

Meeting of the Jones Library Board of Trustees

March 19, 2010, Large Meeting Room of the Jones Library

Present: Trustees Holland, Hoffmann, McKee, Gray, Greenbaum. Absent: Trustee Wang.

Also present: Bonnie Isman, Library Director; Tina Swift, Office Manager; Emily Lewis, Jones Library Trustee candidate; Beth Girshman, Adult Services Librarian; Carolyn Platt, Cataloging Librarian; Tevis Kimball, Curator of Special Collections; Sondra Radosh, Children's Librarian.

The meeting was called to order at: 4:10 p.m.

President Patricia Holland: We will give an interim report of the evaluation of Bonnie Isman. Review of what has been done: 'We have interviewed almost all of the staff. We realize that this is the first time in a long while that the staff has been interviewed for the Director's evaluation. It has been an educational experience for us finding out how the Library works. We are grateful for that.' Ms. Holland pointed to copies of the memo sent to Ms. Isman which lists the Trustees' goals for this review. They hope to be done by early April. Ms. McKee thanked the staff for providing information about the operations of the Library. She hoped that people think 'it has been a good investment of their time.' She referred to the Trustees' Manual, saying that it is their duty to find out this information. Ms. Gray said they used the trustees' guidelines of 2004 for the Director's annual review. She noted that the interim report was based on a **recommendation** she got from Ms. Killoran of the MBLC. Ms. Gray said Ms. Killoran said it would be helpful to do an interim report picking some issues that the committee would like to see changed, and then ask for monthly updates.

Ms. Holland said the interim memo requests monthly cash statements and to provide complete information on all of the accounts that the Library has. Ms. Isman replied that she understands the need for more information and she suggested that the Trustees speak with either Kent Faerber or Peter Shea for more explanation, since there is no "cash flow statement." These people are familiar with the Library and its finances. Ms. Swift suggested providing a balance sheet monthly. Ms. Isman and Ms. Swift will email the financial information to the Trustees. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 6th and Ms. Isman will provide oral information about the emailed financials.

Ms. Isman asked for clarification on "accounts." Ms. McKee pointed to the auditor's report and requested a report on all of the separate funds named therein, such as the Samuel Minot Jones fund. Mr. Hoffmann suggested meeting with the auditors. Ms. Gray wants a listing of all accounts and how they are used. Ms. Isman said that would be four pages. Ms. Gray said that would be fine.

Ms. Gray recommended that there be a financial report from the Director on a monthly basis, at the first Trustee meeting of the month. The sense of the meeting was that that would be when the report would be given.

Ms. McKee says the Trustees are "flying blind" without having specifics on older funds. Ms. Gray **gave examples of how she too felt the Trustees were flying blind about the Library, e.g., just finding out the Library had a personnel policy despite having had a long discussion about the need to craft a hiring**

and firing policy at a recent Trustee Meeting during which time the Director said nothing about the fact that there was already a hiring and firing policy established by the Trustees some years ago.

Ms. Lewis, from the audience said she feels that everyone on the Board is “for the Library,” but she was not getting that feeling from the current conversation. **Ms. Gray said all Trustees should have a copy of the Library’s policies and noted that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners says that this is something that is often included in orientation materials for new trustees.** Ms. Gray said she would pay for that at Collective Copies.

Ms. Gray **would like an update on progress regarding** every item on the memo **to the Library Director** once a month at a regular business meeting of the Trustees.

Ms. Holland moved the discussion to communication.

Mr. Hoffman distributed motions. First he quoted the Trustees’ Manual (state) on trustees’ interactions with staff.

Motion #1: I move that a trustee may not call a staff member at home or outside of their work hours, unless that staff member has previously agreed to receive such a call, or in case of emergencies when all other options have failed.

Motion #2: I move that a trustee may not attend a staff meeting unless invited to attend that meeting by the staff involved, or if a majority of trustees vote to have an attendee at that meeting. This rule does not apply if for legal or contractual reasons a trustee is required, or forbidden, to attend such meeting.

Motion #3: I move that a trustee may not request to see the minutes of any staff meeting unless a majority of the trustees vote to see such minutes. This rule does not apply if for legal or contractual reasons the trustees are required, or forbidden, to view such minutes.

Motion #4: All requests for information about the library's operations that will require significant staff time or resources are to be made to the director, preferably at a meeting of the full board. The director will provide the information to the full board by its next meeting, or explain why the information cannot be provided at that time. This rule does not apply if there are concrete deadlines that require shorter response times. In such cases, the full board must still be notified of the request and informed of the director's response by its next board meeting.

Motions by Chris Hoffman.

Ms. Gray stated that the trustees on the Director’s evaluation committee tried to be as considerate as possible **when calling employees and spoke to almost all staff at the library, but didn’t know the schedules of when some of the part-time staff worked so had tried to call them at home to set up appointments. She noted that the person she called was her neighbor.** Mr. Hoffmann reiterated that the Director, not the trustees should contact staff members. Ms. Holland wants to discuss this on Monday.

Ms. Gray said that in speaking with Ms. Killoran of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, she learned that Trustees should not go to staff meeting [sic] unless invited, but that Ms. Killoran had pointed out that if Trustees were feeling like they needed to be at such meetings to learn critical

information, then this was a sign that there were serious communications issues to be addressed. Ms. Gray noted that three of the Trustees had sat in on a Department Head meeting as part of an evaluation of the Library Director and had learned that there was a lot of information communicated at these meetings that was not being told to the Board, such as new possibilities with technology that was discussed by several Department heads [sic]. Ms. Gray also reported that Ms. Killoran had said that there might be time when there were training opportunities at staff meetings that Trustees might be invited to. Ms. Gray pointed out that she would have found it very helpful to attend the training on Latino culture and the libraries since this would be relevant to issues of diversity that will come up in the Long Range Planning Committee that she is a member of.

Ms. Isman said she feels this topic is relevant to communication. She had had a lot of complaints of the way the trustees had implemented direct communication with the staff **at their homes**, bypassing supervisors and Ms. Isman. Ms. Isman said it would be helpful to address Mr. Hoffmann's motions. Ms. McKee said she wished she had known this at the outset.

Second: Louis Greenbaum.

Ms. Holland wants these motions taken up on Monday.

Motion: To table the above motions until Monday night. Motion by President Holland, second by Carol Gray. **Vote:** 3 ayes, 2 nays, 1 absent. Motion passes.

Ms. Isman was directed to find a way of communicating information to all staff (even those without computer access). Ms. McKee said the staff complimented the Office on a worry free payroll and financial information. **Ms. Gray said concerns about communication were raised during at least 80% of the staff interviews conducted by the Evaluation Committee. Staff reported that there was a feelings [sic] that Departments were too separate from one another. Ms. McKee said one staff had said it was as if they were all in separate 'silos.' Some staff expressed a desire for more of a team feeling in the Library.** Ms. Isman suggested a Google account for those who do not have email accounts in order to communicate with part time staff.

One of the trustees [sic] methods of creating more communication was to instruct the Director to walk around, observing staff more. Ms. Holland wanted Ms. Isman to provide department heads minutes to the trustees **meetings** and Ms. Isman noted that she had talked to Ms. Killoran (of the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners) who said this is not appropriate. Ms. Gray requested take away bullet points from the department heads' meetings **instead of minutes since the point is just to have the Trustees be informed about what is happening in the Library.** Ms. Holland **pointed out that there used to be a practice of having written summary points for the Board as monthly updates about all Library matters and she would like to resume this practice.** Ms. Isman wants the word "salient" inserted into these updates and the trustees agreed.

The Library's policies will be scanned and posted online. Ms. Gray wants all of the trustees to have a copy of the Library's policy book **as is recommended in the Massachusetts Board of Library**

Commissioners [sic] handbook. Requested information will be presented to the trustees on April 2, 2010.

Ms. Holland asked for questions. Ms. Isman **recommended a joint discussion** with herself, the Trustees **and** Ms. Killoran to clarify issues such as making sure the staff feel good about their communications with the trustees. The discussion will be to ensure that the trustees get useful information.

Ms. Gray **said that the Trustees had meant no harm in trying to contact staff at home to set up times to meet with them and that they would apologize to any individuals who were offended by this except that they did not know who that would be. She asked that an apology be conveyed to anyone who felt uncomfortable.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McKee, Clerk

Tina Swift, Note taker

Edits are in bold face and these were accepted by the full Board on April 6, 2010.