

Board of Trustees Minutes
Jones Library and the Town Libraries
December 4, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.
Amherst Room, Jones Library

Present: Molly Turner, Pat Holland, Chris Hoffmann, Ann Grose, Louis Greenbaum, Kathleen Wang

Also Present: S. Merzbach (Press) and Jones Library Staff – Bonnie Isman (Director), Tina Swift, Tevis Kimball, Beth Girshman, Maggie Spiegel, Carolyn Platt, Amy Anaya, Sondra Radosh, Rosemary Loomis, Janet Ryan

The meeting was called to order at: 6:34 p.m.

Motion: To approve the November minutes. Motion by: Ann Grose, Second by: Chris Hoffmann. Vote: Unanimous (Wang absent)

Ms. Turner and Ms. Holland had questions for Director Isman regarding her review and they requested written answers from Ms. Isman. Ms. Turner called for the Trustees' further questions and stated that she would write a final report for the Director's review. Ms. Isman stated that some of these questions are "spot on" for the Library's 2010 strategic plan, not the Director's goals. She noted that three pages of goals for the Director were a bit too much and priorities need to be set. Ms. Turner's goal is to have the Director's review and goals finished by January 2009. Ms. Isman stated that goals from the Trustees would be most helpful.

Ms. Turner's comments on the Department Heads' written answers to budgetary questions: (1) Any change needs to be effected on a library-wide basis. (Synopsis of the answers to question #7.) (2) The HVAC needs to be fixed and made energy efficient. Ms. Turner asked the department heads to tell the Trustees what they want, beginning with Sondra Radosh. Ms. Holland mentioned Amy Anaya's comment that holds from other libraries are a burden, which is what Sondra echoed. Mr. Greenbaum noted that the Library staff 'is quite accustomed to retrenchment, they know all about cuts.' He noted that the Library department heads were very sensitive to their mission 'as servants to the citizens of the Town.'

Ms. Wang arrived at 7 p.m.

Sondra continued saying that the Children's room is very busy, doesn't have a separate "off desk" office so that the staff are doing everything simultaneously in a very small space.

Tevis Kimball spoke next saying that, 'we are at a crossroads at the Jones and in the world.' She noted the need for more effective communication and better run meetings. She noted that Special Collections' core services are not being met due to a lack of appropriate staffing. Right now, she can only service the public who walks through the door, so that areas such as preservation suffer. Tevis called for building flexibility into the organization in order to cover staff absences.

Mr. Greenbaum found it "harrowing" to think that Special Collections could not build its collection due to serving the public. Tevis noted that further growth depends on adding more space. While she has brought back some new collections, processing those collections has become almost impossible. In speaking to possible cuts, Tevis mentioned that genealogy research for those outside of Amherst might fall by the wayside. Following this, there was a discussion of the importance of and difficulty of relying on volunteers.

Beth Girshman spoke next highlighting volunteers, such as shelving audio visual items. She has volunteers for homebound delivery and 79 volunteers for ESL services. Beth stated that she did not think operational changes will solve the current or near future budget problems.

Ms. Wang said the Library is in a time of growth in circulation and use. Ms. Wang suggested adding more automation in the form of self check out machines. Ms. Isman said there is "jukebox" type of CD dispensers that the Springfield Library is looking into, but capital is needed for that.

Maggie Spiegel spoke of her branch (the North Amherst Library) and she noted that a benefit of previous cuts has been that the branch librarians work at the Jones and can do more collection development. They also can assist with ordering more easily. Staff from the Jones is doing the children's story hour on Wednesday morning at the NAL.

Amy Anaya spoke of belonging to the CWMars network which increases demands with system-wide holds. Many materials are loaned out and we borrow many more materials than we loan. Amy suggested tightening up the holds and loan policies so that patrons would place fewer holds in order to have fewer than 12 bins of books delivered per day.

Speaking next, Rosemary Loomis stressed that she is worried about further cuts to the reference substitute budget. These cuts began 4.5 years ago, leading to subs who have less knowledge about policies and procedures because they are at the Library so infrequently. Fewer subs mean more librarians working at the Reference Desk, rather than working in their own departments.

Ms. Holland noticed that the reference librarians seem to spend a lot of time helping people with computers and she asked if these are complicated issues. Rosemary said the lack of response from the Town Information Technology department has hindered improving the computer experience for patrons. Our reference department wants to change the public computer password system and they need IT to assist due to restricted permissions.

Carolyn Platt stated that Technical Services orders materials, catalogues materials, and covers the items (protecting materials). Carolyn makes extensive use of volunteers and work study students, with 'a constant shuffling in and out'. She is now using her staff to manage the volunteers so that she is not interrupted as much since there are often 15 volunteers in use.

Ms. Turner noted that most respondents talked about interdepartmental change, communication and reorganization. She asked what would be the vehicle to achieve these goals. She observed that the department heads seemed isolated from each other. They then listed the meetings that the department heads attend for varying issues. The space needs committee has been reconstituted and has focused on the front hallway. Ms. Turner suggested that the space needs committee look at reorganization, but was told that had been a sticking point in the past. Ms. Turner asked for potential costs of an outside organization development consultant. Ms. Turner suggested asking the capital planning committee for money for HVAC improvements in order to make the Library more "green" and environmentally friendly. She also invited George Hicks (Maintenance Supervisor) to come to the Trustees' meeting to talk about his suggestions. Ms. Turner said the information gathered had been invaluable.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Grose, Clerk

Tina Swift, Transcriptionist