

# WHITING LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## Minutes –November 9, 2021

Trustees Present: Robert Nied, Ed Grossman, Lyza Gardner, David Lord, Rosamund Conroy and Cathy Hasbrouck via Zoom Teleconference.

Citizens Present Deirdre Doran at the Whiting Library.

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Robert Nied, Chair, at 8:30 AM on the Zoom platform.

### **APPROVE OCTOBER 12, 2021 MINUTES**

Ed Grossman said he had sent Cathy Hasbrouck a request to clarify the discussion of payroll and payroll expense figures in the Treasurer's Report section. Deirdre Doran said she had also sent a note to clarify the status of the HVAC system and the plans for future improvements. There were no other amendments proposed. A motion (Lyza, Ed) to approve the minutes was made, seconded and approved.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Robert Nied outlined which parts of the budget discussion will take place during the meeting and which portions will be discussed during executive session at the end of the meeting. The board will leave executive session to take any votes needed. It was also agreed that figures discussed during the meeting outside of executive session would be discussed only at a summary level.

Ed Grossman explained that he was not able to obtain profit/loss statements and balance sheets from the town bookkeeper in time for the meeting. He had looked through his copies of the warrants and deposits he received since September 30, 2021 and highlighted the significant entries for the board. He said over \$1,200 was received in donations during October, some of which was earmarked for the Suzie Forlie Reading Room. He noted receipts during the month from the June fund drive, the silent auction and the book sale. He listed expenses for materials and repairs and maintenance, which included money for painting the Suzie Forlie room.

Ed said the money market account gained about 1% during October. The Preservation Fund balance had dropped and rebounded. As stated in the past, 3 to 5 percent may be withdrawn from the Preservation Fund to cover expenses. The fundraising line is about \$7,000 short of the 2021 goal, with the November drive about to begin.

Ed said the library, with support from the town, is working toward providing health benefits for the director and Youth Services librarian equal to the health benefits of other town employees. A single-person plan would cost \$6,300 and a family plan \$17,000 making a total cost of \$23,300. Ed said he felt the SelectBoard wanted the library to thrive. He thought that if the library showed a good faith effort to share the expense by increasing the money budgeted for health insurance by \$8,750, the Selectboard would increase its share of the health insurance expense by \$8,730. This would be in addition to the \$3,120 the library and the town currently each contribute toward health insurance.

Ed listed various income line items he thought could be increased to meet this expense and grants that might be obtained to offset some other expenses. Lyza asked that the fundraising number be a single figure in the budget, leaving it up to the fundraising committee to decide how to raise the needed money. Robert said keeping the fundraising figure as a summary of all activities would help the board focus on the overall goal. Rosamund suggested that the board look at prioritizing expenses, in order to be ready to adjust spending if a fundraising event fails to produce the expected income.

Lyza said she had thought the support for health benefits which was began last year, was going to be an ongoing budget item that would increase gradually. She asked if the sudden jump proposed for the 2022 budget would bring with it an expectation of the town paying 50% every year or if the library was expecting to work toward funding the expense entirely in the future.

Ed said the funding allocated to health benefits in response to the pandemic represents an opportunity for the library that shouldn't be missed. The town is showing support for this expense. The town is be assuming the expense of insurance co-pays and deductibles for the library employees, in addition to the expense from the cost of buying the health insurance. This expense is a line item in the town's budget. Lyza wanted to be sure that the town was not planning on providing only 50% of the cost of health insurance going forward. Ed thought further support from the town was likely.

Ed said he would like to schedule a meeting with the town manager to discuss a firmer proposed budget for the library. The meeting would be in late November, before the library board's December meeting. The budget would be submitted to the SelectBoard at one of their December meetings.

Lyza suggested the library board schedule a special meeting in November to finalize the specific details. Robert agreed. Lyza said the board could make a motion to authorize the treasurer to negotiate with the town manager with some autonomy. Robert said the discussion in executive session would need to come before such a motion could be made.

A motion was made (David, Lyza) to approve the treasurer's report. It was accepted unanimously. David asked if the bank representatives could offer expertise on the budget discussion. Ed explained that the bank representatives could offer advice on withdrawing money from the Preservation Fund, but not on the library's budget issues.

## **FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The board decided to change the order of the agenda and discuss fundraising before the Directory and Youth Services reports to accommodate a member who needed to leave at 9:45.

Lyza said the November fundraising drive was about to begin. Each trustee can expect to receive about 76 letters to address and mail out. She hoped to have the packets ready by Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. The packets would be available for pickup at the library. No one asked to have the packet delivered to their home. Lyza outlined the instructions which are included in the packet. The letters need to be posted on or after November 17<sup>th</sup>. Deirdre agreed to get the necessary stamps.

Rosamund and Lyza discussed identifying new residents of Chester and treating them differently, either in the fundraising letter or with a separate mailing in 2022. It was noted that in

2018, 2019 and 2021 Chester property transfer records were searched to find new names to be added to the donor list. Lyza said she would like to send a fundraising appeal letter to the library e-mail contact list on Giving Tuesday, which is November 30<sup>th</sup> this year. Deirdre agreed.

### **DIRECTOR/YOUTH SERVICES REPORT**

Deirdre said the second meeting of the strategic planning process took place in October. She has been working on a draft strategic plan since then. The committee will be meeting again in November.

The Courier grant for interlibrary loan has been received. The ARPA grant of \$5,147 has been received and Deirdre is working out ways to make purchases of the larger items that have been planned.

The Suzy Forlie committee met during October. A plaque has been ordered and will be hung in December, but a public dedication of the room will not be held until the COVID risk drops.

Some progress has been made with exterior lights, but they are not yet all working.

The library employees are learning a new system for recording their hours.

Chris Copping has joined as a volunteer. Will Wilcox is taking the vacation time he has accumulated over the last 11 years, leaving Deirdre to fill in at the circulation desk two days a week.

The Dragon Egg hunt ended in October. It was a very successful event with a lot of interest. Halloween Story Time included a parade and other activities and was enjoyed by all.

### **SUZY FORLIE READING ROOM**

David said the plague hanging event will be covered by the press, but only a few people will gather. A public gathering will take place when COVID rates allow. Ed confirmed that donations earmarked for the Suzy Forlie Reading Room had been received. He has not seen any warrants for funds going out. Robert said the Suzy Forlie donors were sent the same type of thank you notes as other donors.

### **OTHER NEW BUSINESS**

Rosamund said she didn't think a silent auction would be a viable option until in-person gatherings were possible again. She wondered whether some items could be raffled off at the library circulation desk during the November fundraising drive. Deirdre said the library has done raffles before. Rosamund said she would coordinate this raffle with Deirdre.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Robert said there was a vacancy for a trustee which needs to be filled. Rosamund asked when the vacant position's term ended. She has a candidate in mind and needs that information in order to recruit her. Robert said he had sent an e-mail with a list of trustees who must petition for re-election in 2022.

Robert brought up a celebration for Sharon Tanzer. Ed Grossman said he had heard Sharon did not want a large celebration, but had no further details.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There being no members of the public present, there was no public comment.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A motion was made (Ed, David) to go into executive session to discuss contract conditions and performance evaluations.

When the board returned from executive session a motion was made authorizing Ed to discuss Health Benefits with the Town Manager in the context of refining the revised draft of the 2022 Whiting Library budget discussed at the Board of Trustees meeting November 9th. The meeting was then adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hasbrouck, Secretary