

FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES January 12, 2022

FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY
610 Main Street, Fitchburg MA

Trustees present were: Chair Matthew Bruun, Robert Favini, Mary Rice Hurley, Joanne Huse, Cynthia Jones, Eric Mbunwe, Dennis Pierce and Jim Walsh. Jacalyn Kremer was present virtually. Also present were Director Sharon Bernard and Assistant Director Jean Tenander.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES of December 8, 2021

The minutes of the December 8, 2021, were approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Bruun reported on the ARPA advisory board meeting. He said he thought the Library's presentation had gone very well. The city has received \$31.5 million and has received requests amounting to \$45 million. As of this date the requests are still being evaluated.

Director Bernard answered questions about why the Library needed the money for the building project. She explained our situation and the limitations of using New Market credits. We are a project that would definitely benefit the downtown area and impact the lives of those in the community, both requisites for awarding some of the money.

She said some people had several projects. She said additional money may be coming in from the state which might be used by the DPW, which was one of the applicants at this meeting. She said we have capital needs irrespective of whether we get the ARPA money. The question is do we just repair things or do we build a library for the future.

Jim Walsh said he thought Chair Bruun's prepared statement was excellent. He asked how prepared the other presentations were. Chair Bruun said everyone was quite well prepared.

There was a suggestion that the money may be divided and given away over a two year period.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Director Bernard said she was pleased the request with interest for the return of the money the library loaned to the city for the repair of our elevator had been met almost without question.

She said the Library had already received \$48,700.00 in state aid and an additional larger payment will be made later this year.

She spoke about the inflation of construction costs. The state grant included an escalation cost but probably is not enough for current increases in material cost. By statute a library can only

reduce its original plan by 5%. The architect is working on reconfiguring the design now that we have the additional land of the parking lot which can be use.

There is a plan for the replacement of the boilers and AC unit and the relocation of the generator to outside the building to happen this spring. The Director said the \$25,000 from the state earmarked for the boiler room must be spent by June 30 of this year.

She said Fitchburg Library will not be going back to curbside pickup as a normal service, however, staff will deliver items out to a patron who is still reluctant to come inside. We will not be doing in person adult programming yet.

The Director has a new assistant, Joanne Sundstrom who started last week. We also have 2 new pages.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee-

Joanne Huse said the committee met with Jim Hohman of First Financial. She said he was happy with the performance of the accounts.

Legislative Committee-

Rob Favini said the Legislate Breakfast was now going to be virtual.

New Director Search Committee-

Rob Favini said the Committee had met over the holidays and agreed there were no viable candidates. More applications have trickled in and there are 5 applicants the Committee will have phone conversations with. He said cities and the state were all having difficulty filling positions. He said the Massachusetts Library System is out of temporary people. He said the committee was excellent and if it is felt a re-launch for applicants is necessary the Committee will do so.

A discussion followed about the mechanics of the interviewing process. Chair Bruun said the Committee was doing a good job. We don't want to stop and re-start but we will if we have to. It is an important position and it is better to wait for a suitable applicant. Director Bernard said she was delaying her retirement until these 5 applicants had been interviewed

NEW BUSINESS

Director Bernard said Juneteenth is now an official holiday and this year will be observed on June 20 since the 19th is on a Sunday. She asked the Trustees to vote to be closed on Sept. 3, the Saturday of Labor Day weekend; to close at 2 p.m. on Nov. 23, the eve of Thanksgiving; to close on Saturday Dec. 24 and to close at 2 p.m. on Dec. 31 which is New Year's Eve.

The Trustees voted unanimously to close on the dates and at the times mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jean Tenander for
Cynthia Jones