

September 21, 2023

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DATE: October 23, 2023
TIME: 9:05 AM

Co-Chair Kathy Keohane called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The meeting was held as a teleconference through Zoom technology. Also attending were Co-Chair Elaine Alligood, Trustees Mark Carthy, Gail Mann and Mary Stearns, Library Director Peter Struzziero, staff member Grainne Griffin, and members of the public, Barbara DuBois and Susan Lewis. Vice Chair Corinne Olmsted joined the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Public Comments

Barbara Dubois inquired about the water table and its impact on the new building. Co-Chair Keohane noted that this is being discussed with the architects and the Library Building Committee. She further noted the Planning Board's involvement and the new stormwater regulations.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the August 24, 2023 Trustees meeting were approved unanimously on a motion made by Co-Chair Keohane and seconded by Trustee Stearns.

Director's Report

Director Struzziero referred to his Director's report included with the meeting materials. He noted that two librarians had resigned, the teen librarian and the community outreach librarian, one due to a move and the other to a promotion opportunity. He noted that the teen librarian position has been filled and the new hire will be starting soon. Director Struzziero highlighted the success of the various summer reading programs and Co-Chair Keohane suggested that feedback about the programs be posted.

Library Operations Update

Director Struzziero reiterated that building maintenance continues to be a challenge and as previously reported, until move-out the focus will be principally on items affecting health and safety. Existing maintenance contracts are being wound down in anticipation of the move to temporary space.

Temporary Space

Director Struzziero thanked the staff, Co-Chair Keohane, and Trustee Stearns for their considerable efforts with respect to temporary space planning. He noted that library services, particularly programming, would be limited after November 1 as the staff prepare to move out of the building. As previously reported, he expects to terminate patron services at the current library building the week of Thanksgiving and to move in December, with on-line services available during the move period and a goal of having the closure period as short as possible. Director Struzziero is working on making certain services available during closure, such as museum passes, materials pick-up, perhaps limited programming, and chat or a hotline.

Director Struzziero reviewed hours for temporary space during the transition:

Beech Street Center (Adult services):

9:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. Friday

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Saturday

Benton library (Children's services)

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Monday, Thursday, Friday

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Saturday

Chenery Middle School (staff and tech services)

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday

Co-Chair Keohane noted that the working groups for the Benton Library and the Beech Street Center should begin meeting soon to review operations as against the memoranda of agreement between the parties. She reported that Glenn Clancy will be looking into traffic considerations in the Benton neighborhood. She suggested a “good-by” celebration for the library the week before closure. Co-Chair Alligood will explore and organize this and will include key partner groups.

Building Project Update

Co-Chair Keohane updated the Trustees on the project. She reported that the Belmont Media Center would have dedicated space in the new library building. The goal is to prepare a letter of intent and then an operating agreement to memorialize understandings. The parties are working out the staffing and equipment contributions and other financial considerations. Ralph Jones is representing the BMC board in these discussions. She noted that BMC also has dedicated space at the Belmont Middle/High School and at the Chenery Middle School. Co-Chair Keohane did not know whether BMC would continue to occupy their current storefront. She confirmed that the Town Administrator is aware of these discussions.

The Trustees indicated their approval of Co-Chair Keohane continuing discussions with the BMC, with Trustee Carthy in support but abstaining because of his involvement with matters involving the BMC.

Co-Chair Keohane reported that two sets of constructions documents – one for the demolition of the building and the other for construction of the new facility – are being prepared. While there is some risk with this approach, it better supports project timing and should result in a lower total project cost than a single contract.

Co-Chair Keohane noted that the project is still on budget but that the contingencies built in to the cost estimates will be necessary. She noted that new energy codes, new stormwater management regulations, Belmont Light hook-ups, and inflation have all contributed to cost increases.

Co-Chair Keohane provided an update on various design elements of the project, including interior finishes, and the pros and cons of various choices.

Friends/Library Foundation Update

Trustee Stearns noted that the Friends would be holding its annual membership drive in November. The organization is trying to expand its membership and Director Struzziero is working with them on possible incentives. The final book sale at the existing building is scheduled for the weekend of September 23. The Friends is considering a possible Halloween event at the library.

Trustee Mann reported that the Belmont Library Foundation was working on communications to promote visibility of the status of the project. They will be soliciting and collecting remaining pledges from donors over the next few months. The BLF continues to consider its tax status and future structures in this regard. Co-Chair Keohane reported that the BLF would be transferring additional funds to the Town in November and January to be applied to the costs of the project.

Trustee Mann noted that the Belmont Savings Bank grant intention would be satisfied after the construction contract is awarded.

Schools Update

Director Struzziero reported that the 5th and 6th grade library card initiative at the Chenery Middle School had been launched.

Other Business

Trustee Carthy and Director Struzziero reported on the Belmont Garden Club's plans for the area around the new library, including handicap accessibility. Since this is Town property, CPA grant money is not available to fund the effort. The Garden Club will proceed with a consultant but will need to seek funding.

Director Goals FY 2024

Co-Chairs Keohane and Alligood reviewed Director Struzziero's goals for the current fiscal year, which were developed with input from all the Trustees. The focus is on actionable goals and the future of the new library.

Budget Review

Director Struzziero, with Co-Chair Keohane and Vice Chair Olmsted, led a discussion on the first draft of the proposed FY 2025 Library budget to be submitted to the Town. Director Struzziero noted that given the move to temporary space, the budget includes less funds for building maintenance and part-time services. The budget reflects funding for a full year of the Assistant Director position, which is scheduled to come on board during the middle of FY 2024. The budget includes increased administrative costs, small increases for professional development, website updates, software increases, technology purchases in the anticipation of the new building, and a mid-year hire of a technology librarian resource. The initial proposal is for a 2.3% increase, following a budget decrease for the current fiscal year.

Vice Chair Olmsted noted that the budget submission focuses on the Library occupying temporary space and those areas where costs increase and decrease as a result. Co-Chair Keohane noted that construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of FY 2025. Depending on the schedule, move-in could be earlier than currently anticipated (end of FY 2025 rather than early FY 2026), in which case the Library's operating budget could be impacted.

Co-Chair Keohane noted that the capital planning process would need to be taken into account, particularly with lease/buy decisions on technology, and that she is working to get the new library factored into the Town's capital planning process.

On motion by Trustee Mann, seconded by Trustee Stearns, it was voted unanimously to approve the initial submission of the Library's FY 2025 budget.

Director Struzziero noted at the end of the meeting that the Town-wide yard sale, originally scheduled for September 23, the same day as the Friends book sale, has been postponed until September 30 due to the weather forecast.

Next Meeting: October 19, 2023 7:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Co-Chair Keohane moved to adjourn the meeting and Trustee Stearns seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail S. Mann, Secretary

Exhibits:

- Agenda, September 21, 2023
- Director's Report, September 2023
- August 24, 2023 meeting minutes
- August 2023 Statistics
- Director's Report September 2023