

**Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**  
**February 9, 2021, Virtual Meeting**  
Approved, 3/9/2021

**Call to Order:**

**Attending – Via Zoom:** Mark Gerath, Kristen von Campe, Nancy Wilder, Jane Allen, Kate Bettencourt, David Zeiler and Library Director Vanessa Abraham. Guest: Select Board Member Josh Degen

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 January 12, 2021 minutes as amended and the January 23, 2021 minutes as presented. Jane moved to approve both minutes and David seconded, approved unanimously.
- The Trustees voted to allocate up to \$10,000 for supplemental staff for the summer reading programs from the Gift Fund account derived from the Bequest of Mr. Christopher Christie. Mark moved and Jane seconded, approved unanimously.
- The Trustees voted to approve an amendment to the Library Director's contract. Jane moved and David seconded, approved unanimously.
- The Trustees voted to approve a \$150 contribution to the fee associated with the personnel advertisement in the Lowell Sun. Jane moved and David seconded, approved unanimously.
- Jane made the motion to adjourn and Kate seconded. Approved unanimously.

**Action Items**

- Mark to contact Josh regarding the decision to pursue supplemental fund raising.
- Mark to contact the Town Manager with the Trustees budgetary decisions, a request to fill the recently vacated part-time position, and a review of the MBLC's decision on accreditation criteria for FY21.
- Kristen to develop an amendment to Vanessa's contract.
- Kristen to contact the HR Director regarding the Trustees' contribution to the Lowell Sun invoice.
- David to complete the application to the Community Preservation Committee for the upgraded skylight.

**New Business**

Special Guest Select Board Vice-Chair Joshua Degen to Share about Sargisson Beach Fundraising  
Josh offered to help the library fund raise by approaching a set of potential donors that he knows and/or by developing a GoFundMe page for the purpose. These funds could be used to defray some or all of the FY2022 budget for Sunday hours and Summer Reading programs.

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Following questions and discussion, the Trustees thanked Josh for his attendance and his generous offer. The Trustees indicated that they would consider their options and contact him with their decision in the next day or two.

Library Trustees Up for Re-Election: Jane Allen and Kristen von Campe, also Kate Bettencourt for remainder of Mimi's 2-year term: The slate of candidates was confirmed and the process for obtaining signatures reviewed.

### **Unfinished Business**

Approval of Meeting Minutes from Jan. 12 and 23, 2021 Meetings Completed, see vote summary.

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

Review Trustees' Calendar for Current Month

### **Standing Committees and Liaison Reports**

#### **Budget & Finance**

Budget Meeting with Select Board and Finance Comm. and FY2022 Proposed Library Cuts The Town Manager's budget and the discussion at the joint Select Board and Finance Committee meeting were reviewed. It was noted that the year-over-year budget cut was approximately 5.8% which is in the range of cuts to other municipal department budgets. It was noted that strong support for the library was expressed by both boards following the Library Trustees expression of concern that budget for full service, particularly Sunday Hours and Summer reading, be restored after the fiscal emergency.

Potential strategies to maintain some or all of Sunday Hours and Summer reading in FY22, including supplemental fund raising was discussed by the Trustees. Vanessa discussed the difficulty in planning staffing and budgets during the COVID-19 restrictions and given that some temporary and part-time staff have been out of work for nearly a year. She also indicated that hiring and training new staff took time, and that there are still two part-time positions going unfilled. For these reasons, she was very concerned about the ability to commit to certain level of service in a set schedule. The Trustees agreed that it would be unacceptable to raise supplemental funds and then, due to logistical constraints, be unable to provide the services.

The Trustees decided that the primary focus for the Summer of 2021 (including portions of FY21 and FY22) was the provision of summer reading to the greatest extent possible. To enable the necessary planning and hiring, the Trustees authorized expenditure of up to \$10,000 from

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the Bequest of Chris Christie (as contained in the Gift Fund) – see vote summary. It was noted that as the effort began a note should be sent to the family and potentially to the Groton Herald. The group believes that Sunday hours are still a priority but understands that the logistical challenges need to be better considered. For that reason, the decision to provide funds and their potential source(s) was tabled for future consideration.

The recent resignation of a part-time staff person was discussed and it was agreed that the Trustees should seek permission to refill the position.

The Trustees asked Vanessa to consider amending her contract to forgo a cost of living increase and limit her merit increase to a one-time payment of 1.5% of her salary in alignment with all other town department heads. Vanessa graciously agreed.

FY2021 State Aid Update Vanessa reviewed the updated MBLC guidelines for accreditation. She is optimistic that the Groton Public Library will meet those guidelines for FY21.

Review Second Quarter Financial Reports The financial expenditures were reviewed relative to budgets.

Other Budget Updates The request to reimburse some or all of the job advertisement fee for the Head of Circulation in the Lowell Sun was discussed. It was noted that one of the 33 applicants was derived from that advertisement. The Trustees voted to approve a portion of the fee using ½ of the remaining advertisement budget – see vote summary.

## **Building & Equipment**

Community Preservation Project Update: FY2021 Pocket Doors The doors are done and they look great. It was noted that they were installed with “soft-close” hardware which is remarkable as each door weighs 265 pounds.

Community Preservation Application Update: FY2022 Historic Skylight Restoration David reported on the application for the refurbishment of the skylight. The CPC is requesting additional information including a management plan. The Historical Commission will provide a letter of support.

## **Policy, Personnel, & Planning**

Head of Circulation Search Status Update Thirty-three applicants have been received and almost all have relevant experience. A search committee has been established from key staff and a process has been defined that will conclude with an in-person (distanced) interview.

Town Hall / Library & Supervisors Union Updates The Trustees understand the Town Hall/Library Union has reached an agreement that includes no cost of living increase for FY22. A one-time

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merit-based payment will be available for that fiscal year.

**Liaison Reports**

GPL Endowment Meeting Feb. 8; GPL Endowment Events, Inc. The Endowment's Administrative Assistant has resigned and Deborah Fleischman is considered whether she might take the position. A change in the funding allocation formula is being considered based on the current value of the Endowment. The Trustees proposed that an "expendable" account might be set up which accrues funds against an extraordinary, one-time expenditures. The GPL Endowment Events Inc. entity holds a liquor license for funding raising events. While it has not been used for some years, the Trustees agreed that its low cost (\$15/year) supports maintaining it.

Art Committee : Ray Ciemny has completed his sculpture for the third floor and it will be hung on Friday.

Social Media Report None

**Other Business**

None

**Library Director Reports**

Monthly Director's Report Items of note: a) appointments for browsing are about to begin; b) more than 99 people signed up for Birds in the Back Yard; and c) Vanessa will attend the Town Department Heads' meeting on Thursday and share any critical news with the Trustees.

Statistics Circulation statistics were reviewed.

**Wrap-Up**

Review of Action Items from Current Meeting:

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

- Trustees Meetings: Mar 9, Apr 13, May 11, 2021
- Spring Town Meeting: Saturday May 1 at 10 AM

Adjournment Adjourned at 8:52 PM, see vote summary.

Respectfully submitted:

Mark Gerath, Secretary