museum, coupled with staff development situated around team building.

**Discuss and possible action on status of Library Buildings Project** – E. Lane talked about the CIF discussion at the last building committee meeting, and the possibility of library board support for seeking additional funding to help finance the full renovation and expansion of McMahan Wintonbury. A. Biffer emphasized the importance of adequately funding the McMahan project and bringing funding opportunities to the council. She said the library board will support pursuing additional funding for McMahan.

#### *New Business*

**In-Person Meetings** – B. Merritt noted that most boards and commissions are now meeting in person, and that she would like for the library board to pursue this option. A. Biffer stressed the importance of a hybrid option for people unable to attend in person. The board discussed the possibility of using a meeting room at town hall. E. Lane said that she and C. Siloac will look into how to make the hybrid option feasible and report back.

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

*Board Comments*

L. Farrell thanked the board and talked about how rewarding serving on the library board has been for her. If not for logistical issues, including an anticipated move out of Bloomfield, Leah would want to continue serving.

P. DeLorenzo thanked L. Farrell and M. Ursery for their service to the board and expressed how much he enjoyed serving with them. P. DeLorenzo said he visited the library's table at Geissler's, and that he has seen the helpful directional signs leading to the Atrium. He also expressed a preference for having the library board meet in person and suggested the use of conference room 5 at town hall, due to its hybrid capabilities.

B. Merritt thanked the library for resuming processing and getting new books on the shelves.

M. Ursery thanked everyone for their remarks and talked about what a meaningful experience it was serving on the library board, especially during such a challenging time.

A. Biffer thanked T. Cooper for his service to the board and congratulated him on his run for town council. Ava said that, although she and the board will miss Todd, she will be thankful to have a strong library advocate on the council.

T. Cooper spoke about how professionally and personally rewarding it has been serving on the library board. He said that the town council will give a voice to the library going forward, and that it will be one of his main areas of focus.

*Approval of the Minutes*

**Motion by P. DeLorenzo to accept the minutes of the August 8, 2023 meeting;** seconded by L. Farrell and accepted unanimously.

*Executive Session*

**Personnel Matter: Performance Review of Library Director – MOTION by L. Farrell for this meeting to enter executive session for a personnel matter and to invite Director Lane to attend;** seconded by B. Merritt and approved. The board entered executive session at 6:55 PM.

The board exited executive session at 8:15 PM.

**Motion by T. Cooper to adjourn at 8:16 PM;** seconded by P. DeLorenzo and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac  
Assistant Director