

Thayer Memorial Library Trustees Meeting

November 18, 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

Susan Munyon, 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 September meeting,

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

After reviewing the minutes from the October meeting,

Member Spanagel 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 held Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 6:30 PM. Due to COVID restrictions the Board's meetings will continue to be held over Zoom until further notice.

Chair's Report

Chair Rose again noted that Library staff and the Director have been doing a great job under difficult circumstances, and that there is a great deal going on at the Library.

She asked Director Mulé about the possibility of LSTA or other grants to help fund the Library. Director Mulé has been discussing potential grant projects and applications with the staff. He reminded the Board that the majority of grants that the Library might receive would require a match, and any grants that might have been approved for the Library last year would not have gotten their match due to the COVID crisis. He feels that the Board needs a grant subcommittee to review options and evaluate the best possibilities to apply for. Unfortunately the Library's big need is for funds for capital projects, and most grants will not fund capital projects.

Chair Rose will follow up with Member Engelhardt about the next steps in the Library's response to the Town's recent ADA compliance report.

Budget subcommittee:

Director Mulé discussed the Library's FY22 capital and operating budgets. Both will be sent in to the Town on Monday. The operating budget is submitted directly to the FinComm, but the capital budget goes to Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco in his role as the Town's Procurement Officer as he must coordinate the bidding process for any approved capital projects.

Director Mulé reviewed the Library's capital budgeting process, especially given the financial complications of COVID. He presented the capital budget request he will be submitting this year, and explained why next year's request is so large – because the Library has significant capital needs for HVAC and other building issues, and none of the Library's capital requests were funded this year. Along with his capital budget request Director Mulé will include copies of the many reports documenting the Library's physical plant needs from Lynn Spencer, Ward Hamilton, and others.

In response to the FinComm's inquiries, Chair Rose asked if the Library's annual payment to C/WMARS could be cut. Director Mulé: No.

Director Mulé discussed how a 5% budget cut would affect the Library's Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) and its Required Materials Expense (RME) standards necessary to certify the Library with the Commonwealth so it can receive State Aid. The MAR can only be met by a direct appropriation from the Town, but the RME can also be met by donors or other unappropriated funds.

Director Mulé reminded the Board that the consequence of the Town not funding the MAR would be the Library's loss of certification and its resulting loss of State Aid, presently about \$15,000 a year, thus compounding the effect on the Library of the Town not meeting the MAR due to budget cuts. He then laid out the process for getting waivers from the MBLC, reminding the Board that to get a waiver from the MAR the Library must show that its reduction in allocation is proportional to all other Town departments.

Member Ogilvie asked about the cost of becoming certified again if the Library should lose its certification. There is no additional fee payable to the MBLC to recertify, but if no waiver is received then the Library would not receive its usual State Aid award, would not receive other services from MBLC, and other town's libraries would probably not lend to Lancaster residents.

Only five consecutive years of waivers can be given. Secretary Streeter asked how the Library's MAR would be calculated after the waiver period. Director Mulé explained the Library's MAR will increase annually based on the amount of the pre-waiver MAR, no matter how low the Library's appropriation might be during the MAR waiver years.

Chair Rose asked for comments on Director Mulé's letter to the FinComm about the budget and the possible 5% cut. The Board approved of the text, so

Member Spanagel moved to send the letter on behalf of the Board; Vice-Chair MacGrory seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 6-0 vote.

Chair Rose will sign it on behalf of the Board and Director Mulé will deliver it to the FinComm.

The Board discussed the upcoming cancellation of the Town's Special Town Meeting, which was due to be held on November 23, especially how this might affect the Town's budget process and its timing.

Director's Report:

Director Mulé reported that curbside checkout continues to be very popular, but the public is not coming back into the building in droves, which may be due to continuing concern about COVID in indoor spaces. At present the total capacity of the Library is limited to 10 by pandemic regulations. Member Ogilvie asked how Library staff are doing under the circumstances. Director Mulé responded with his usual accolades, and noted that they had been exceptionally flexible as the Library navigates the reopening process.

Relating to the letter to the FinComm, Member Engelhardt suggested adding information about how much the Library would be missed if it lost certification and how much more it will be needed in the times ahead due to the effects of the pandemic and the economy. Director Mulé stated that budget cuts would not be obvious to the public during the first year, as the Library would spend down all of its reserve accounts in an effort to maintain services. However any cushion would be gone after that and the effects of the cuts would be very obvious in the second year and beyond.

Director Mulé reported that a patron had commented to him that the books by mail they order from the Library arrive more quickly than the ones they order from Amazon. Director Mulé noted that means it's quicker to borrow than to buy, and cheaper too! At the time it promoted this service the Thayer Memorial Library was the only library in the Commonwealth providing a books by mail service.

Director Mulé recommended holiday hours. Library staff can have any of the following days off using available vacation time or without pay:

- The day before Thanksgiving
- December 12 – 18 [to observe Hanukkah]
- Christmas Eve and December 26
- New Year's Eve and January 2

If enough people request the same day off, it may mean that library services will be paused until the next day. However, staff can still work on other projects, of which there are plenty, even when the Library is not open to the public.

Finally Director Mulé recommended that the Board review the Library's Strategic Plan and have a few focused goals for the year ahead. He will review the FY22 budget (and any changes to the FY21 budget) with the Board at its December meeting. The Board will revisit the Strategic Plan in January or February.

Adjournment:

There being no further business for the Board to consider,

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

The Board adjourned and the Zoom meeting ended at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary

List of Documents:

Agenda, Chair's Report, Director's Report