

Thayer Memorial Library Trustees Meeting

December 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

Dick Trussell, Finance Committee Liaison to Thayer Memorial Library
Michelle Vasquez, Finance Committee Liaison to 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.

Chair Rose asked that other Board business, including approval of the minutes, be postponed until after the portion of the meeting with Town's liaisons from the Finance Committee. (FinComm) The Board agreed.

Meeting with Liaisons from FinComm:

Director Mulé introduced the liaisons to the Library Board of Trustees from the FinComm, Michelle Vasquez and Richard (Dick) Trussell and turned the meeting over to addressing their questions concerning the Library's FY22 operating and capital budget requests.

Ms. Vasquez opened this section of the meeting by complimenting Director Mulé on the quality of his submissions to the FinComm. Both she and Mr. Trussell expressed their appreciation for the Library's work.

Mr. Trussell noted there was no provision for salary increases in the Library's proposed FY22 operating budget request and asked Director Mulé how any raises would affect the budget. Director Mulé noted that he could not positively answer until the completion of the Town's collective bargaining negotiations with the clerical union.

Mr. Trussell asked why there were two line items for repairs and maintenance in the Library's operating budget. Director Mulé explained that one is for services rendered by vendors and the second is for supplies purchased by the Library.

Ms. Vasquez noted that the FinComm is asking each department for an FY22 budget request with a 5% cut from FY21, and asked how that cut would affect the Library's certification application with the Commonwealth. Director Mulé first explained that the Library never has worked from an operating budget fully funded by the annual municipal appropriation - raising non-appropriated revenue has always been necessary to fully subsidize Library operations. Director Mulé then explained the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) standard administered by the Commonwealth and how not meeting it would affect the Library, including losing a State Aid award of more than \$14,000. Mr. Trussell asked some follow up questions about the MAR and the Town's appropriation and how they compared to the Library's actual total operating expenses.

Director Mulé discussed how the loss of State Aid would affect the Library and what options might be available to mitigate those effects. He noted that he could compensate somewhat for the effects of the loss of State Aid in the first year, but that would likely exhaust the Library's reserves and jeopardize its ability to supplement the appropriation.

Director Mulé then explained the Required Materials Expense (RME) standard administered by the Commonwealth. Ms. Vasquez and Mr. Trussell asked further questions about how the RME is calculated and the effects a cut in municipal funding would have on the Library's ability to meet the standard.

Ms. Vasquez and Mr. Trussell asked additional questions regarding the Library sustaining a cut to its FY22 municipal appropriation. Director Mulé explained that the

MAR standard can only be met through funding approved at an annual town meeting. Any cut that resulted in a municipal appropriation less than the MAR standard would jeopardize the Library's yearly certification application with the Commonwealth. However, the RME standard could be supplemented with non-appropriated revenue sources such as State Aid.

Ms. Vasquez expressed her support for the Library and her appreciation of the work the Library staff have accomplished under challenging circumstances. She also gave her compliments to Director Mulé and Chair Rose for the detailed materials submitted to the FinComm for reference during the capital budgeting process.

After a discussion of the Library's capital requests, which are quite significant due to the amount of the Library's deferred maintenance, Chair Rose noted that the Library would likely fundraise to the extent possible. Chair Rose invited Ms. Vasquez and Mr. Trussell to come and tour the Library to see the needed repairs in person.

Referring to future fundraising efforts, Member Spanagel pointed out that the Library has a limited donor pool. While the Library's donors have a long history of generously supporting the Library, that support has limits and the Library can't take the risk of overloading those donors in its fundraising work.

Mr. Trussell asked about the Library's capital requests and which ones were essential, especially those relating to deferred maintenance. Director Mulé noted that virtually all of the Library's capital expense requests were for deferred maintenance and that the Library makes every effort to get the maximum life out of its systems. However some of those systems are well beyond their useful lives and in definite need of replacement.

Director Mulé discussed the process of securing grants and what capital work could be funded by them. He noted that many grants require a match from the Town, and those matching funds are scarce right now. Mr. Trussell reminded the Board that the Town had recently passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) so there should be CPA funds available by FY23 that could be used for the Library. He encouraged the Library to apply as early as possible to be first in line. Secretary Streeter noted that there would be stiff competition from other groups for those limited funds and that the Library shouldn't count on them in its budget projections.

Mr. Trussell asked how managing the restrictions imposed by the pandemic had impacted the Library's FY21 operating budget. He clarified that this does not mean changes in the total budget, but reallocations within it. Director Mulé noted that salary and wage expenditures, which comprise nearly 80% of the Library's budget, haven't changed due to managing the impacts of the pandemic. Despite the pandemic restrictions, in 2020 the Library added new services, including books by mail and curbside pickup.

After what all considered a successful interchange, the FinComm liaisons, Ms. Vasquez and Mr. Trussell, signed off the Zoom meeting.

Past Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the November 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, January 13, 2021 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 noted that she had received information that the MBLC may be coming up with more aid to libraries, as well as more "wobble room" on their requirements. Nothing official yet but she is hopeful.

Chair Rose brought up the Commonwealth's recent move back from Phase 3.2 back to Phase 3.1. This and Lancaster's recent change into a red zone community due to increasing rates of COVID mean that the Library will not be open to the public until Lancaster is moved back to Phase 3.2. Library staff will continue to work and all Library services that have been in place during the pandemic will continue, including curbside checkout.

Director's Report:

Director Mulé asked the Board how SharePoint was working as a way to distribute large files to the Board. The sense of the Board is that it is working well, so Director Mulé said he would be using it more in the future, especially as it is more secure than email.

Member Spanagel noted that there would be no report about the Friends this month, or about other fundraising and advocacy efforts, but he hoped to have an update for the Board at its January meeting.

Director Mulé discussed the status of the Library's HVAC repairs. He noted that the Library might be installing UV lights in the air handlers as a part of the repairs, which would serve to disinfect the air passing by them. While the COVID crisis may be over by the time these lights are installed, they will be helpful going forward and will help with controlling cold and flu viruses, as well as COVID and others that may come.

Director Mulé did not have an update on the Library's holiday hours (as voted in November) but noted that the staff are not using their vacation time as they are staying close to home this holiday season. The Board discussed how the Town has rolled over unused vacation time in past years (only allowed one week to carry over) and how that might change for 2020 given the pandemic. The Town hasn't decided yet.

Member Ogilvie noted that the strategic planning process would resume in January after the holidays.

Member Engelhardt reported that the schools are excited to resume collaboration with the Library on reading projects once that is again possible post-pandemic.

Adjournment:

There being no further business for the Board to consider,

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

The Board adjourned and the Zoom meeting ended at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary

List of Documents:

Agenda

Chair's Report

Director's Report

FY22 proposed budget

TML Capital Needs Schedule