

Topsham Public Library
Board of Trustees Business Meeting
Wednesday, April 25, 2018
Minutes

- 1) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Larry Fitch, President, at 7:03PM.
Present: Jerry Davis, Jim Demosthenes, Jen Ecker, Anne Eustis, Diane Hender, Anne Macri, Irene Martin, Hahna Patterson, Larissa Vigue Picard, Megan Therriault, Joe Trafton, Sally Von Benken, Owen Yabsira, Director Susan Preece.
- 2) **Consent Agenda.** The Board reviewed the Consent Agenda, which included the Minutes of the March 28, 2018 Business Meeting, Development Committee Report, Finance Committee Report, Friends Report, and Survey Subcommittee Report. Anne Eustis made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, Diane Hender seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- 3) **Director's Report.** Susan highlighted the following, in addition to her written report.
 - TPL received a bequest check for \$196,378.69 from Janice Solomon, which came in while Susan was away. The check has been deposited and the Finance Committee will discuss how best to use it. TPL will not widely publicize the bequest until a plan is in place. It could be used as a stepping off point to a campaign, to build the endowment, or, in part, to cover the current budget deficit.
 - There was recently \$8,000 worth of repairs to the HVAC system on top of some relatively minor repairs. As this falls under the town's expense, the plan is to take money out of the capital funds the town has set aside for the library. Titan Mechanical did preventative maintenance at the same time as this repair and found that the coils in the HVAC unit outside the community room are failing. They plan to repair them instead of the replacing them.
 - The pine trees between the TPL parking lot and David Douglass's house will be thinned out soon. Susan has been working with Pam LeDuc on this. The town has contracted with Alan Higama (??) to take out the trees as he is doing tree removal for the town at other locations. He is charging \$500 to do this, which is half of what his normal fee would be; ideally this will be paid by the town. The stumps will be ground down and arborvitae will be planted in their place to provide a better screen between the properties. The new trees need to be put in by September; it's possible TPL could get Bowdoin College Common Good Day student volunteers to help with it.
 - The Finance Committee has suggested a spending freeze on all non-essential expenses (primarily the materials collection, but also a scheduled carpet cleaning and miscellaneous supplies) because TPL currently has an \$11,000+ deficit for this fiscal year, with \$8,000 in outstanding bills. Susan is hopeful that spending can resume before the end of the fiscal year as some Business Roundtable money is still expected and there is a pending grant proposal for \$10,000 for Bus Book Bag Program.
 - Please attend Town Meeting! It is helpful to have a full complement of board members there to support the library.

- Mariah and Emma recently attended the Public Library Association conference in Philadelphia and had a wonderful time. They realized that TPL is holding its own against larger libraries with regard to programming and services.
- There were 664 people at Big Truck Day, the biggest one ever. A woman fell near the handicapped parking area, but EMS workers, there for the event, helped her.
- Noting that library traffic has slowly gone down, Joe asked Susan to provide some comparable information from other libraries at the next meeting.

4) **Old Business:**

- a) **Annual Meeting: Thoughts on Format Changes.** Diane said the Development Committee is looking at new ways to engage the community by changing the format of the annual meeting. Susan reminded the board that this initiative comes from the Long Range Plan. Diane said the committee feels that people are not likely to come out to an annual meeting even if there is food and a speaker, so the committee instead recommended that a variety of town VIPs be invited including the Selectboard, town manager, local state representatives, school administrators, Friends leadership, Whitten Society members, and TPL volunteers, and that each trustee should invite one guest. The Development Committee would be willing to take care of the invitations and organize the event.

Considerable discussion ensued about the idea. Some felt that without a special program and nice reception, there wouldn't be a strong incentive for many people to attend. Others said that perhaps the annual meeting was the wrong venue for community outreach, and that a special event drawing a broader range of ages would be preferable.

The question was raised about moving the date of the annual meeting from July to a time of year when attendance would be better. However, this would mean votes done at the meeting—such as for new board members and officers—would then not coincide with the fiscal year. One person noted that typical annual meeting business could in fact be done at another meeting, and that an annual meeting could be more in name only, and simply be focused on a special program.

It was suggested that an outreach event might be better in 2019, the library's 15th anniversary. All agreed to forego an outreach event this year and work toward something in 2019, ideally around the time the library actually first opened, which was June 4. Whether or not this effort coincides with the 2019 annual meeting remains to be decided, though if that is the intention, moving the 2019 annual meeting date would require a bylaws revision.

The Development Committee was thus charged with coming up with recommendations for acknowledging the anniversary and combining that with outreach of some kind, whether a fundraising campaign, event, etc.

5) **New Business:**

- a) **Staff Updates and Project Outcome to Date.** To date this year, TPL has done Project Outcome surveys for summer reading, early childhood programs, and adult book groups. Susan distributed a handout summarizing 49 surveys collected between November and April from the library's seven book discussion group.

There was considerable discussion about the responses and value of the survey. While Project Outcome provides a template, analysis tools, and a state and national context against which to assess TPL, the drawback is that the questions are not customizable and so don't always fit the program adequately. For example, the "Book Look" group was an outlier on the survey because the member's responses to the rating scale questions were consistently negative, although their comments were largely positive. That suggests either confusion with the rating scale itself or that questions such as "You learned something that is helpful" don't really fit this group in that they really just in it for fun, not education.

Ultimately, everyone agreed that using Project Outcome is preferable to burdening the staff with designing their own, diverse surveys. It will also be helpful once we have more years of data to compare.

Board members were asked to read the report in more depth and provide Susan with any comments or questions.

- 6) **Next meeting dates:** May 23, June 20, July 18 (Annual Meeting)

7) **Upcoming Events:**

Sat, May 5, 11AM: Photographer's Talk

Wed. May 16, 7PM: Town Meeting (Board sit together)

- 8) **Adjournment** at 8:38PM. Diane Hender made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Anne Macri seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Larissa Vigue Picard
Secretary