

DIGHTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES
February 1, 2023
9:30 AM
Old Town Hall

Due to the increasing concern surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, this meeting was open to the public through the Zoom Conferencing platform.

Call to Order Trustee Meeting Started at 9:31.

This was a hybrid meeting with adequate and accessible access through Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call – In-person participants: Ron O’Connor, Chair; Rita Araujo, trustee; Ann Meitzen, trustee; Jocelyn Tavares, library director

With a virtual meeting, a roll call vote should be taken, so that it is absolutely clear what the outcome of the vote is. The meeting must be completely audible. The meeting is recorded.

Ann moved to enter Executive Session Under **Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2)**;

2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

Rita seconded the motion.

Ron O’Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

Motion carries. Ron announced Executive Session and the meeting would return to Open Session.

Open session resumed at 9:38.

Ann moved to return to the general session. Rita seconded.

Ron O’Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

Motion carried.

Old Business

- Proposed Policy Reviews - Review/Discuss/Act
 - Collection Development Policy

Ron summarized his reflections of the collection development policy from the issues brought forth over the past few months. He mentioned access to certain materials to minors; library’s

approach to marketing library materials targeting minors; and library's collection perceived as not showing a diversity of thought.

Ron mentioned his commitment of taking the concerns seriously. He asked other board members if that was a fair concession. Ron was struck that everyone appreciated the library and the importance of children as part of the community who the library serves. There was also consistent consensus on First Amendment rights. Ann added she heard the importance of family and parental guidance in selecting library materials, which is emphasized in the library bill of Rights. Rita agreed and emphasized parental role in determining appropriate material.

Ron discussed his meeting with the library director, town administrator and the principals of the group who brought up the concerns. He then summarized the issues that were requested to the library to take action and discussed the legal implications that arose from them.

Ron mentioned leaving personal opinions aside in the role of trustee and summarized a clause from the Trustees handbook. He mentioned that Town Counsel's opinion stated the constitutionality of the Board's position and explained the statute that governed the trustees limits with regard to law. Ron also discussed the need for standards and principles amongst libraries in Massachusetts for consistency's sake.

Ann discussed the material read from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and the American Library Association (ALA), and everything underlines what Ron described, including the trustee role of upholding the law.

Rita acknowledged that everyone has their own opinion, and that the trustees need to be neutral and abide by the law. She underlines the fact we serve a community of differing opinions.

Ron started discussing the specific change requests. The first is amending the library policy to restrict users under the age of 18 certain materials from subject areas of concern. Town counsel said this change would be impermissible and unconstitutional. Ron said this opinion does not dismiss the underlying concerns. There may be ways to address concerns without violating the constitution and law.

There was a suggestion to remove a specific statement regarding library collection selection and parental decisions in the current policy. Town counsel advised against this. Ron used this point to encourage input on library policies and explained how they are drafted and that he appreciates the intent of the request given.

There was a suggestion to add "diversity of thought" and "balance of philosophical and ideological views" to the policy's selection criteria. Rita agreed that there should be diversity of the collection for everyone, and that the library is for everyone. That is where collections comes in.

Ann thought the intent was there, but it may be helpful to add the language, with the understanding that this can only happen if the materials are available for purchase. Libraries represent all people.

Ron asked if these additions are implicit in the current policy. Ron discussed the criteria listed in the collection development policy. If accepted, he would like it done in the spirit that this is a clarification and amplification of the message of the policy and not an omission. He doesn't feel the policy didn't reflect these values. He also asked if there are other aspects of the criteria

missing. Ron read the criteria. He recognized that diversity of thought and balance of philosophical and ideological views may be reflected in service roles and relevance of place in Dighton.

Ann questioned if the library mission was clear enough, and if the mission was reflected in the policies adequately.

The library bill of rights does reference the diversity of thought in its second point. Ron asks Jocelyn to look at criteria from other libraries used.

Rita asked how long these criteria last and if it is still relevant. She agreed with the principles of diversity of thought and capturing what the residents are telling us.

Jocelyn read the mission.

The next question needs to have a response. There were a few questions regarding the library's process with regard to the collection, including space limitations on the collection; how the library makes space for the collection.

Jocelyn explained the weeding process, the temporary space restrictions, rotating popular titles through the locations, how the library purchases, managing backlist titles that are being requested, rotating in demand titles with newer titles, and balancing all of these factors with the items in the collection that are being used. Staff rely on circulation data and the physical condition of the book. If a book is not checked out it is removed. There is no choice because of the space restrictions.

In the past the library had authorization to donate discarded library books to the Friends book sale. This has not been accurate for some time because the library wasn't open during the COVID pandemic. Jocelyn explained that the library must purchase a certain amount for the collection. Ron and Jocelyn will work on response.

Rita mentioned the new library would be a help toward addressing a lot of these concerns.

Jocelyn mentioned the library has not been receiving donations, but sometimes an exception is made to replace an existing copy of a book in better condition. She repeated there has not been a book sale in some time.

Ron will ask to adjust the agenda in order to accommodate public discussion.

Ron acknowledged taking steps in regard to marketing the collection. A statement was made about the collection not being diverse enough.

The board and library welcome comments in regard to collection. Ron discussed the plan for diversity audit, which is an analysis of the collection regarding the different subject areas to see if there are gaps in the collection so it can be addressed. Purchasing choices were explained with regard to items that are in demand with patron holds and requests. Also the amount of budget allocated toward the collection is mandated.

Rita moved to jump ahead in the agenda to begin the public comment. Ann seconded.

Ron O'Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

Motion passes.

Ron explained the parameters of public comment to begin.

Public comment:

Leonard Hull reminded the board how technology is and should be a consideration in the collection.

John Rufo asked about the SAILS relationship with regard to Overdrive. Jocelyn answered that there is both a shared collection among SAILS member libraries and an individual collection for Overdrive with precedence going to Dighton library cardholders.

Andrew Horton mentioned the public comment of two minutes was too few for comment. He had concerns about public input, trust, and government transparency.

Robert Woods reiterated the comment from the previous speaker. He believes there is a majority of people in Dighton who are concerned about book content available to children.

Rafa Delfin shared his concerns about obscene material being available to minors.

Donna Berdos felt that the parents should not have to go to the library ahead of time to find a safe spot for their children or be worried about the collection.

Paul Reynolds (on Zoom) asked if there is a way for parents to check on their children's titles. Jocelyn replied that some parents use their personal contact for this information, with options of text, email or automated voice notifications. A child's library card is issued with a parent's consent.

Ron stated the thoughts behind limiting public comment to two minutes at the prior meeting were due to not knowing what to expect in the way of public comment for that meeting. He wanted to make sure that everyone who wanted to speak had that opportunity. He mentioned that he is open to adjusting the parameters in order to keep the conversation going. He acknowledged that this is the first time in his tenure that the library has had public comment at their meetings. The prior meeting's public comment was one part of a larger library agenda.

He also mentioned the Massachusetts General Law governing trustees and the board's legal obligations.

Mr. Horton mentioned he did not want to see a hiccup in getting the new library. There has been overwhelming support from the Board of Selectmen and the Community Preservation Commission (CPC). He has concerns about perceptions that things are done wrong at the library.

Rita acknowledged that we all want to protect our children. She also emphasized the importance of libraries.

Mr. Delfin shared his support of libraries. Rita agreed.

Ann loves the dialogue and the passion that people have brought to the meeting and communicated her thanks.

Ron discussed the building and application to the CPC , which led to a question by Mr. Woods about if there was an official meeting. The meeting in question was attended by Ron, Jocelyn and the Town Administrator.

Ms. Berdos shared her concerns about certain titles appearing in a former church building.

Old Business

- An adjusted budget for Fiscal Year 24 was presented in the scenario that the clerical contract will be ratified and contractual increases (an estimate of 2%) for staff will go into effect on July 1. Jocelyn will present both budgets to the Town Administrator and Town Accountant at the budget meeting.

Ann moved to approve the revised budget. Rita seconded.

Ron O'Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

- Discussion regarding if the CPC application should come from both the Board of Trustees and Library Building Committee. Ron is Chair of Board of Trustees and co-Chair of the Library Building Committee.

Rita moved that Ron is authorized to sign the CPC application. Ann seconded.

Ron O'Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

Ann moved to adjourn the meeting. Rita seconded.

Ron O'Connor: Aye

Rita Araujo: Aye

Ann Meitzen: Aye

Meeting adjourned at 10:56.

Documents Referenced:

Collection Development Policy

ALA Library Bill of Rights

Legal Opinion

FY24 Budget