

Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at 7 pm, Library Community Room

Approved, 9/14/2023

Attending in Person: Library Trustees Mark Gerath, Kristen von Campe, and David Zeiler. Helena Altsman participated by Zoom. Also in attendance: Library Director Vanessa Abraham and Assistant Director Sarah Breen.

Absent: Kate Bettencourt

Call to Order:

Kristen von Campe, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Vote Summary

- Approval of July 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Moved by Mark, seconded by David. 3 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstention.
- Approved \$700 for staff training modules by Ryan Dowd to be drawn from the State Aid Account. Moved by Mark, seconded by David. 3 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstention.
- Adjourn. Moved by Mark, seconded by David. 3 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstention.

Action Items

- Budget and Finance to develop a budget tracking tool.
- The Trustees to appoint John Konetzny as an Endowment Trustee for another term at the September meeting.
- Building and Equipment to get a quote from Babin Landscaping to address issues at the Main St. side of the building south of the entrance.
- Vanessa to ask for a quote from Sierra Tree Service regarding tree trimming.
- Building and Equipment to reach out to the HDC regarding Main St. sign replacement.
- Vanessa to seek a quote from Niklaus Painting for the front doors.
- Vanessa to discuss the re-grading of the Community Engagement Specialist with the Town Manager and Personnel Director.

New Business

Welcome to New Assistant Director Sarah Breen. Sarah introduced herself. She will regularly attend Trustee meetings because an essential part of the Assistant Director position is to serve as back up for the Library Director.

Unfinished Business

Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 11, 2023 Meeting

- Completed, see vote summary.

Report on Action Items from Previous Meetings

- All action items reviewed. Outstanding items identified and brought forward to new action item list.

Review Trustees' Calendar for Current Month

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- All calendar items reviewed.

Review Monthly Bills

- All library bills reviewed.

Standing Committee & Liaison Reports:

Budget & Finance

Fiscal Year Wrap-Up and Reports

- A survey of the budgets for towns similar in five demographics categories to Groton found that most departments' budgets in Groton were in line with the other communities. The cultural line item, which includes the library, was higher than other towns' – 2.6% versus an average of about 1.6%.
- Discussed some of the factors for consideration when comparing GPL funding to libraries in other towns: whether the library manages its own facility maintenance, custodial staff, and technology as Groton does, etc.

Staff Training Funding Request for \$700 from State Aid

- Ryan Dowd is known nationwide for providing excellent training videos specifically for library staff on having positive, empathetic interactions with all members of the public, no matter what behavior, issue, or difficulty. Sarah has direct experience with the videos from her recent position and thinks highly of them. Purchase was approved – see vote summary.

Budget & Finance Updates

- FY2025 appears to be another challenging budget year.

Building & Equipment

Landscaping Projects and Work

- Karen Brackett with help from George Brackett have spent considerable time weeding the front of the library and Katie's garden, all entirely voluntary.
- A quote is expected from Babin Landscaping for moving and replacing some plantings in the garden.
- Sierra Tree Service will be asked for a quote to address several tree issues around the library. Any work be done in coordination with library neighbors.
- Information on repainting the outdoor furniture is still being sought by Building and Equipment.

Building Envelope Work

- There is considerable erosion where water has accumulated over many years in the front of the building corner and is leaking slightly through the masonry into the "old coal

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bin.” Babin Landscaping will quote on digging out the soil from that corner, waterproofing the masonry, placing landscape fabric and gravel, and sloping the soil surface away from the building. Funds for this purpose are available from prior capital authorization for the final building envelope work.

- The doors facing Main Street need to be refinished and Vanessa will seek a quote from Niklaus Painting.

Building & Equipment Updates

- David described the proposal for an updated sign on Main Street and is still seeking a final quote.

Policy, Personnel, & Planning

Trustee Vacancy

- The posting of the vacancy will be published toward the end of August. The logistics of interviewing etc. were discussed. It was agreed that not all applicants must be interviewed.

PPP Updates:

- Part-time Library Assistant opening: fifteen applications have been received and interviews are starting.
- The re-grading of the Community Engagement Specialist was discussed. It was noted that a similar position at the Groton Center was defined at a higher grade. Vanessa has developed a proposed new position description and supporting information for the Town Manager and Personnel Director. Both are aware of the issue.
- Trivia Tuesday weekly activity will continue under Joelle’s management.
- It’s becoming more common for adults with young kids to hang out in the Teen Room, which discourages teens from using the space. There is a new sign on the door that all patrons are welcome to browse the collection, but only teens are invited to linger there.
- The recent “First Amendment Audit” was discussed. The courtesy and professionalism of the staff was applauded.

Other Reports:

GPL Endowment:

- Vanessa is coordinating the year end package for the Accountant’s annual financial review, with support from the Endowment Treasurer, Financial Assistant, and Clerk.

Art & Artifacts:

- No update

Social Media Report & Other News:

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- Sarah Breen will be taking over responsibility for the library's adult Facebook and Instagram accounts and is breathing new life into them.

Other Business

- The theme of the 2024 Groton Reads will be music and there will be coordination with Groton Hill Music Center.

Library Director:

- Several reports were provided and reviewed:
 - Director / Library Updates:
 - Town Updates:
 - Program Updates
 - Review Monthly Reports and Statistics

Review of Action Items from Current Meeting – see above

Review Upcoming Meetings & Events

Adjournment at 8:32 pm – see vote summary.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Gerath, Secretary pro tem