

Thayer Memorial Library Trustees Meeting
September 9, 2020
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference

Roll Call

Present were:

Emily Rose, Chair
Frank MacGrory, Vice-Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Kate Engelhardt
Anne Ogilvie
David Spanagel
Joe Mulé, Director, Ex Officio

Kathy Suits, Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. The following statement was read into the record:

This Open Meeting of the Thayer Memorial Library Board of Trustees is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus.

In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, we have been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

The Order, which is posted with agenda materials for this meeting allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. For this meeting, the Board of Trustees is convening by videoconference via Zoom as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join.

No electronic messaging among members of the Board is permitted during the meeting in keeping with Open Meeting Law requirements. Please direct all conversation through the Chair.

Chair Rose called the roll of attendees and opened the meeting.

Past Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the June meeting,

Vice-Chair MacGrory moved to accept the minutes; Member Spanagel seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

After reviewing the minutes from the July meeting,

Vice-Chair MacGrory moved to accept the minutes; Member Engelhardt seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 6:30 PM, either in the Nathaniel T. Dexter Room at the Library or over Zoom due to COVID.

Chair's Report

The Board discussed meeting over Zoom vs. meeting in person. Although all agreed meeting in person was preferable, given the current situation and the continued uncertainty about exactly when the Library will be able to reopen to the public, the October meeting was very likely to be held on Zoom. If the Board decides to meet in person it will meet in the Nathaniel T. Dexter Room.

Secretary Streeter stated he was in favor of meeting over Zoom, as did Chair Rose. Vice-Chair MacGrory expressed his preference for meeting in person. Members Ogilvie, Spanagel, and Englehardt were ok with meeting on Zoom, especially if the Library was not open to the public. Director Mulé invited the Trustees to come by the Library anytime to see the new layout and the changes since March, but reminded that an appointment must be made before any visit.

Director Mulé explained that the circulation desk would now be in the Nathaniel T. Dexter Room to facilitate the flow of one-way traffic through the building. He noted that the Library would need a minimum of five people per shift when the Library is again open to the public. This includes three people just for administering reopening protocols and only two for actual library work.

At the moment the plan is for the Library to reopen for 30 hours each week with all visits by the public by appointment only with an advance reservation. The Library's volunteers will not return for a while, perhaps only once the Town approves its usual tax credit for volunteers. The public has been compliant with all of the new requirements and Director Mulé's expectation is that the reopening will go smoothly.

The Board then discussed what patrons would need to do or certify to gain permission to enter the Library, including possibly having their temperature taken and certifying to their health and possible contacts with COVID. Making reservations by email allows patron contact tracking should that become necessary and also includes the standard health qualification questionnaire. There is no legal requirement that patrons answer the questions correctly, but the Library will ask.

The Board discussed what to do about walk-up patrons and how they could gain access to the Library if there were patron slots available. Masks are required for entry, so Secretary Streeter asked what would happen if a patron removes their mask. Director Mulé stated that the staff will ask the patron twice to either put on a mask or leave the Library, and if they fail to comply with the second request Library staff will call the police.

Director Mulé noted that the Leominster Public Library has not had much of a demand for appointments. He said that there is no downside to requiring appointments for regular access and it makes it easier to manage the number of patrons in the building at any given time. Chair Rose commented on her visit to the library to view the preparations for reopening the building to the public and encouraged other Board members to do the same.

Director Mulé asked the Board not to tell the public when the library might be reopening until he can put out a formal announcement to help manage the process. Chair Rose reminded the Board that the Library has been providing services throughout the pandemic, even if patrons could not enter the building. Director Mulé said that computer access would be limited initially to a maximum of 15 minutes at a time. Chairs will not be provided. All the bathrooms can be reopened, but the water fountains are going to be for bottles only as per Board of Health regulations.

Director Mulé announced that the Board of Health has allowed the Friends of the Thayer Memorial Library to have their annual book sale at Town Hall.

Director Mulé asked the Board about their comments pertaining to the Library having either a hard or soft opening and how best to promote it. He will initially promote reopening to his email list before any further outreach. He will also contact the Perkins School to let them know the reopening schedule. Director Mulé reminded the Board that all visits would be by appointment.

Member Engelhardt asked about how to address walk-in patrons coming by as a result of these promotions. The Board discussed the process for entry and how it could impact the staff. Director Mulé described the form he would like to use for patron access. The sense of the Board is that the Board is confident in Director Mulé's planning and approach to reopening the Library.

Member Spanagel discussed the pop-up event he recently attended in Northboro.

Now that it has been authorized by the Board of Health, the Friends of the Library's annual book sale will be held over the Columbus Day weekend. It may be extended to a second weekend as well as the week between. This will be a bag sale with a price per bag of books to allow easy checkout and less close interaction with customers.

Director's Report:

Chair Rose asked about the Town's recent ADA needs assessment and any issues raised

in connection with the Library, especially if any of the Library's signage needs to be updated. Director Mulé noted that there is no plan at the moment to make any changes at the Library until the Town comes up with a plan (and funds) to address the report on a town-wide basis. The Board expressed significant concern about the Town sending over contractors given the extensive damage to the Library the last time that happened.

Director Mulé reviewed the MBLC's certification requirements in the current situation. He expects the Library to meet all the MBLC's standards. Director Mulé discussed some issues with MBLC concerning holds and mail service.

Director Mulé announced that staff member Dot McCandless, who worked at the Library for a dozen years, had moved to upstate New York. She is a retired psychiatric nurse, which is possibly why she was so good with the public, who loved her. Director Mulé said she was a great employee and will be missed.

Member Engelhardt will follow up with her contacts at Mary Rowlandson Elementary School (MRE) about future reading programs, including for the summer of 2021. She feels that the last summer reading programs went very well. She said the parents loved it and are very much looking forward to its resumption.

Member Engelhardt asked about the status of the Library's newspaper and magazine subscriptions. Director Mulé reported that all newspaper subscriptions would be canceled as they cannot be shared in the Library. There will be no change in magazine subscriptions as magazines can be circulated like books.

Member Engelhardt asked about creating a reopening FAQ. Director Mulé was enthusiastic so Member Engelhardt will draw up a list of 10 questions to start the process.

Member Spanagel asked about financial reports and the Library's financial status in general. Director Mulé has not been giving regular reports over the past few months but he will resume for the October meeting.

Director Mulé outlined some capital projects where he will need the Board's help, both operationally and especially with fundraising. This includes projects like the replacement of the windows in the Children's Room. Director Mulé reported that the Library has a reserve of unused capital funds for needed HVAC work, but unfortunately it is not enough to complete any of the major outstanding projects so it will continue to be kept in reserve.

Adjournment:

There being no further business for the Board to consider,

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

The Board adjourned and the Zoom meeting ended at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary

List of Documents:

Agenda, 9/9/2020

Chair's Report, September 2020

Director's Report, September 2020

Minutes, June & July, 2020