

Great Barrington Libraries Board of Trustees

May 9, 2013

5:30 P.M.

Mason Library

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Holly Hamer at 5:30 P.M.

A. ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: HOLLY HAMER (HH)
KATHY PLUNGIS (KP)
MARY PAT AKERS (MPA)
ED ABRAHAMS (EA)
EMILY SHAW (ES) - 5:45 pm
KATE DEVINY - DIRECTOR (KD)

ABSENT: HILDA BANKS-SHAPIRO

AUDIENCE: 4

B. Approval of April minutes .

Correction requested by KD under the H section.

MOTION TO ACCEPT: E Abrahams

SECOND: MP Akers

VOTE: 4-0 K Plungis not voting as she was not at April meeting.

C. Trustees' Announcements: None

II. Report of the Officers, Boards, & Standing Committees

A. PRESIDENT'S REPORT: HH: Please see the report on file.

Reported that the circulation figures for Ramsdell Library have been corrected on the Annual Report.

HH also researched circulation figures of similar sized libraries, comparing them to Ramsdell Library. She noted that Ramsdell had higher circulation numbers compared to area libraries and other libraries. As a goal, she would like to see an outreach to the residents of Housatonic, for them to visit the library and make use of all Ramsdell can offer.

HH also wanted to bring up the governance of the Library.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding whether the Trustees work with the Director's vision or the Director works with the Trustees' policies and vision.

HH stated that she would like to see tangible progress with this question which has arisen continuously since the implementation of the Town Charter twenty years ago and to be openly and constructively discussed and be resolved.

B. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

KD: Please see the report on file.

KD requested \$800 for plantings at Ramsdell. She explained that she and KP had met with a DPW employee to discuss the plantings in front of the library. That the front of Ramsdell needs some sprucing up.

A discussion ensued as to who will be doing the labor and what the \$800 will specifically be going towards.

HH asked that the Housatonic Beautiful committee be approached and have the DPW employee meet with them to coordinate ideas. It was asked whether plant materials could be donated.

MPA stated that while this was her last meeting as a Trustee (she was appointed to fill in until the elections), she (along with former Trustees) is in the process of creating a timeline (20 plus years) that will show the fissures over the years regarding the buildings, grounds, renovations, CWMARS, Town Managers, Directors. One of the issues is according to the Mass Library Trustees, is that the Trustees in the majority of the communities in the Commonwealth are in charge of the governance, policies, facilities.

That the Town of Great Barrington had decided that the Director would be in charge of the facilities.

Concern was also expressed regarding the deterioration of the Mason Library's steps, since they had only in recent years been constructed (side steps), rebuilt (front steps).

MPA also stated that she does not feel that that is the Director's responsibility to follow through on that, that it is the Trustees' responsibility.

She also stated that over the years, two or three landscape designs have been drawn up but not been executed.

That there needs to be a common vision for Ramsdell and Mason for plantings.

That with the new Town Manager, that we will be able to have a smooth transition and be able to get to the crux of some of the issues that have transpired here in the last three or four years.

And that we have a broad vision of what goes on in other communities in the Commonwealth relative to governance and charter.

KD stated that we hold this request until the committee looks at it.

HH stated that she will talk to HB-S and finalize the committee and the DPW employee regarding the grounds and she will then contact Housatonic the Beautiful. A member of the audience, a Selectman, E. Chernielle, reported that the Selectmen have directed the DPW Superintendent to create a plan for the town buildings, their plantings. She stated that the DPW is responsible for plantings.

At the end of this discussion, the money issue was not acted upon.

KD then made a motion that \$148.93 and \$40.46 (see report) be allocated for the children's summer reading program's supplies. She responded to a question as to the purpose of the monies, that it was for supplies and that the monies were donations but that she needs permission to access those donations.

EA made a motion that the monies be allocated.

ES seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0, Motion passed.

KD asked for volunteers or names of people she can contact for the August 24th program (the reading of Souls of Black Folk). Names and an organization was given to her, of people that may be interested in this.

KD had a mock up of the adult summer reading program and how it was going to be run.

KD also asked that someone volunteer to draw a map showing how to get from Mason Library to Ramsdell.

EA volunteered.

She also stated that the library will be running an ad in the Shoppers Guide, probably beginning in July, with a list of the library programming that will be offered.

A Trustee questioned as to where the money will come for this. There is money that has been allocated.

HH asked about the summer adult summer program, whether it is a national program or made up by the Director. The Director stated that it has been done by many other libraries in Massachusetts.

The Director answered questions as to why incentives were built into the summer program.

Responding to a question by a Trustee, KD explained that the nonfiction books at Ramsdell Library are being grouped by subject. She has been following the trends of books (such as gardening and parenting books) being checked out from Ramsdell and is beginning to place those books in more accessible areas.

She was questioned as to whether the Staff has the time to do this. KD responded that they are finding the time to begin the process.

KD stated that some of the Young Adult books have been moved to a more visible spot in Ramsdell Library in order to increase the circulation of young adult materials.

KD stated that Ramsdell is offering a children's garden for the summer. KP has volunteered to run this and the DPW has placed boxes on the side of the front lawn for this purpose. Soil will be placed in them soon.

That magnets &/or pencils will be ordered for promotional items for the libraries.

C. TREASURER'S REPORT

ES No update re finances.

A discussion ensued as to KD looking into whether the Trustee's Treasurer needed to sign the monthly warrants. KD had received a ruling that it was not necessary.

ES stated that since this suggestion from KD, she has met with KD and the current policy of signing the monthly warrants will remain as it is.

ES stated that when the new Town Manager begins on a full time basis, that there should be a meeting with the Town Manager so that roles and goals, and best practices can be clarified.

The \$10,000 allocated for programming for the rest of the year, which was voted upon at last month's meeting was brought up for discussion.

Questions arose as to what the monies were for, how much programs in general and adult programs in particular, cost, whether the programming schedule is made up months in advance.

A discussion continued around the money allocated last month, with the suggestion that clearer communication between the Director and Trustees regarding programming and a programming schedule, that was made months in advance, would reduce the questions regarding the money being needed.

Discussion continued regarding past record keeping, prior to KD's arrival. That Trustee want a better spreadsheet regarding programming. The one currently in place gives the Trustees the number of programs and attendees at each, in a month. It was asked of KD to add the cost of each program, with the plan that it would provide a better idea of budget planning for the future. KD noted that this request of additional information will be time away from the running of the library.

HH made a motion to reduce the money allocated last month down to \$6,000-now to the end of December, 2013.

It was again asked that the cost of programming be added to the spreadsheet.

That the Trustees would like to see solid information regarding the cost of running programs over the course of a year.

Discussion continued around the planning, allocation of monies for programming.

HH made a motion to amend the monies to \$6,000 through December.

That the Director come to the Trustees in November and ask for extra money, if necessary.

A discussion ensued around the money currently in place and what it has been allocated for. KP stated that she is uncomfortable cutting the money that had already been allocated last month. That KD has been coming to the Trustees asking for monies and that her requests have been discussed without action being taken.

Discussion continued regarding programs and where cuts would come from if monies were cut. A concern was expressed that if the \$10,000 were allocated for the remainder of the year, could that kind of money be sustained for the following year.

MPA stated to leave the budget as it currently is. That in September, there would be a better idea of the costs.

HH stated that she was uncomfortable with the \$10,000. That it may not be able to be sustained for the following year.

Discussion continued regarding monies and of programming record keeping.

HH asked for a Second regarding the reduction of the allocation of State Aid.

There was No Second and the Motion died.

HH stated that the \$10,000 allocated at last month's meeting will stand.

EA voiced concern about the ability to sustain that level of funding.

D. FRIENDS REPORT: A report was read by HH.

The movies are being suspended for the months of June, July, and August.

E. WEBSITE: EA stated that the \$100 allocated for the website last month will not be needed.

KD stated that the website has been improved and is up and running.

F. TEEN ROOM EA stated that the Young Adult (Teen) room has been getting more use. There are two goals for the Teen Room:

To make the room into something that teens will use.

To give the teen users of the room some sense of ownership over the process.

To those ends, KD has been talking with teens, asking them for their general recommendations and specific suggestions.

The general feedback has been that they want a room that is comfortable to hang out in. Specifically, they would like a more comfortable seating and floor lamps for softer lighting.

A discussion ensued around this. EA is going to draw up a new floor plan for new placement of the bookshelves and a possible couch.

F. CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE REPORT: KP reported that after another meeting, the plans have been scaled back to only July 27th, with the times being reduced to 10 am till 3 pm. Various activities are being planned. The Children's Librarian has obtained four local authors to do readings on that day. A singer, musician has also been scheduled.

G. LONG RANGE PLAN COMMITTEE REPORT:

KD stated that another meeting had recently been held and that the process is continuing.

III. Unfinished Business:

A. Uniform Monthly Statistics: MPA stated that the figures she wanted to see are now being presented at the Trustee's meetings. She asked that the program expenses also be added to the Director's report.

B. Clarification of State Aid Funds for programming. This had already been discussed under the Treasurer's report.

IV. New Business:

A. Role of the Trustees and Staff:

EA stated that there is a misunderstanding of the roles of the Trustees and Director. He made a motion to "Create a policy describing the roles and responsibilities for the Trustees and Library Director. This statement will not be a job description for the purposes of employment, evaluation or compensation review between the Director and the Town. It is intended to clarify the relationship between Trustees and Staff."

Seconded by HH

Discussion ensued as to purpose of the motion. EA stated that he will come to the next meeting with recommendations and have various sources cited. He stated that

this proposed policy will only be a recommendation.

A member of the audience asked what would happen to this Motion if EA is not elected. He stated that he would still come to the June meeting with his proposed policy.

Vote: 5 - 0

B. Ramsdell Initiatives:

HH now that the warrants at the Town Meeting were passed, she gave a description of what now needed to happen.

A member of the audience stated that the names proposed for the subcommittee appears to have already been selected. She proposed that there be a sign posted in the Housatonic Post Office asking for residents of Housatonic to apply.

HH Made a Motion to form a Subcommittee to pursue the next step for Ramsdell. A Selectman in the audience, A. Cherneille,,,,, questioned whether HH could make a subcommittee.

HH stated that as President of the Trustees, she is able to, as it is part of the Bylaws and that she can make a recommendation to the Trustees.

AC observed that it seems to be a power structure that is very different from other Town committees.

HH stated that her Motion can be put off for a month and that she can come back with a proposal in June.

MPA and ES stated that there is value in having a group of locals (residents of Housatonic) involved in Ramsdell.

A member of the audience stated that Housatonic residents need to be included. HH withdrew her motion.

C. Policy Review:

HH presented an Alcohol Policy regarding the libraries.

HH made a motion to accept the proposed policy: "On Premise Serving Beer and Wine Policy". See enclosed statement.

Seconded by EA

A discussion ensued as to the general policy.

HH stated that the Selectmen have the final approval for the granting of a license.

MPA stated that the policy would be in effect from June 2013 to June 2014 and whether the Trustees need to go before the Selectmen for every request. HH--Yes. Discussion clarified that the Trustees wanted to have these specific guidelines in place.

KP questioned whether the servers of the wine and beer would have the TIP certification and that she is uncomfortable with the policy if the servers were not going to be TIP certified. Discussion ensued as to the certification.

And if children are present during the serving of the wine and beer, that there be close supervision.

Discussion continued.

Vote:

Yes -- 3 No -- 1 Abstain -- 1

Motion passes.

A member of the audience stated that she wanted to talk about the Alcohol policy. HH stated that she already had spoken.

Another member of the audience stated that the form submitted to the Selectmen asks for an All Alcohol license and that HH need to relook at what was submitted. HH stated that that was a mistake and that it is to be a Beer and Wine license.

A member of the audience remarked that at last year's event that had beer and wine, was closely monitored.

HH asked that the rest of the Agenda be tabled.

V Citizen Speak:

A member of the audience stated that she has been attending other Town Board meetings and that she was appalled at the contentiousness displayed tonight and that the Trustees and Director need to get on the same page.

EA asked that she be more specific.

The audience member stated that the Trustees need to follow proper procedures, that this evening, talking was occurring over "each other". That the tone of the meetings need to change.

HH stated that the Trustees are well aware of this and that she hopes that the problems can be resolved.

Selectman AC, speaking as a member of the audience, stated that it seems that there is hostility between the Trustees and Director, that it is toxic and has carried over from last month's meeting. That it is uncomfortable to be observing this "from the outside".

That other town boards are not like this. That there seems to be power in the position of the President and that there needs to be more votes taken.

That there needs to be more study of the rules and procedures of voting.

That to bring in a representative from the MMA to talk with the Trustees may be helpful.

AC acknowledged EA's proposal to create a policy of roles and responsibilities and that the Trustees review it.

MP stated that this is why she is creating a "timeline" so that the Board can move forward.

HH stated that they already had someone volunteer to come in to help us.

AC stated that the Trustees need to work with the Director and that what seems to be happening now, happened to the previous Director.

That it is important for the Director to run the Libraries.

MPA Also wants input from the Union , as to how everyone fits in.

AC stated that the goal is to work together.

EA stated that the definition of the Trustees' role is not clear, that he is frustrated in not knowing what "our" (Trustees) job is.

A member of the audience stated that the Handbook includes a list of what a Trustee's roles is and is and is not and the rules of behavior.

VI. Adjournment: HH made a Motion to Adjourn.

EA seconded. The Board voted (5-0) to adjourn at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Plungis

Kathleen Plungis, Secretary

President's Report - May 2013

With the coming of a new town manager it is a new opportunity for Gt. Barrington, with the possibility to proceed in a positive way to continue to make the libraries relevant, well used and supported.

What happened at town meeting was true testament to the power of the town meeting form of government where the voters, not the town staff which kept asking us to accept later as an answer have the final say in expenditures, policies and regulations.

Thank all of you for standing up for Ramsdell and congratulations to all of us on our perseverance.

As to the relevance of Ramsdell Library, now that Kate has corrected the circulation figures, it is fairly easy to compare the numbers for Housatonic, a village of about 1,000 to other local small town libraries with populations under 2,000:

Housatonic: 14,594

Otis: 9713

Lanesboro: 9037

Egremont : 2,918

West Stockbridge: 8206 - which is 3 miles from Stockbridge (GB to Housatonic is 5)

So let's get to work to improve our offerings, enfranchise the residents and get everyone in town into that building at least once this coming year.

We have talked a great deal in the last years about the governance of the library - who's in charge, who charge of what, and what we see as fundamental flaws in the currently practiced structure.

But what I see as the basic problem, the root of the disagreements and disappointments between the trustees and the library director is more fundamental and more disparate than simple hierarchy.

Kate has said to the Friends and to the Trustees - here is an excerpt from an email sent to trustees: "...I hope that from here on, we can work together with the Trustees supporting the Director's vision and goals, and that there will be no need for confrontation."

We are elected officials, the director should be charged with carrying out our policies and visions. When ideas don't mesh and attempts at collaboration stall, the Trustees should prevail.

This is a large philosophic as well as pragmatic divide.

Regardless of who signs the paychecks, who bargains with the Union, the basic issue is not so much or hierarchy as one of "ownership". Do the libraries belong to the people via the library director or via the trustees?

Is the trustees' primary role to support the Director, **her** vision and goals or is our primary role to work with the Director to carry out **our** vision and goals?

So, in addition to all of the volunteer work we do with our projects in the school, on the grounds, for the Centennial, the promotion of Ramsdell, raising money with book sales, etc. I would like to see us make some tangible progress with these questions which have arisen continuously since the implementation of the town charter 20 years ago and need, finally, to openly, constructively, be discussed and resolved.

And in the meantime, I would like to encourage you, Kate, to be welcoming of initiatives made by the Trustees and particularly by the Friends - a very hard working group of volunteers whose only agenda is promote and benefit the libraries and forge alliances with the libraries and the community.

Statistics:

	Total Patrons	Adult programs	Children's programs	Computer use	Quiet/study	Meeting room
Ramsdell	758	16 programs 144 attending	5 programs 51 attending	67 +4	10	9
Mason	9,548	10 programs 89 attending	16 programs 168 attending	1,679 +3	171	7

Request to spend \$800 from Ramsdell donations to replant front yard at Ramsdell

Request to spend \$178.93 from Mason donations for children's SRP & \$40.46 from Ramsdell donations for SRP

Started making subject groupings of non-fiction at Ramsdell.

If not magnets, pens with our name, address and phone number? Canvas bags for the 100th?

Two upcoming events that happened after the calendar went out:

6:15 on May 30, 2013 Mason Library – Gary Leveille will give a talk on Laura Secord. He has also set up a display of memorabilia about her life which is at Mason Library.

May 25, 2013 Kathy is going to help children set up their gardens at Ramsdell. If you know of children who would like to garden, please have them call Amanda or give Amanda their names.

When will Ted Nappo give chess lessons? We are looking for an outdoor (preferably cement) chess table. If you know of someone who can do this or something that is similar, please let me know.

A Reading of excerpts of the Souls of Black Folks by Du Bois and/or selections of The World of Du Bois: A Sourcebook by Meyer Weinberg. This reading will take place inside the Mason Library on Saturday morning, August 24th. *Looking for names of people to ask to read.*

Adult Summer Reading is shaping up

Mockup of GB Libraries brochure- hope to work with Ron on this and the weekly ad in the Shopper's Guide

Website upgrade went well due to Jessica being awesome.

Rec'd
May 9,
EA

motion

[I move that the trustees create a policy describing the roles and responsibilities for the trustees and library director.] This statement **will not be** a job description for the purposes of employment, evaluation or compensation review between the director and the town. It is intended to clarify the relationship between trustees and staff.