

Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2021, Virtual Meeting
Approved, 2/09/2021

Call to Order:

Attending – Via Zoom: Mark Gerath, Kristen von Campe, Nancy Wilder, Jane Allen, Kate Bettencourt, David Zeiler and Library Director Vanessa Abraham.

Support and attendance by Groton Cable.

Kristen von Campe, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Vote Summary – All Votes were by Roll-Call

- The Trustees voted to approve the December 8, 2020 minutes as amended and the December 14, 2020 minutes as presented. Jane moved to approve both minutes and Kate seconded, approved unanimously.
- Jane made the motion to adjourn and Kate seconded. Approved unanimously.

Action Items

- Vanessa to circulate a draft of the GPL annual report to the Trustees.
- Vanessa to distribute the Town Manager's budget presentation.
- Vanessa to post a Trustees' meeting for January 23, 2021.
- Mark to draft a letter to Herald regarding budget cuts and circulate to the Trustees and Vanessa for comments.
- Vanessa to provide photos of GPL services for transmission to the Herald.
- Vanessa to discuss snow removal from the emergency stairs on the building's south side with Deb Ladue.
- David completing the application for funding for the historic skylight upgrades to the Community Preservation Commission.
- Vanessa to follow up with the Town's Human Resources Director on the charges for advertising for a new head of circulation.
- Jane will send a card of condolence to the family of Lee Burton.
- Nancy will request a copy of the presentation provided to the Commissioners of Trust Funds by the Financial Advisors at the December 15, 2020 meeting.

New Business

Updates on Library & Town Hall Closing and Current Services Reopening of town buildings including the library is pushed out to January 25, 2021. Under that schedule the library would allow limited visits by appointment on January 26, 2021. The temporary shelter protecting the children's room window has been redone and is greatly improved. Curbside delivery has been extended to the children's room.

Unfinished Business

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Approval of Meeting Minutes from Dec. 8 and 14, 2020 Meetings Completed, see vote summary.

Report on Action Items from Previous Meetings Reviewed and all completed.

Review Trustees' Calendar for Current Month

Annual Report Vanessa is looking for ideas on developing a one page summary for the Town's Annual Report. She will circulate a draft to the Trustees.

Finance Committee Meeting Planned for Saturday January 23rd at 8:30 AM.

Warrant Articles (if any) None anticipated.

Standing Committees and Liaison Reports

Budget & Finance

Report on Town Manager's Budget Presentation to Select Board and Finance Committee Mark reported on the Town Manager's budget presentation to the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and the Select Board. The proposed budget is a 5.7% decrease from FY21 and includes no adjustments in staff salaries and wages. Expenses are level funded consistent with the GPL's proposed budget. The unfilled library assistants position remains unfilled and the budget eliminates staff slated for Sunday hours and the summer reading program. Mark explained why the cuts were deemed to be necessary and that other municipal departments were also cut by similar proportions. Mark expressed concern about the future fiscal situation in the town and said it must be a priority to fund Sundays and summer reading in the future.

Mark proposed writing a letter to Groton Herald explaining the FY22 cuts, the Trustee's acknowledgement of their necessity, and Trustees intention to return to full level of service as quickly as possible.

Changes to Policies for FY 2021 that Impact the FY 2022 State Aid Cycle Vanessa discussed the potential accommodations that Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners is considering for FY21 including relative to hours open and the municipal expenditures. The changes are not final but some form of accommodation seems likely. Mark and Vanessa will be prepared to summarize the situation at the January 23rd budget meeting.

Review Bills & Sales Tax Vanessa explained that for a recent COVID-related expenditure, a new vendor was not aware that state sales tax should be waived for the Town of Groton including GPL. This resulted in an unanticipated expenditure. Efforts were made to reverse the charge but it was not possible.

Building & Equipment

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Snow Guards Request Library custodian Debbie Ladue requested that additional snow guards be placed on the roof to protect against sliding snow onto the southern emergency exit stair. After reviewing the situation, the Trustees agreed that compromising the new roof to retrofit with snow guards would be inadvisable and fiscally difficult.

HVAC Unit 3 Repair An installation error was discovered in one of the HVAC units that required an emergency repair. Efforts were made to attribute the error to a specific contractor but they were not successful. The reverse air flow in HVAC unit explains its continued shorting, overheating, and freezing, and was the likely cause of recent leaks from directly under the unit.

Children's Window Shelter The upgraded shelter is in place and is working very well. Vanessa gave credit to Jane and David for the vision and effort.

Community Preservation Project(s) Update (if any) David will complete and application to the CPC for the upgrade to historical skylight for submission by January 14.

Policy, Personnel, & Planning

Diversity Task Force: Fines as Economic Barrier Vanessa reported that Teen Librarian Deb Dowson is serving on the Diversity Task Force and that the DTF is considering overdue fines as an economic barrier to a town service. The Trustees may see a request for change in the fines policies from the DTF. The American Library Association recently came out with a statement recommending against late fines as an economic barrier to library use. Library staff also recommend their removal, as it costs more in staff labor than is collected and creates many needless negative interactions between library staff and the public. It has also been found that people will return library items with or without the fine penalty. Lost items will continue to be billed.

Head of Circulation Job Posted The position was posted on January 4th and so far 12 applications have been received.

Other PPP Updates Vanessa reported that the Town's Human Resources Director ran an advertisement in Lowell Sun for the head of circulation. The ad cost \$1,883 and the HR Director may ask the library to defray some of the costs. The Trustees were concerned that this cost was incurred without their permission, particularly as the Lowell Sun is not likely to be reviewed for such positions. Lower cost, more library specific venues should be favored for such postings.

Liaison Reports

GPL Endowment - No report.

Endowment Assistant Update (if any) Library Administrative Assistant Deborah Fleischman is considering whether she may be able to help the Endowment with bookkeeping in addition to her role at the GPL, or what the best collaboration between the two positions could be.

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Art Committee : The gallery curator Ken Hansen will be contacted in the Spring to coordinate new exhibits. He is currently supporting Groton Reads art projects.

Social Media Report None

Other Business

Other: None

Library Director Reports

Monthly Director's Report Staff activity has been focused on taking a fresh re-evaluation of COVID protocols and protections for staff and patrons with the latest CDC recommendations and expending the CARES Grant by Dec. 30.

Library News & Updates

Town News & Updates Lee Burton, a long-time and much loved library volunteer, passed away.

Programs & Service Updates The new adult programs coordinator Beth Dalal is doing great things including "Spice Club".

Winter Newsletter is out

Groton Reads A great Groton Reads program is coming together with participation from many groups and citizens. An audio tour is planned. Credit to Beth Dalal and Owen Shuman, who is helping as the volunteer co-coordinator.

Reports & Statistics Materials lending is down by 50% but far higher than other communities. Readers' Advisory is up 300%.

Wrap-Up

Review of Action Items from Current Meeting:

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

- Trustees Meetings: Feb. 9, Mar 9, and Apr 13, 2021

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted:

Mark Gerath, Secretary