

## BARRE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

Meeting

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Woods Memorial Library

6:30 p.m.

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PRESENT: Lester Paquin (Chairman), Cherie Benoit (Vice Chair), Kimberly Dawson, David Deschamps, Dona Lapati and Susan Twarog.

GUESTS: Carol Witt, Library Director; and Jenna Garvey, Cataloguing Librarian

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The meeting of the Barre Board of Library Trustees was called to order by Chairman Lester Paquin at 6:30 p.m. in Allen Hall at the Woods Memorial Library.

The Barre Board of Library Trustees did not meet in July, August or September, 2020.

The Minutes of the July 8, 2020 meeting of the Barre Board of Library Trustees were presented. David Deschamps made a MOTION to accept the Minutes as presented. Dona Lapati seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Chairman reported that the LIBRARY ROOF PROJECT has been completed, with the Trustees paying for more than half the total cost (\$88,000+), utilizing \$49,000+ in Trust Fund income under the aegis of the Trustees (this funding is not in the library's municipal appropriation), designated to cover the cost of materials only.

The REPORT OF THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR was presented by Library Director Carol Witt (ATTACHMENT I). This report also included a summary of the Library Director's professional development activities between July 16 and September 29, 2020.

The Library Director reported that staff member Joseph Hood has designed new pages for our WEBSITE, which she displayed for the Trustees' review.

After discussion, Cherie Benoit made a MOTION to purchase two CORDLESS PHONES to facilitate inter-staff communication within the library during working hours, at a cost not to exceed \$1,200. Dona Lapati seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

After discussion, Cherie Benoit made a MOTION to authorize the Library Director to pursue the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) and an expansion of staff working hours (per ATTACHMENT II) with the Town Administrator, utilizing funding granted to the Town of Barre by the CARES Act. The cost is currently estimated at \$22,073.11 (*NOTE: This figure was amended to \$26,575.65 on October 16, 2020 [ATTACHMENT III], prior to the submission of the application to the Town Administrator on that date*). David Deschamps seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. It is hoped that the Town Administrator will let us know the status of our request in one week's time.

The Chairman stated that informal meetings have been taking place between himself, Cherie Benoit, Carol Witt and Jenna Garvey with regard to establishing protocols and procedures for RE-OPENING THE LIBRARY BUILDING. So-called "CURBSIDE SERVICE" has been working very well to date, and (excepting medical absences) the staff has been working their hours in the building.

Cherie Benoit stated that some of the things the working group is considering are as follows:

- Selecting a date for re-opening the library building, in whatever modified capacity may be required to ensure the health and safety of staff and patrons alike;

- Identifying the types of materials and services that will be offered;
- Identifying what areas of the library may be re-opened and what patrons may have access to (no computers, furniture, bathrooms, certain rooms [especially the Children's Room] and other areas, etc.)
- Establishing cleaning protocols and procedures
- Identifying what PPE may be required for purchase in order to ensure the health and safety of staff and patrons.
- Taking into consideration the comfort levels of staff who will be interacting with the public.
- Identifying the number of staff which may be required to re-open the building safely.
- Perhaps soliciting volunteers to assist in the re-opening effort.
- Considering making access to the building by appointment only, frequency and number of appointments, etc.

The Library Director stated that the staff was, at present, "uncomfortable" with re-opening the library, and they were "unanimously opposed" to such a re-opening at this time.

When asked if the staff's reluctance to re-opening the library would be abated if proper PPE was purchased and the recommendations identified above were implemented, the Library Director stated that she was uncertain what the staff's response would be, though it would likely become more favorable.

Cherie Benoit stated that we have made a commitment to utilize \$22,000+ in tax-payer-funded CARES Act resources, and in exchange for that investment -- designed, in large measure, to address staff concerns and allay their fears -- it would not be unreasonable on our part to expect the staff's comfort level to increase.

Kimberly Dawson stated that all library staff was hired with the expectation that they would work with the public, and if correct equipment is purchased and employed, and if proper precautions are taken as dictated by the novel coronavirus, then staff should be expected to honor their employment commitment. If any staff member remains uncomfortable with the working conditions after prudent and practical precautions are taken, then perhaps a reassessment of their career choice may be in order.

It was agreed by consensus that staff should be consulted by the Library Director for their willingness to work in a re-opened library -- in whatever form that may take, after proper equipment and precautions are put in place -- before public funds are spent on purchasing any equipment.

It was further agreed by consensus that such polling would take place prior to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, which will be on Wednesday, October 28, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the library. At that meeting, the Trustees will consider these responses, along with possibly setting a date for re-opening the library under certain conditions.

Cherie Benoit made a MOTION to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. David Deschamps seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lester W. Paquin  
Secretary Pro Tem

*All attachments referenced in these Minutes are available for review at the Woods Memorial Library, 19 Pleasant Street, Barre, Massachusetts, 01005, by appointment with the Library Director during normal business hours.*