

Thayer Memorial Library Trustees Meeting  
February 8, 2023  
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference



Roll Call

Present were:

Emily Rose, Chair  
David Spanagel, Vice Chair  
Frank Streeter, Secretary  
Ann Frantz  
Karen Silverthorn  
Adam Zand  
Joe Mulé, Director, Ex Officio

Melissa Carlson, President of the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library  
Rachel Rosengard, Assistant Director

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Chair Rose called the roll of attendees and opened the meeting.

Past Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the October, November, December (2022) and January (2023) meetings,

**Trustee Silverthorn moved to accept the minutes; Trustee Spanagel seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.**

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 6:30 PM. The Board's meetings will continue to be held over Zoom until further notice.

Chair's Report:

Friends President Melissa Carlson gave an update on the Legislative Breakfast that is being held at the Library on Friday February 17 and reviewed plans for set up. She has a team in place for that Thursday for initial set up such that everything will be ready by 8 AM on Friday at the opening of the event. Chair Rose will try to set up an exhibit of works by Henry Nourse in the display case in time for the event. Chair Rose quoted former Library Director Alice Green Chandler on the need to involve the public in determining the Library's space needs and uses. The Board noted that nothing about that statement has changed since she made it the 1870s.

Advocacy and Fundraising:

Vice-Chair Spanagel also reported on preparations for the Legislative Breakfast. Lancaster Select Board members Steve Kerrigan and Alix Turner helped arrange invitations to a variety of members of state government with the hope of involving as

many as possible. Vice-Chair Spanagel expects our State Representative Meg Kilcoyne, and our State Senator, John Cronin, will attend.

Vice-Chair Spanagel attended the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library's meeting on February 1. He was pleased to report that the Friends still had \$26,861.74 for the Children's Room windows project, although that sum had not increased since January. He and the Friends are still working on the forms required by the Attorney General for fundraising solicitations. Ms. Carlson gave an update on the process and requirements for the form to register to solicit beyond simple memberships and book sales.

Trustee Zand asked about registration for the Legislative Breakfast and Director Mulé responded that the Library will be sending out a mass email to promote it. The sign-up will be limited to 50 people, but Director Mulé expects about 80 to eventually attend. The event will be held in the Reference Room.

#### Building:

Director Mulé sent out the RFP for the Children's Room windows project as there was no interest the first time he distributed them. The feasibility study is proceeding well with lots of help from the staff. There have been a number of positive comments about the museum. Director Mulé was very pleased to report that there had been no frozen pipes or other damage from the recent extreme cold. he was also pleased to note that the library had yet again past its annual elevator inspection.

#### Strategic Planning:

Director Mulé updated the board on the status of the Library's new strategic plan. The plan will go through one more final editing after this draft. Regrettably Director Mulé was not able to share his screen to display the document on Zoom due to technical issues. However, he gave a detailed update on the current status of the plan and reviewed the process to complete it.

Trustee Franz asked for a definition of "young adult" and what age group that referred to. Assistant Director Rosengard responded that young adults are considered to be ages 11 to 17 and that her focus is largely on middle school children. She stated that reaching high school students is more difficult as they are more spread out geographically due to the regional school system. The Library does wonderfully in serving younger children and adults, but young adult patrons are still a gap that the Library plans to focus on.

Chair Rose proposed modifying a part of the goals and objectives section of the strategic plan that she felt needed to be reworded. She felt that the goals were good, but not well described. Director Mulé followed up on issues of geography relating to the Library and its patrons. He noted that North Lancaster is about 5 miles away from the Library and asked how best to serve this population. Chair Rose asked Director Mulé about working with South Lancaster Academy and Browning elementary in the same way the Library works with the Town's public schools. Director Mulé responded that the Library is working with them on the same basis as the Town's public schools. However, he also noted that students from South Lancaster could not walk to the library.

Chair Rose praised the inclusion of demographic information in the strategic plan. Vice-Chair Spanagel complemented the strategic plan as a “work of art” with great illustrations and quotes to accompany the text and tables. He suggested segmenting the plan so the second half serves as a reference/appendix. He felt that would encourage reading the first, narrative half of the plan rather than potential readers being turned off by the fact that the entire plan is 75 pages and not reading it at all. The Board felt that was a good idea. Trustee Silverthorn complemented Director Mulé, Assistant Director Rosengard, and their entire team on the quality of the plan. In response to a question by Trustee Zand, Director Mulé gave reasons why the necessary maintenance work on the building is not in the strategic plan.

Director Mulé noted that there is no standard definition of a visit to a library, and without that definition it is difficult to evaluate data from the Library and compare those numbers to other libraries. Circulation numbers and program attendance numbers are hard numbers that can be used for comparison, however. Based on those hard numbers, the Library is doing very well in comparison to its peers and offers more features, such as the museum. Director Mulé feels the Library is an excellent value to the citizens of Lancaster when compared to its peers and the Board strongly agreed. For instance, more out of town residents use the Library instead of the one in their own town than is the case with others in its peer group. Director Mulé referred to the net lender numbers the library used to generate in the past when the program was in place, and noted that the Library was the third largest in the county behind only Worcester and Fitchburg, both larger cities. Director Mulé discussed the concept of prestige and the strategic plan and how it affects and promotes the use of the Library by out-of-town residents. Director Mulé discussed comparable towns and how to use their data for purposes of comparisons. Trustee Zand asked if it would be possible to survey Library patrons about what other libraries they use.

Director Mulé discussed how to communicate the strategic plan to town residents in a way that would encourage them to read it and further engage with the Library. Ms. Carlson stated that the Library had done a great job on the plan. The Board discussed how to distribute summaries of the plan at the upcoming Legislative Breakfast. Lancaster resident Victoria Petracca of Woodland Drive commented that the plan sounds really wonderful. The Board discussed census numbers and demographic information relating to the Library. There being no further discussion,

**Trustee Spanagel moved to accept the draft Strategic Plan; Trustee Frantz seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.**

#### Policy:

Secretary Streeter proposed changes to the Library’s Collection Development Policy concerning how to handle complaints about materials in the Library’s collections. He felt that complaints should be made in person and not electronically as a way to prevent the Library from receiving multiple requests from out of state residents. Director Mulé feels that the Library should not restrict complaints in this fashion. As at the moment they are

not an excessive load on staff time. The Board will revisit this issue if there are increased complaints such that they begin to adversely affect staff time.

Director's Report:

Director Mulé reported that the Library is on schedule in terms of its budget and he has no specific concerns. He reviewed the Town's budget process from now until the Annual Town meeting in May. Town Administrator Kate Hodges has created a large budget book in conjunction with the Finance Committee that is a comprehensive look at the Town's overall spending. Trustee Zand asked for an update on the status of the repairs to the broken statue of the four seasons that was in the hall at the lower level of the Library. Director Mulé saw a photo of the work in progress and was impressed. Regrettably he reported that the Town's deductible on its insurance policy is just a little too high to cover the cost of the repairs. He estimates the statue will be back in the Library by the time of the Board's April meeting.

New Business:

Trustee Frantz reported on the Memorial School Reuse Committee's meeting with the Select Board on Monday, February 6. She explained why the Committee rejected housing options for the site and why they proposed a recreational pavilion instead. She also announced that the First Church's annual Horseshed Fair would be held on September 30 this year and not later in October. Ms. Carlson stated that the Friends of the Library will have their annual book sale that weekend and the following weekend.

The Board discussed deadlines for nomination papers for the upcoming election in May, which are due by March 20. Chair Rose and Trustee Zand will both be running for reelection.

Adjournment:

There being no further business for the Board to consider,

**Secretary Streeter moved to adjourn; Vice-Chair Spanagel seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.**

The Board adjourned and the Zoom meeting ended at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary

List of Documents:

Agenda

Chair's Report

Director's Report

TML Fundraising and Advocacy Report