

Minutes of the Trustees of the Jones Library and the Town Libraries
March 3, 2009
Trustees Room, Jones Library

Present: Trustees Turner, Greenbaum, Holland, Hoffmann, Grose, and Wang. Also present: B. Isman (Library Director), S. Hugus (branch librarian), T. Swift (Library staff), K. Moran (Finance Committee), the Press, and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Consideration of the Minutes of Feb. 17th: Remove “only Ann Grose missed...” and replace with “Five of the Trustees attended.” Delete shop or eat at local businesses and change to use the local businesses. Add: Ms. Wang responded to John Musante that Corporations have been funded by donations for more hours, ESL, etc. Change Cathy to Kathy.

Motion: To approve the Minutes of Feb. 17, 2009 as amended above.
Motion by Pat Holland, second by Ann Grose. Vote: Unanimous

President’s Report. Thank you to Mr. Hoffmann for the article about the Branch Libraries. She also thanked Ms. Holland, Ms. Isman, and Ms. Hugus for their additions to the article. The article is with the Bulletin’s editor.

Ms. Turner said the budget deliberations causes turmoil for the staff with mention of furloughs, losing hours, and losing staff. Ms. Turner asked if she and Ms. Holland could attend a department heads’ meeting to clear lines of communication between the Trustees and the staff. Ms. Isman suggested that the full Board of Trustees discuss this notion, but only two or three trustees may attend because of the open meeting law. (Ms. Isman will research the number of trustees before a meeting must be public according to the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Isman noted that department heads’ meetings should not be a public meeting. Ms. Turner will attend the All Staff meeting on March 25th and Ms. Holland and Mr. Hoffman will try to attend.

Treasurer’s Report. The endowment is \$6,162,395.43. On January 13, the endowment was approximately \$6,400,000. Ms. Holland had hoped that the invested funds would have started to creep upward by now. At the end of 2008, the endowment was \$9,114, 264. The corporation has lost 1/3 of its assets.

Director’s Report. Ms. Isman spoke with Jim of ACTV who said they are having trouble covering the meetings which they are contracted to cover. He would assist a volunteer in covering the Trustees’ meetings, and rebroadcast the meeting, but he cannot commit to taping.

Ms. Isman spoke to the parking enforcement/collection people and they do not know how much is collected on a daily basis from the parking meters. They empty the meters twice weekly and all of the money goes to the Collector’s Office. Ms. Turner had hoped

increased parking meter revenue on the days when the Library is open would point to how vital the Library is to downtown. Ms. Isman noted that there are various groups of people competing for parking. A Library patron who wants to spend three hours at the Library is competing with the movie patrons who want those same three hour meters. Now, the Town will ticket “meter feeders” who wish to extend their stay. Ms. Isman is soliciting comments on the parking meter situation.

Ms. Isman opened the discussion of the audit and volunteered to clarify any questions the trustees might have. Ms. Moran asked if the Corporation had to project the liability for the Jones’ one retiree’s possible health claims. Ms. Isman will check with the auditors.

Budget discussion. \$2,209,399 is the level services budget without Monday afternoons (so it’s not really level services) because the Library would be closed all day on Monday.

The six day per week, MAR (Municipal Appropriation Requirement) budget has a \$117,111 gap. If you added Monday afternoons, the gap would be approximately \$128,000. Mr. Hoffmann said the Friends could possibly contribute \$15,000 for FY10. Discussion of raising the Trustees’ contribution of endowment funds ensued.

Ms. Holland had asked Peter Shea if the Trustees should increase their contribution from the endowment. He advised against spending more than 5.4% of the endowment. Mr. Greenbaum said, ‘My basic feeling is once we exceed this thing, we will never get back to it.’ He spoke of the need to ‘nurture and succor the Library’s endowment’ by protecting the invested funds. Ms. Isman disagreed saying that she has watched the endowment rise and fall over 25 years. She spoke of an ‘Obama impression’ that things will change and the endowment will not disappear. She expressed confidence that the endowment will grow again. She feels that another \$16,000 would provide the service needed. This action would also show other Town boards and committees that the Library Trustees will ‘give a little’ and it might encourage other boards and committees to also give a little. Ms. Turner spoke of other libraries without endowments and asked, how this had come to pass. Mr. Greenbaum said many other town libraries no longer have endowments because they failed to nurture their endowments. He spoke of selling the Bierstadt to help fund the addition and Ms. Grose remembered how angry townspeople were at that time.

The fundraising committee discussed the North Amherst’s Library proposals to do some fundraising, such as raffling slabs from the felled tree, and conducting a benefit dinner. They want to use the remainder of the Holland fund for a source of matching funds for the North Amherst Library. Some patrons have suggested donating \$100 per user family with stickers on the library cards to recognize donors. The North Amherst Library wishes to form a subcommittee for branch fundraising, and the Trustees approved, encouraging South Amherst residents to do the same.

The ESL department has fundraised about \$6,000, including a grant from Love Notes of the Amherst Club. Ms. Isman and Ms. Weintraub want to broadcast the information about the opportunity to give online, using the Chronicle of Philanthropy website.

Larry Shaffer, Town Manager, has suggested that some of the capital projects (such as repainting the Library) could come from the Governor's stimulus money, and capital money could be used for the Library's operating budget.

April 2009, will be a health premium free month for both the employees and the Town. Larry Shaffer has proposed doing this again in FY10 if there are no great claims on the Health Claims Trust. Ms. Isman suggested asking the Town for use of some reserve funds to augment the Library's budget.

Ms. Turner said she is not ready to vote on any budget options due to the lack of information from the state. According to Ms. Moran, Senator Stan Rosenberg has said they will have revenue raising proposals on the Governor's desk by April 1st. The Town still does not know what the federal stimulus aid will be. Senator Rosenberg said he's certain the schools will not get more Chapter 766 aid. Senator Rosenberg also said he feels that there will be a state aid deficit in future years.

Ms. Moran brought a handout which shows what the schools will have to eliminate from their budget.

Ms. Holland said she would be willing to go to 5.5% (the 2008 level of endowment use) but not 5.6%. The trustees' intention was to go to 5.4% in 2010. [The Trustees decided to decrease use by 0.01% every year until they reach no more than 5%.] Mr. Hoffmann would prefer to go with 5.4% or possibly 5.5%. He explained that since the endowment has dropped by 30%, the 5.5% is a greater hit. Ms. Grose would rather 5.5% rather than close a branch or layoff people. Ms. Wang stands by the Trustees' decision to decrease to 5.4%. Ms. Turner wished this sentence to be in the Minutes: The Trustees are divided between 5.5% or 5.4%.

Ms. Isman will have staff try to find \$36,000 in staff reductions (which could increase up or down).

The Library professionals have suggested giving up one week's pay. The Town administrators will give up their COLA's if the school administrators do the same. Ms. Isman does not advocate giving up COLA's for bargaining unit members. Ms. Isman explored the possibility of having a rental collection of audiovisual materials. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) says that rentals are all right as long as they are duplicate copies. Ms. McKee suggested having a memorial plaque so that when donations exceed \$500, the donor's name is added to this plaque. Ms. McKee has met with the Friends seeking support for "targeted giving" by seeking popular items as donations to the Library's 'wish list.'

Trustee training opportunities: MBLC sponsors a Trustees' Symposium on March 7, 2009.

Committee Reports. Pat Holland and Molly Turner went to the Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) meeting. The Amherst Fire Department has bought a quint which is a fire truck with a 75 foot ladder. This truck is priced at \$700,000. There were farewell speeches from the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief. Both are retiring.

The Budget Coordinating Group meeting was cancelled due to snow.

The Personnel Board has not met.

250th Committee: Ms. Grose told of the meeting on March 6th which will have a panel of women including Representative Ellen Story, Lucy Benson, Lorna Peterson (4 p.m. at Hampshire College); March 7th there will be a 250th concert at the middle school; on March 8th there will be a speech by Bob Romer.

Friends: Mr. Hoffmann talked of the success of the Valentine's baskets. The Friends have increased the summer reading clubs' money to \$800 each (for the Jones and each branch). They also voted for some furniture for the Library and the dedication of the Robert Frost room. Mr. Hoffmann added that the Friends will contribute to the new roof on the book shed at the Take it or Leave it book space at the landfill.

Two new trustees will be elected on March 31, 2009. Ms. Grose and Ms. Turner are not standing for reelection. Mr. Greenbaum suggested a round of applause for the departing Trustees.

Future Trustees' meetings: Cancel April 7; add April 2, 2009 as the Annual Meeting for next Trustees' meeting. At Ms. Turner's suggestion, the Trustees will decide on April 2 if there will be a public budget hearing on April 14th or May 12th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Grose, Clerk

Tina Swift, Transcriptionist