

Pawlet Public Library
Meeting of Board of Trustees

MINUTES

June 4, 2024

Present: Trustees in attendance: Harley Cudney, Grace Larson, Kathryn Lawrence, Joni Lee, Lauren Herbert

Community Members:

Adelle Santwire, Jed Rubin, Linda Lynton, Lyndsi Barnes, Sue LaPorte, Eve Schaub, Cori Rail, Carol Schoenwetter, Bob Schoenemann, Martha Schoenemann, Rhonda Schlangen, Hannah Herbert, Bob Herbert, Martin Kravitt, Monica Kravitt, JoAnne Van Meter, PEGTV

5:30 Call to order

Operating Norms: Be polite, respectful.

Public Comment:

- Cori – Operating Norms include being responsive, the majority of public comments have been critical of the Board regarding the firing of Lyndsi and the hiring of a lawyer, the Board has not been responsive to public opinion. Public comment has been limited, and the Board has done nothing to address public concerns. Lauren is the only member who was voted in since Lyndsi was fired, the other four Board members should step down.
- JoAnne – Our society has become divided, unfortunately this has invaded our Pawlet community library. The Board should have reinstated or mediated with Lyndsi, even if for a brief period of time. The library has not had professional leadership for 6 months. The Board needs to consider ways to make sure this doesn't happen in the future.
- Martha – Commends the Board for moving forward in a positive way, including the newspaper ad that defines the position well. Also, for putting importance on the rules of procedure for meetings, some of which have lacked decorum of late.
 - o Lauren – This ad was not discussed by the entire Board in open meeting, which is the wrong way to do things. Transparency comes with discussion then action, not action then discussion.

End of first public comment. Harley calls for a recess.

Approval of May minutes:

- Kathryn motions to approve, Joni seconds, motion carries.
 - o Sue points out that it took Rockingham 12 months to find a new librarian, not 3-5 years.

Agenda:

- Harley would like to add in New Business a discussion of new laws S220 regarding libraries.
- Joni motions to approve, Kathryn seconds, motion carries.

Secretary's Report:

- No report, but Grace reiterates that she will include any letter in the addenda of the minutes if requested.

Treasurer's Report:

- Kathryn gives the report.
- Lauren wants to talk about changing procedure for payments and warrants.
- Marty asks about grants.
- Sue asks about what has been spent on advertising.
- JoAnne asks why there is \$3k down in projected income.

Director's Report:

- Adelle reports on usage, programs, etc.
- Poultney has given us a lot of COVID tests, so those will be available at the library.
- Adelle will be taking some vacation; some coverage is still needed.
- The Fire Department is doing practice in the Library June 18th, 7-9pm.
- Some lightbulbs are out and need to be replaced, either Harley or the Select Board will do this.

Committee Reports:

- Hiring Committee:
 - o Ads have been placed on Front Porch Forum, the Granville Sentinel and affiliates, and the Manchester Journal. Total cost is \$812. Harley will not be seeking reimbursement for this since library revenue has been down.
 - o There has been interest. All applications received by June 14th will be reviewed, those received after that will be reviewed at the discretion of the committee.
 - o We have a thorough job description but will revisit this, as well as interview protocol to ensure that they meet our current needs.
 - o Lauren – once candidates are narrowed down will the committee bring the list to the Board?
 - o Harley – yes, rank ordered, hopefully by July meeting.
 - o Linda – who will interview? Harley answers that it will be him and Joni, then for promising candidates Adelle and community members.
 - o Marty – what credentials are required, do they include a degree in Library Science? Joni points out that Vermont does not require this. JoAnne points out that the Vermont program results in a certificate, not a degree.
 - o JoAnne asks if the Board has considered advertising on the Vermont State Library website.
 - Harley will look into this.
 - o Lyndsi – will this process be opened up to the entire community? Harley – no.
 - o Martha – points out that 4 or 5 recent Directors have not had library science degrees. This library has been under excellent custodianship with them.
 - o Lyndsi – there is a state requirement.
 - o Cori – confirms that Harley paid for advertising. Asks if we have discussed hiring with our lawyer. Joni and Harley reiterate that we do not share what has been discussed with the lawyer.
 - o Cori – have you tried word of mouth? Harley says yes, and everyone should, it's a great way to garner interest. Cori doesn't think it's appropriate for the Board to solicit candidates.

- Sue – thinks the ad is pandering to a specific individual, and the Board needs oversight.

Library Sale:

- We need volunteers.
- Bake Sale -
 - Need someone to run this, assuming we have one.
 - Lauren asks if we have info from previous years.
 - Harley will ask Sally Cleveland and forward info to Lauren.
 - Joni might be interested.
- Harley has established that as a non-profit we don't need to pay fees to the school.
- Food trucks are allowed.
- Books are coming in, sorting is 9-11 Tuesdays
 - Last dropoff will be either the week before or week of the Sale.
- Jed asks if the 4H club will be available.
 - Harley will check, and Jed suggests checking with the Rutland extension office if needed.

Rules of Procedure:

- Draft Rules have been posted on the website for review.
- Harley asks if there is a motion to approve the Rules of Procedure as amended to omit the line "The collective silent acquiescence of the body in response to a motion will signify its unanimous consent."
- Joni motions to approve the Rules of Procedure as amended, Kathryn seconds, motion carries.
- Martha – The rules include public comment before a vote on agenda items – this seems very generous considering the public comment at both beginning and end of meeting.
 - Harley points out that these comments will be restricted to the specific agenda item, public comment at both beginning and end of meeting is in our Bylaws, which will be reviewed.
- Bob – appreciates all that Adelle has done while we look for a new Director.
- Lauren – thinks we should wait to review Bylaws until we have a Director.

Warrant Procedure:

- Payment to lawyer wasn't discussed properly.
- Lauren – these matters need to be discussed before action is taken.
- How to avoid late fees but also discuss expenses in open meeting?
- Harley – can we separate regular budget expenses from special expenses?
- Lauren thinks there's a better way.
 - Board receives Warrant some # of days before meeting, reviews, signs in open meeting.
 - Lauren motions to adopt this, Joni seconds.
 - Kathryn is worried about bills being paid late.
 - She will ask Julie what she does about Warrants and especially cc payments.
 - Martha – in Bylaws, the budget needs to be very specific, she agrees with Harley that we could separate regular vs. special expenses.
 - Vote: Kathryn votes nay, all others vote yes, motion carries.

Library Board Training:

- Joni and Grace attended, as well as members of the Rupert Library.
- Joni gives a synopsis – major points included the importance of libraries to our Democracy, and the rights and duties of library Boards.
- Action Item suggested was setting up library email accounts so Board members are not using their personal email accounts for library business.
 - o Harley and Adelle will look into this
- There was also discussion of changes coming to open meeting laws that would expand access to more people.
- We will need to explore how to comply with these new laws.
- The VT Dept of Libraries will be revealing more guidelines in the near future.

Policies:

- The following have all been posted on our website: ALA Bill of Rights and Code of Ethics, Freedom to Read and View Policies, Consideration of Materials, Material Selection

No New Business.

Public Comment:

- Sue – unilateral decisions should not be made. Still thinks the Board should not be looking to hire a new Director.
- Jed – Asks about how Casella trash is billed, if it is the same whether the dumpsters are full or not. Harley – yes.
- Lyndsi – Chair's action outside of library Board doesn't follow Bylaws.
- Cana – offers to assist with library credit card.
 - o Have we considered reaching out to local colleges/universities with library science programs for the position?
 - o Agrees with getting separate emails.
 - o Asks about public record law.
- Martha – what policies will be posted on website? What policies will be discussed next meeting?
 - o Harley – pet, gift, unattended children. There is some discussion regarding where to get guidance on gift policy.

Reflection of Operating Norms.

7:45 Harley motions to go into Executive Session for confidential attorney-client communications made for the purposes of providing professional legal services for to the body. Joni seconds, all agree.

7:57 Kathryn motions to leave executive session, Joni seconds, executive session ends

No decisions were made.

7:58 Grace motions to adjourn the meeting, Kathryn seconds.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting July 2nd , 5:30pm at the Library.

Dated June 13, 2024, Grace Larson, Secretary

Addenda

June 4, 2024

To the Chair and Trustees of the Pawlet Public Library:

I would like to commend the Library Board on moving forward with the search for a new Library Director and for the excellent advertisement that I saw in a recent issue of the Free Press. It indicates to me that you have spent time developing a description of the responsibilities of a director and considering the characteristics that you are looking for in the “ideal” candidate.

Secondly, I was pleased to read the draft document, “Rules of Procedure for Meetings,” that was posted during the past month on the Pawlet Public Library website.

[see <https://pawletpubliclibrary.com/policies>]

I gather it is a policy that is under consideration for adoption by the Board and is on the agenda tonight. It is a 7-page document and I was particularly pleased to see that there is a section on “Public Participation,” starting on page 5. It seems to me that establishing rules for the behavior of attending members of the public is just as important as the “Operating Norms” for Board members. If this document is adopted tonight, it has the potential to bring a higher level of decorum and fairness to the expression of Public Comments during the designated sections of the agenda.

It is my personal opinion that during Board meetings over the past four or five months, there has been a level of aggression and hostility in remarks directed toward members of the Library Board, by some members of the public, that borders on harassment.

If this document, “Rules of Procedure for Meetings,” is adopted, referenced frequently and posted in a place that is easy for members of the public to find and read, it may have a beneficial effect on the tenor of future Board meetings. As a member of this community, I certainly hope so.

Respectfully,

Martha Schoenemann