

Minutes of the Board of Trustees
The Town of Amherst and the Jones Library, Inc.
March 26, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.
Jones Library's trustees' Room

Present: Kathleen Wang, President, Ann Grose, Will Bridegam, Molly Turner, Pat Holland, Anita Page.

Also Present: Bonnie Isman, Library Director; Sondra Radosh, Assistant Director, Tina Swift, Beth Girshman, Lynne Weintraub, Carolyn Platt, and Tevis Kimball, Library Staff; the Public (5 people).

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

Ms. Turner stated that she enjoyed serving on the Board of Trustees with Will Bridegam, who is attending his last meeting as a Trustee of the Jones Library. Mr. Bridegam said that he has enjoyed three years of serving as a Trustee. He wished the remaining Trustees well with the remaining budgetary issues. Ms. Wang also added her good wishes for Mr. Bridegam and hoped that it would not be his last Jones Library Board of Trustees meeting.

Minutes: Correction to Minutes of March 13, 2007 (Special Meeting Minutes): If the override passes, there will be a 5% budget increase for the second and third years. (Not only for the second year.)

Motion: To accept the Minutes of March 13, 2007 (Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes) as amended. Motion made by Molly Turner, Second by Will Bridegam. Vote: Unanimous.

President's Report: Consensus: The President of the Board of Trustees will respond to letters and emails from the public regarding budgetary and other issues.

No Trustees can attend a coordination meeting suggested by Ms. Brighty due to time constraints.

Treasurer's Report: The market has taken a down turn (a correction); therefore, the endowment has lost \$32,000 in a month. Vanguard is doing a good job, resulting in the endowment's earning more than any of the indexes.

Director's Report: Ms. Misus of Vanguard is moving to a different division, consequently, the Library will be working with Jim Gorman as financial advisor. \$3651.33 will be coming to the Town from the new Public Libraries Fund from the state. A \$3,000.00 restricted gift in memory of Mrs. Hanke (restricted to use in the Emily Dickinson collection) has been donated by Susan and Tamim Abouhalkah..

The Annual Fund Drive total is \$42,021, putting the Library within striking range of the \$45,000 fundraising goal.

ESL Fundraising: The Director distributed a staff report on ESL fundraising efforts. Ms. Page conveyed the information that she had spoken to a man at the Literacy Project (not Program Director, Jim Ayres, who had spoken at the public hearing) and he said students are always moving on and they fit people into their program. Ms. Grose spoke with the Director of International Programs at U. Mass. and she suggested contacting Nancy Conlon at the International Student Center at U. Mass for training community members in ESL. Ms. Girshman noted that the Jones program has never accepted university students or wives as ESL students. She also said that the University program is for very well educated people who are literate in their own language, whereas the Jones ESL program students would not seamlessly fit into another program. 'There's a real difference between the students,' Ms. Girshman said. Ms. Grose suggested speaking with Nancy Conlon and Ms. Girshman promised to follow up on this lead.

Ms. Turner asked about the expenses for the ESL program. She suggested "serious fundraising" to fund the ESL program. The application for possible Community Foundation funding for the ESL program has been reviewed. The results will be known in July. Ms. Turner suggested emailing the Governor (Deval Patrick) at his web site to advocate citizenship training assistance. Ms. Wang told the Trustees that they need someone to focus on fundraising, such as part time help who would do nothing but fundraising. Ms. Turner asked Beth and Lynne to harness the energy of the concerned citizens who appeared at the public hearing to fundraise.

Unfinished Business: FY08 Budget

Motion: To reconsider the tentative budget decisions made on February 26, 2007. Motion made by Will Bridegam and seconded by Pat Holland. Vote: 4 ayes, 1 opposed, 1 abstention. Vote passes.

Motion: To accept the following budget recommendations for 2008. Retain fines which now go to the Town and are approximately \$19,000, eliminate the part time Office clerk for \$7,000, accelerate the spending of state library aid by using \$42,000 now. Motion made by Will Bridegam, seconded by Ann Grose.

Discussion:

Mr. Bridegam read the following statement outlining his reasons for moving to accelerate the use of state aid:

I am adamantly opposed to reducing library materials budget. At the Trustees' meeting before the recent open hearing, Beth Girshman was quoted as saying that, "Many materials the Library buys go to serve people in other towns through interlibrary loan." The impression that statement gives is that the Jones Library is a net lender to other libraries. That statement is misleading. Last year, the Jones Library borrowed 5,767 more books than it lent. And it stands to reason that a Library that is

willing to invest only the State-prescribed minimum percentage of its budget in materials, or less, will be a major net borrower.

Interlibrary loan is based on the concept of reciprocal sharing, not simply presuming that we can depend on other libraries substantially more than they depend on us for ILL. If we reduce our materials budget below the State prescribed minimum, we will be among three out of 48 libraries in the State that are least willing to support their book budget proportionally. Frankly, I would be embarrassed to see that happen.

Regarding ESL, I think that the 75 people who attended the hearing on the Trustees' proposed budget cuts made a strong case for continuing the ESL program. But I don't think anyone was or is questioning the value of the ESL program. The question is whether a different source of funding could be found to support ESL. I hope that the Trustees will look diligently for other sources of funding, but until they have found them, I think the Library should continue to support the ESL program.

Ms. Page suggested that the Trustees consider cutting the summer hours in order to retain the rest of the ESL program. Ms. Wang said this suggestion could come after the current discussion. After a question from Ms. Wang, Ms. Isman said the Finance Committee did not decide to allow the Library to retain the \$19,000 in fines, although they left the idea up for discussion. Ms. Isman urged the Trustees to pursue retaining these fines. More discussion ensued.

At the Feb.26, 2007 meeting, the Trustees decided on these measures to close the budget gap of \$68,769 for FY08:

Retain \$19,000 fines which currently go to the Town

Eliminate \$7,000 part time Office clerk

Cut the Materials line item by \$20,000

Eliminate ESL staff (1 benefited person, 20 hours per week) for \$27,000.

If state aid is used one year early (\$47,000 instead of eliminating \$20K in materials and the ESL \$27 K), it will not be available for the next budget (FY09).

Ms. Turner noted that using state funds early is a one time measure and she advocated fundraising to get the ESL program onto a stable footing. She suggested reducing the ESL program by closing it for the summer.

Ms. Page remembered that the Trustees have already given the ESL program one year for study and fundraising. Mr. Bridegam noted that the public at the hearing as a whole implied that the Library's main function is providing ESL services as opposed to reference services and providing reading materials. Ms. Page called for long range consideration of the budget with careful reflection.

Ms. Isman agreed that long range financial planning is "scary." She observed that in five

years, there will be a number of people with 30 years of service at the Library, who are considering retirement. Furthermore, the endowment needs to grow by \$500,000.00 so that the annual distribution can increase by 5%. She called for a long term plan for private funds.

Ms. Holland does not feel cutting the materials budget to save the ESL program would be a problem. Ms. Grose advocated urging the Town to take back the employees' health costs. Ms. Wang stated that she does not feel waiting a year to consider the long term budget will help.

Ms. Wang suggested: Cut the Jones Sunday hours of operation. Ms. Isman reminded the group that the Library must retain 63 hours per week for either Jones or branches in order to receive state aid to libraries. Mr. Bridegam asked each Trustee why they think \$20,000 should be cut from materials, since the Library is already at the state minimum.

Vote (on Mr. Bridegam's motion): 2 Ayes, 4 Nays. Fails

Motion: Retain \$19,000 in fines, Eliminate \$7,000 clerk, save \$10,000 by cutting Sunday hours, save \$4,300 by cutting ESL summer hours, plus use \$3,600 from the Public Library Fund, cut \$20,000 in materials, use \$10,000 in state aid now. Motion made by Kathy Wang and seconded by Pat Holland.

Motion: Amend the previous motion to:

Take \$14,869 from state aid and do not cut Sunday hours in addition to above. Amendment made by Anita Page, second by Pat Holland.

Discussion: Mr. Bridegam will vote against this because it still takes \$20,000 out of materials. Ms. Page hopes that other income such as the auction of art will help restore some of the materials budget.

Friendly Revised Amendment: Keep \$19,000 in fines; Take \$20,000 from state aid and \$14,869 from materials; Keep Sunday hours (\$10,000), and, eliminate ESL summer hours for \$4,300.

Vote: 4 Ayes, 2 Nays. Amendment to the motion passes.

Vote on motion as amended: 4 Ayes, 2 Nays. Passed.

New Business: Guilford Mooring from Public Works brought plans showing the new design for sidewalks in front of the Library. The new sidewalk will be bordered with pavers. 16 street lights will illuminate the front of the Library and other parts of Amity Street. Benches, lighting, and sidewalk design will match the Planning Department's design.

Motion: The Jones Library's Board of Trustees strongly supports the DPW sidewalk plan shown today, with the possibility of modification at a later date.

Motion by Molly Turner, second made by Kathy Wang. **Vote:** Unanimous

Return to Unfinished Business: Kay Moran of the Finance Committee said it's not a given that the Library could retain \$19,000 in fines. There will be questions raised by the Finance Committee about changing this source of revenue for the Town. She stated that the Library would have a problem in future years whether or not the override passes because their budget will be lacking \$20,000 from accelerating the use of state aid. This is not sustainable. Use of the public library fund money is another one time source being built into the operating budget (not available next year). Ms. Moran noted that the Trustees have not reduced any fixed costs, such as personnel, and the current budget approach will make future budget considerations much harder.

The Trustees next considered a 3% Budget with a target of \$36,184 in cuts (instead of \$68,000) in case the override passes.

Motion: Restore the branch hours, restore Jones Library's Monday morning hours (both of which add up to approximately \$15,000), restore \$14,869 to the materials line item, cut the \$7,000 Office clerk, and eliminate ESL summer hours. Motion made by Ann Grose, seconded by Pat Holland.

Amendment by Anita Page, seconded by Will Bridegam:
Save \$2,716 public Lib fund money for next year

Vote: 5 ayes, 1 opposed.

Vote on amended motion: ayes 5, 1 opposed. Motion passes.

Consideration of the Finance Committee's March 5, 2007 proposal for the Board of Trustees to take a position on the override. The Lib represents 2.8% of the total Town budget and Mr. Bridegam feels that the Board should not take a position on the override. He and Ms. Wang feel that individuals should decide in the voting booth whether to support the override. *[Eliminate Ms. Grose here. Ms. Grose is in support of an override.]* Ms. Holland reported that a vote of the Board of Trustees would lend weight to the Finance Committee's recommendation. She noted that the other Town Boards have supported an override.

Ms. Turner read from "Is Trustee Authority in Jeopardy?" by John Ramsey. "By law, public libraries are under the exclusive control of library trustees. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78 establishes the sole authority of the Board of Trustees over all library operations. This was done to protect libraries as unique entities which are responsible for representing all points of view and "whose Mission is to provide full access to the entire world of information to everyone in the community. {MGL 78" has set up a structure whereby our libraries are not subject to pressures, politics and influence that could sidetrack it from performing its vital mission to the town."

Ms. Turner noted that the Trustees do not have to ‘knuckle under to any pressure.’ Ms. Page said, “We are a different entity with 25% of budgetary support [coming from the endowment].” Mr. Bridegam said he personally supports more money for the Library, but admires Ms. Turner’s abstention. Ms. Wang said historically the Board did not take a position. Ms. Holland said the Board’s not taking a position will be perceived by the public as a lack of support for additional Library funding.

Motion: The Jones Library Board of Trustees support the need for additional funding for the Library. Motion made by Will Bridegam and seconded by Kathy Wang. **Vote:** Unanimous.

Motion: We acknowledge the need for long term library budget planning. Motion made by Will Bridegam and seconded by Ann Grose. **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: If the override is approved by the voters, we agree to abide by the provisions as they relate to the Library in the Finance Committee’s plan. Motion made by Will Bridegam, second by Pat Holland. **Vote:** 2 Ayes, 4 Nays. Motion defeated.

Motion: In light of the fact that the Library represents only 2.9% of the municipal budget, we feel that we (the Board of Trustees) will take no position on the override. Motion made by Anita Page, second by Kathy Wang. **Vote:** 5 Ayes, 1 Nay. Motion passes.

Motion: To adjourn at 4:12 p.m. Motion made by Molly Turner, seconded by Ann Grose. **Vote:** Unanimous.

Ms. Turner feels the ESL program is in grave jeopardy.
The rest of the committee reports will be addressed at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be on: Friday, April 6, 2007 at 10:30 a.m. Cancel a tentative meeting on April 9. The Annual Meeting will be on May 14, 2007 at 10 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Jones Library.

Minutes prepared by Tina Swift

Please note: Insertions in Italics are part of the voted changes.

The above Minutes were voted approved as amended on April 6, 2007.

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