

Pawlet Public Library  
Regular Meeting of Board of Trustees

MINUTES

November 12, 2024

Present: Trustees in attendance: Harley Cudney, Grace Larson, Joni Lee, Lauren Herbert, Cori Rail

Members of the public present:

Molly Beverage, Jena Cacace, Carol Herbert, Drew Herbert, Sue LaPorte, Julie Mach, Eve Schaub, Gordon Dossett, Joanne Van Meter, Bob Schoenemann, Martha Schoenemann, Juli Haley, Nancy Morlino, Joy Proft, Amy Thebault, Rhonda Schlangen, Sheree Foster, Elizabeth Torak, Barbara O'Connor, William with PEGTV

5:32 Call to order

- Review of Operating Norms: Harley reads Operating Norms.
- Addition or deletion of agenda items and approval of Agenda:
  - o Harley would like to add succession plan.
  - o Cori would like to add an action item of voting on the treasurer presenting the salary request to the Select Board.
  - o Lauren motions to approve the agenda, as amended. Cori seconds, no discussion, motion carries.
- Public Comment:
  - o Martha – would like to express appreciation for the book group that Christine started, discussion was stimulating and books were made available.
  - o Joanne seconds Martha's comment. Christine plans on having more such in the future, hopefully there will be good attendance.
  - o Sue – Reads a petition demanding the resignation or removal of Harley as Board Chair.
  - o Julie – is very concerned after the last meeting, in which the Board admitted to actively trying to avoid telling the truth about library-owned property, not only to the public but to the Board members. Transparency, honesty, and willingness to admit to making a mistake is of the utmost importance and your behavior is disturbing.
  - o Amy – sees a lot of strife, finds it brave for people to stand up as they are. It is important to have transparency.
- Approval of minutes:
  - o Lauren makes a motion to approve the minutes from October 8<sup>th</sup>, Joni seconds.
  - o Harley would like the minutes to add Lysndi's words "and had informed the Board Chair, Harley, about it".
  - o There is discussion of why this is relevant, Harley doesn't answer but says it is important to him and will become apparent later.
  - o Julie points out that minutes don't include direct quotes.
  - o Lauren – if this change is made than Harley should be directly quoted in the discussion about his broking the computer.
  - o Grace will amend the minutes in both instances.
  - o Motion to approve as amended carries.
- Secretary's report:

- Nothing to report
- Treasurer's report:
  - Cori emailed the Warrant right before the meeting but it hasn't been seen by most of the Board. She didn't have a breakdown of the cc statement, but reports it is for normal, regular expenses. The only question is about the charge for discarding books, this is new this year as the old method of disposal is gone. This should be added to book sale expenses.
  - Christine is supposed to categorize the expenses and send this to Cori.
  - Harley has unilaterally excused Christine from this meeting. This is supposed to go through the Board, and notice of absences needs to be made to the Board. There has also been a request for a report from Nina, which has not been provided.
  - Grace motions to approve the Warrant, Lauren seconds, no further discussion, motion carries.
  - Audit update – Cori has not yet been in contact with W. Pawlet Fire Department about their methods, but will do so.
  - Library warrants are audited with the town, but we need to do an internal audit.
- Director's report:
  - Christine is not here. Harley goes over the circulation, programs, usage, etc. report that she has submitted.
  - Harley has also included an update on research he has done regarding the Loop system, without clarifying that he had written this part of the supposed Director's report.
  - Lauren – we need to discuss this as a Board, not take individual action. Research about it is the Director's job. Everything needs to be discussed among the Board before action is taken. This is a lack of understanding of procedure.
  - The only Community Connector report is a print out of DonorSnap information. There needs to be discussion about the type of report the Board would like from both the Director and the Community Connector. Usage data is good to have, but the report should be more about using that information to inform decisions going forward. They should include how time is used what is being done, if it is effective in getting more donors, etc. There should be year-to-year comparisons, and more information about direction and ideas.
  - Joanne – was hoping that Christine would be able to give an update on status of accessibility grant. We need to know if we can meet the terms of the grant or if it needs to be returned.
  - Lauren – no one should say “I decided” – action should not be taken without Board discussion and approval.
  - Rhonda – the board is to steward the library and serve the community, currently not a lot is getting done.
- Working Group reports:
  - Policies – Joni and Lauren met once as a working group, and have a list of policies that they are working on dividing.
    - Joni is working on a draft of the inclement weather policy, and also the employee handbook.
    - Lauren – was hoping to hear from Christine re: priorities. She has gotten some information from other libraries.
    - There is some discussion about whether the employee handbook is a policy. Joni and Lauren will look at whether the employee handbook is a “policy” or informed by policy.

- Lauren has found a comprehensive employee review form here in the library and distributes it to the Board.
- Unfinished business:
  - Draft budget for FY 2025-26
    - Cori wasn't able to meet with Christine, but has taken the information and has actuals and budget proposal.
    - Harley asks if this is presented for approval, as the agenda includes "vote". Cori – this is a draft for review and discussion, to be submitted to the Select Board for the Town Report. Cori has spoken with Julie – the salary request needs to be presented to the Select Board on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for presenting the budget is the end of December.
    - There is discussion about budget categories – Julie confirms that the categories are controlled by the Board.
    - Cori will start categorizing Adelle's hours and mileage as "interlibrary loan" rather than being included in those general categories. She would like to add two new categories.
    - Lauren motions to add these two new categories: "legal counsel" and "community engagement". Grace seconds.
      - Cori will work with Christine to differentiate between "programs" and "community engagement" (basically entertainment).
      - Motion carries.
      - Definition of categories would be useful going forward. For example, what is "automation"?
    - Cori will send an updated draft in 2 weeks to the Board for review before discussion and approval at next meeting.
    - Harley asks to be cc'd in budget emails with Christine.
    - Harley – what can we do with investment account, can we draw on it for next FY budget? Cori will ask.
    - Harley will ask Christine to bring the laptop to the next meeting so we can make change
  - Fundraising –
    - Raffle drawing has been scheduled for Friday at 5pm.
    - The Board had voted to hold the raffle at this meeting, this was never conveyed to Adelle or Nina, so the letter went out with Friday's date. This was a result of poor communication.
    - The letter had multiple problems. It was grammatically incorrect, and also it was signed from the Board, but no Board member had actually even seen it.
    - Also, the donations were not properly attributed to donors. It was not made clear who had actually donated items.
    - Cori – Grace should have written the letter.
    - Next year the secretary will write the letter.
    - Barbara points out that the letter didn't even say who the trustees were. The letter should be personally signed. There was no signature.
    - For annual appeal – this letter is usually signed by the Chair.

- In future – draft letters can be emailed to Board members for review and response (not discussion), then discussed and voted in in Open meeting.
- Sue points out that in the past Board members have written personalized notes on the annual appeal letter.
- Martha - since the raffle is happening just now, and the Pawlet Historical Society has just sent out their appeal, it would not necessarily be a bad thing to have the annual appeal go out later than usual.
- Lauren – organization of fundraisers should be done by the Board (groups or subcommittees with members of the public have been used in the past).
- Barbara – the raffle drawing should be advertised.
- Harley and (probably) Grace will go to the drawing.
- Joni – how will we recognize donors/write thankyou notes?
  - Harley will make sure Christine organizes this.
  - In-kind donation note?
  - Martha – there is a certain price point under which we don't need to give a donation receipt.
- Cori – how will we publicize raffle winners? Facebook page, letter to library email list, Front Porch Forum. Should include thank you to donors.
- Joni – maybe we should publicize (before or after) the raffle, including donors.
- Donor list needs to be updated/purged.
- Harley asked VLTC about when a Board member has to get Board approval before asking for advice. He reads the response (which has also been emailed to the Board). Basically, unless the advice is very specifically and clearly stated as personal only.
- Computer recovery:
  - Data has been recovered – everything except the library business that was conducted using a personal email address.
  - It cost \$500. The computer is working, the monitor is broken, so it is functioning like a tablet, currently with a monitor that we could buy from Vinnie Covino for \$75.
  - Vinnie wrote a report, and says a comparable computer could be purchased for \$750. Harley suggests that he pay the library this amount, plus whatever additional funds would be needed to purchase a laptop that would be suitable for the Director's use.
  - Lauren would like Harley to replace the computer. If we need a laptop we can table that for another time.
  - Joni – does it make sense to bury a strict replacement or get something more relevant? Joanne Joni is right – it doesn't make sense to replace an older computer with another older model.
  - Cori – this obfuscation is wasting our time and resources (including the public). This could be part of a larger discussion about what we need in a computer, which one needs updated most.
  - Gordon – all of the information on the computer is now available and the computer is operating? So a decision doesn't need to be made tonight? Yes. Also, he heard all the passwords were on file in the office. Harley – not the password to this computer.
  - Harley – it seems more cost efficient to buy a laptop that would fit the Director's use, then Cori could use the current laptop, which would be useful. But there is no question that "I broke it, I buy it."

- Joni will talk to Vinnie and Christine and bring three different options for replacement to next meeting.
- A grant proposal was not found, but there are a couple folders marked “lift expansion” though there doesn’t seem to be a plan. The institution memory is very valuable.
- Martha suggests a report or statement about what information was found on the computer.
- There is a discussion about why it took so long for this to happen.
- Joanne – there is bullying going on here, making everyone very uncomfortable.
- Possible retreat and mediation for Board of Trustees – tabled, but Lauren has some information she hands out.
- Website project update, window evaluation tabled.
- Update on Accessibility Grant Received – Cori confirms that the grant was received and has been deposited in the library account.
- Director’s evaluation –
  - Lauren motions to have evaluation by December 10<sup>th</sup>, Cori seconds, motion carries.
- New Business:
  - Fundraising tabled.
- Public Comment:
  - Sue reiterates that breaking the computer, taking it apart, not talking to the Board about it, etc. is part of a long line of withholding information, not the way for a Chair to behave, calls again for resignation.
- Grace motions to ask Cori to present the proposed salaries, as we had discussed in executive session, to the Select Board at the November 19 meeting, Lauren seconds, motion carries.
- Reflection of Operating Norms.
  - Discussion, including Cori pointing out that we should be more responsive to community input/requests, such as Rhonda’s suggestion of a 360 review.
- Next meeting will be December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Harley will send out draft budget for review, we will discuss it then.
- No executive session (Christine’s contract covers the topic).
  - Harley reports that Christine will be working 24 hours/week. Adelle will be working fewer hours.
  - There is discussion of how many hours will be worked in library. After July 1<sup>st</sup> she is required to work a minimum of 20 hours/week on-site.
    - How should this be announced? Harley will ask Christine.
    - Christine should publicize when she will be in the library. For December meeting, Christine should come prepared with her proposal for her schedule and what hours will be on-site.
    - Cori – this should be on the calendar.
- Joni motions to adjourn, Grace seconds, no discussion, motion carries.
- 10:17pm meeting adjourned.

Next regular meeting: December 3, 2024, 5:30 pm at the Pawlet Library.

Dated November 17, 2024, Grace Larson, Secretary.