

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING OF JULY 29, 2008

A special meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held at Southworth Library on July 29, 2008. Ms. Aisenberg called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. with all members present. Present for the Privatization Committee were Frank Gracie, Robert Michaud, and Joseph Vasta.

BOARD MEMBERS

Kathryn Murphy Aisenberg, Chairman	Andrew Couto
Rachel Charrier, Vice Chairman	Paul Pereira
Lorraine Carey	Dolores Sharek

STAFF

Denise M. Medeiros, Director of Libraries	Audrey Quail, Administrative Clerk
Lynne Antunes, Acting Assistant Director	

Mr. Gracie presented the report of the Privatization Study Committee. He said that the Committee's approach was to try to save money in general, to try to save library service to the community, and to protect the library from appearing to be "low-hanging fruit." He said that Shannon Jenkins, who is a member of the Committee, is very worried about the continuity of library service.

He distributed copies of his report along with Frequently Asked Questions from the LSSI website and a Request for Proposals for the Administration and of the City of Leander [TX] Municipal Library.

He noted that LSSI would require at least a three-year contract so that it could recover its costs. After that, after curtailing the library budget to below the MAR Requirement for three years, he suggested that we could then pursue the Certification path again.

He also suggested collaboration with the Dartmouth Public Schools, UMass Dartmouth, and general resource sharing as ways to save money..

The Committee recommended that the Trustees initiate a Request for Proposals to outline the desired services and the cost for same. Mr. Gracie noted that the Trustees would retain control, as the company would work for the Trustees. The Committee offered this as an option worth exploring.

Ms. Aisenberg said that the Trustees should be the contact people with LSSI. Mr. Gracie said that LSSI will not be offering any specific information until there is a RFP. Ms. Aisenberg noted that Dartmouth residents currently borrow 58,000 items through inter-library loan and the virtual catalog. The Trustees will need to gauge the political will within the town. Ms. Aisenberg noted that there is no guarantee that the Friends of Dartmouth Libraries and the Dartmouth Library Foundation would continue their considerable fund-raising efforts for a for-profit company.

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Assessor Michaud noted that new growth has dropped to \$350,000 from an average of \$800,000 to \$900,000 in past years. He sees privatization as a way to keep the libraries open.

Select Board Chair Michaud said that he didn't see how we can keep the libraries open after countless hours of reviewing budgets, noting that it was the Trustees' role to preserve and protect the libraries. Mr. Michaud said that an RFP is needed to determine the cost for a private company to operate under the same terms and conditions currently in place. LSSI's estimate of \$600,000 would save \$400,000 over the current library budget. He believes that would be a compelling argument to the town. He noted that the savings would have to be significant to get the Board's attention. He stated that the State's requirement to appropriate 2.5 percent above the average of the prior three years was "asinine."

Select Board Member Gilbert said she is skeptical about hidden costs, out-of-scope costs, pay-out costs, and litigation costs. She cited measures already taken by the Trustees and staff and said that privatizing the library would not solve the town's financial problems.

Mr. Pereira warned against jeopardizing a long-term investment for a short-term gain.

Ms. Charrier noted that LSSI's estimate was based solely on budget and square footage. Library administration has already shuffled staff and responsibilities. She was concerned about subjecting the town to costs through the RFP process.

Ms. Aisenberg reported that Tewksbury had reviewed the idea of privatization and dismissed it because there would be no real savings. She noted that libraries are used more during economic downturns. She pointed to the town's override vote in support of the libraries as a barometer of the value the community places on its libraries.

Ms. Medeiros announced that the Trustees had voted, as a result of the override vote and the goal of providing library service to all residents of the town, to reopen the North Dartmouth Library for 17 hours per week from September 8, 2008, through June 30, 2008. The Trustees had investigated using space in the Potter School and purchasing a surplus bookmobile to park behind the school. It became apparent that the best option was to reopen the branch library building containing 20,000 volumes. We will be using grant money and State Aid to keep the building open this fiscal year. Ms. Medeiros said that there is a philosophy group at UMass Dartmouth that has offered to do major fundraising in support of the North Dartmouth Branch Library.

Ms. Medeiros also explained that the residents of the town are already paying taxes to the State that support the five library regions and the seven library networks across the state, along with telecommunication costs. Failure to be certified would result in Dartmouth residents subsidizing library service in other communities.

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Ms. Sharek said that the Trustees will be looking at every avenue to cut costs but are not able to make a decision after a one-hour presentation. It was agreed that the Trustees would discuss the report, research the feasibility, and report to the Privatization Committee.

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, August 26, at 4:30 p.m.

Today's meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Audrey Quail
Administrative Clerk