

Minutes of the Jones Library Board of Trustees

Tuesday, 12 May 2009

Trustees Room of the Jones Library

Present: Trustees Patricia Holland, Chris Hoffman, Carol Gray, Louis Greenbaum, Sarah McKee, Kathy Wang

Also Present: Jones Library Director Bonnie Isman; Amherst Bulletin reporter Scott Merzbach, Finance Committee member Kay Moran; Carolyn Platt (staff), Kirstin Kay (staff), Sue Hugus (staff), Beth Girshman (staff – at 7:40 p.m.), Sondra Radosh (staff – at 7:40 p.m.).

Meeting called to order at: 7:03 p.m. by President Patricia Holland

1. Minutes of May 5, 2009: Insert on Paragraph 3, after the paragraph “someone might donate this amount” Ending: Ms. Gray also requested the cost for operating a skeletal staff, and the difference in cost between a full staff and a skeleton staff – we need this number to vote responsibly on cuts. Moved to accept the previous minutes as amended. Motion by Ms. Gray. Vote: Accepted.
2. President’s Report: Report on the American Library Association (ALA) Legislative Day in Washington, D.C.: Patricia Holland showed up for the American Library Association legislative day and she had to leave before could see Representative John Olver, but she stopped into Senator Kennedy’s office & saw aides of Nikki Tsongas and John Kerry. ALA people seemed sort of upbeat but President Obama is asking for less than ALA wants. We should urge passage of the LSTA (\$300,000,000) Library Services & Technology Act – it would benefit the Jones. This is the only money ever given to libraries to test ideas and see whether they work. We used it to found English as a Second Language (ESL) years ago & to fund outreach to the Hispanic community. We also want to pass Improving Literacy thru the Libraries Act for \$100,000,000. Kerry & Tsongas’s offices are apparently supportive.

The USA PATRIOT Act is up for review. Three sections pertaining to library patron records should be modified to protect readers’ privacy. Ms. Gray asked whether there’s a campaign to get these passed. Yes. Ms. Gray will draft a letter from the Board of Trustees and will send it to the relevant legislators with information from Ms. Holland. Ms. Holland will draft a letter from us regarding the LSTA.

3. Treasurer's Report: Vanguard investment manager Jim Gorman cannot attend due to travel conflicts, but is available for a conference call (no, he is not available tonight even by phone) and for the meeting on June 2, 2009. The endowment balance as of May 8 (last Fri) is \$6,586,798.45. This is about \$100,000 more than it was on Tuesday.

Mr. Gorman (Vanguard investment advisor) and Chris Hoffman have been playing phone tag. Mr. Gorman did send the white paper. Mr. Hoffman says it looks interesting in a statistical sort of way, but does not take into account other present factors. Mr. Hoffman will ask Mr. Gorman for his analysis, e.g., bank stress tests, other current economic factors. Mr. Hoffman would like to hear him in person – he will give him various materials on economy.

Kathy Wang: Did Vanguard's analysis predict the current crisis? On page 8, Vanguard thinks that the expected 10 year annualized total return for the 2009 – 2018 period will be in the 9% to 10% range, close to the historical average. June 2 is the soonest that Mr. Gorman can meet with us. We definitely will invite him. How long can we talk with him via town Internet if necessary? This is unclear. Ms. Gray will bring her cell phone which can broadcast.

Town Meeting starts June 15, 2009. This is a postponement.

Director's Report: the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) hearing was last Thursday in Springfield. They rarely meet here. There was a nice turnout from various types of libraries. Four signed up to speak, including B. Isman. All spoke. One speaker wanted to make sure that the final rule will be based on the beginning appropriation number in case a city requires a midyear giveback. All seems to be fine. The formal vote will happen in early June and it gets finalized in late June. This will take effect for FY 2010. It will affect both materials and hours requirements. This meeting had two waiver requests. Bonnie Isman got the filings from the town that did not meet the Municipal Appropriations Requirement (MAR). These documented the difference between treatment of libraries and other town components. It was an eye-opener to see what documentation and good faith efforts are required.

The Library had two Community Preservation Act Commission (CPAC) articles passed at Town Meeting – HVAC for Special Collections (engineering design), and slate roof (study, specs, and emergency repairs). The CPAC did not need photos of rotten ceiling tiles, plastic.

Kay Moran: We don't know yet what the Senate will propose as a budget, so we postponed Town Meeting, but no one expects good news. State revenue projections are going down. Federal stimulus money is helping with a school shortfall, but is not a recurring revenue source. The public sector is generally lagging the private sector. The Town may cut as many as ten (10) municipal staff. The Schools are also looking at reducing staff. The Regional School Committee has voted its budget at Tier 1 so that if more revenue comes in, there will be no need to go back to four Town Meetings. Shutesbury & Leverett have approved a Tier 1 budget plan; Pelham Town Meeting hasn't yet voted. If it Okays Tier 1, Amherst will be perforce be assessed at a Tier 1 level. The Finance Committee members are glad that they've postponed tomorrow's meeting to May 28, but they must make decisions that night. It will meet on Thursday, May 14, & would like to know if Library will have a budget by then. If Library doesn't vote a budget tonight, Kay Moran suggests that we schedule another meeting. Amherst is relatively poor in terms of property values and especially income levels. We're therefore eligible for more state aid which helps all of our budgets. So when there's a cut in state aid, it affects us disproportionately. If the meals and hotel taxes are approved by the legislature, then Town Meeting must enact these and Town Meeting cannot do this in advance. And, Town Meeting might not pass it at all. The Finance Committee is not inclined to count on these tax measures to save our bacon for next year. The Library's Municipal Appropriation Requirement budget for FY 2010 might even be impossible.

Bonnie Isman made a Revenues worksheet & Budget Worksheet, based on the last Trustees' discussion. In the worst case scenario, the Budget Coordinating Group may make changes based on the Senate budget. See sheet. We believe that all the FY10 gifts and donations are available. MAR is our best-case scenario.

On expenditures, salaries are somewhat reduced as book repair slot is already vacant. (Level services would hire someone). There is a lower bottom line so we could lower our circulating book / materials line item by \$5000. Plus, we could reduce even further if new MBLC regulations come in. FY 2010 MAR would come in at \$2,126,288 – which would allow no reduction in staff and hours. This would be \$82,894 less than a level services budget.

Regarding the Friends of the Jones Library's program of Beds for Books: The charge for singles (but not doubles) has gone up. Carol Gray will talk to Sandra Mullin about these rates – maybe they are too low.

Worst-case: Assuming that we get all of the revenues listed, we'd have to take all the cuts that the staff proposed (about \$48,000) or equivalent cuts. The calculation at bottom is how Bonnie Isman calculated the MAR given the new (we hope) MBLC guidelines for materials purchase. 'mats per capita' – materials per capita -- equals \$4.76 per person in our population. The average is \$4.80 or so – we are not leading here, folks.

Carol Gray: What's controversial on revenues? Ms. Holland asked, 'what's the total of the annual fund drive?' Ms. Isman replied that the fundraising has brought in about \$46,700 – from direct mailing (in the fall and a recent follow up). The goal is \$60,000 after expenses. But the FY 10 budget shows \$45,000 in donations because that is what Ms. Isman thought we could count on.

Ms. Holland: How solid are the FY10 gifts listed? Ms. Isman: Very solid. Mr. Hoffman: How realistic are the \$5,000 total branch fundraising goals? Maggie Spiegel (No. Amherst Library) and Sue Hugus (Munson Memorial Library, So. Amherst Library): We think that we can do it, though we have not started fundraising and will not until we have decision by the Board of Trustees. There's about \$1700 in the Munson Memorial Library gift fund. Ms. Gray: What about asking for a two month rental holiday for the Munson? Or even a complete waiver? Ms. Gray and Ms. Holland are willing to meet with Claudia O'Brien of the Munson Memorial Trustees to ask for a waiver of the rental fee.

Ms. Wang asked a point of clarification: Did Ms. Isman take all staff recommendations except closing on Sundays instead of Friday afternoons? Yes. (There was no consensus last time on Sunday closing.) But this budget would keep Library open on Monday afternoon.

Ms. Gray still wants the difference between the cost of a full crew of workers and a skeleton crew. Ms. Wang wants the staff preference on a day to close. Ms. Isman stated that Sunday was chosen because the Library is already closed on Sunday in the summer. Ms. Hugus observed that Sunday is a light circulation day. Maggie Spiegel noted that it is also a workload question because there is no CMARS delivery on Sunday. This is one of the reasons that Sunday can be lighter staffing – same for evenings.

Louis Greenbaum asked what sort of deficit we're facing in the coming year. What are the proposals and suggestions for meeting these cuts? Ms. Isman responded with, 'We could save \$13,000 by closing Sunday; the professional staff have agreed to take 1-week

furlough.’ This would cut craft programs for children. Cutting reference staff would require cutting computer classes. One professional librarian has offered to cut her hours, but branch librarians would have to fill in. If additional revenue does not come in as anticipated, we’d have to cut back on non-benefitted staff. Mr. Greenbaum asked: Has anyone calculated savings for closing the Library for a week? Ms. Isman told the group that the Union (SEIU) has not agreed to close for a week.

Ms.Gray: We should come in to Town Meeting with our budget – not with options to cut. She recommends adding back in the \$3,000 for Sunday openings in summer. We might think about putting back also the \$48,658 from Worst Case scenario – if we take cuts now, it lowers our level services for next year. Not good. Ms. Isman supports going in for the MAR as it will help us later if we must go to the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners for a waiver. Beth Girshman: we’ve made many personnel shifts – dismantled them -- to maintain the Saturday reference service. If we’re going to add anything back in, she’d prefer to go back to the professional staff and ask what they think is most needed. Ms. Gray: as long as we add back in the same amount. (Someone: adding summer Sunday hours would be a new service – not level services.) Ms. Holland supports asking for the MAR (level services) amount. Mr. Greenbaum asked what items Town Meeting might want to cut from our budget if it doesn’t accept our MAR budget. Ms. Isman responded that it would be a hatchet job with a lump sum that we’d have to eat. Ms. Gray wants to add the book repair slot to the MAR, but Ms. Isman said she cannot make a case for more than the MAR. Ms. Gray:

Motion: That we convey to the Finance Committee what Level Services would be – i.e., \$2,209,182. Because of change in state regulation, we will request MAR budget number (plus adding back in the bookbinder position, i.e., \$2,131,182. Motion by Ms. Gray.

This does NOT include Sunday afternoons in summer. Library is already at bare bones due to staff reductions from prior years.

Ms. McKee seconded. Ms. Gray withdrew motion.

Ms. Gray: Town Meeting materials will talk about all the cuts that the library has already made; etc. Mr.Greenbaum: confirmed, level of the endowment is at 5.4%. Mr. Hoffman is concerned about what Ms. Isman said about expending political capital on the bookbinder position. He is concerned that being a little above MAR does not strengthen our position. Ms. Wang asked, ‘Could we wait two weeks and meet again? The Board agreed to meet on Wednesday, 26 May 2009.

4. Agreed: If market goes down, we agree in principle to meet within 48 hours for open meeting purposes to decide on a trigger to protect the endowment. Chris Hoffman will ask Jim Gorman about possible triggers regarding the endowment.
5. Ms. Gray and Ms. McKee are working on handouts for Town Meeting. Ms. Holland requested that they make lists for Town Meeting of what we could do with X amount of donations.
6. Ms. Isman: The Jones Library is starting summer hours on May 31. The Library will be closed on Sundays and Tuesday and Thursdays will have 1 hour shorter evening hours.
7. Postponed other fundraising items except for some exploratory talk.

Adjourned 9:20 p.m.

Future Board meeting dates: Wednesday, May 27, 2009 (in basement Large Meeting Room – enter by the garden door); Tuesdays June 2 and July 14 at 7 p.m.

Fund Raising Committee will meet at 6 p.m. on July 14

Budget presentation at Finance Committee meeting May 13, 2009 at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McKee, Clerk