



Skaneateles Library Association
Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 12, 2023

Supporting Our Mission

To inspire learning, enrich lives, and connect our community

Realizing Our Vision

To be the cultural and informational hub of a vibrant, thriving community by creating spaces and experiences that are welcoming, enriching, and sustainable

Present: President Susanne Guske, Vice President Dave Hempson, Secretary Meghann Sandak, Treasurer Maura Molnar. **Trustees:** Katie Armijo, Kristin LaBeau, Manny Arroyo, Kathryn Carlson, Ralph DeMasi, Andrew Hagen, Bob Lotkowitz, Larry Palmieri, Amy Rolleri. **Staff:** Library Director Nickie Marquis, Assistant Director and Adult Services Librarian Andrea Snyder.

Absent: Karen Bedard, Steve McClintic, Erin McCormack, Stephen Thomas.

Members of the Public: None.

Call to order: 6:30 p.m. by President Guske.

Public Comment Period: None.

Approval of the Minutes

President Guske called for comments on the November regular meeting minutes. Hearing none, the minutes were approved.

President's Report

Four trustees' terms will be expiring in January 2024. Andrew Hagen will roll off the Board as he has served all eligible terms. Meghann Sandak, Karen Bedard, and Susanne Guske will serve another term. The slate of officers that will be presented in January for the coming year are Dave Hempson as President, Erin McCormack as Vice President, Maura Molnar as Treasurer, and Kathryn Carlson as Secretary. Erin will primarily focus on fundraising. Andrew will stay on the Fundraising Committee as a key committee member. Susanne will step back as President and will remain on the Board and key committees. She is also committed to seeing the separation of the Library and Barrow through.

Susanne presented a change to the bylaws that needs board approval before the January meeting. The change strikes the reference to the annual meeting being scheduled for the fourth Thursday of January. Meghann made the motion to approve the change to the bylaws. Dave seconded the motion. All trustees voted in favor of the motion with no abstentions, and the motion passed. On January 16th, we will start with the private Barrow's quarterly meeting at 6 p.m. (*wasn't this 5:30?*) At 6:30 p.m. we will begin the public regular January Library Board meeting followed by the Annual Meeting.

The calendar of meetings for 2024 was also distributed. Susanne shared the intent to hold one meeting each quarter in another community within our service area (i.e. Spafford). Bob made a motion to approve the 2024 schedule of Board meetings and Dave seconded the motion. All trustees voted in favor of the motion with no abstentions. The 2024 meeting schedule is approved.

Library Director's Report

Nickie shared that the library staff made cookies for all trustees to enjoy. Susanne posed one question regarding statistics from Nickie's director's report. She noted that computer usage is still down, which staff feels is related to more patrons having personal devices available to them.

Andrea demonstrated Savannah, a software used to collect library usage data and to send email communications. This is a follow up to a previous demonstration, as the staff's use and understanding of the software has grown tremendously. The software reports that 41% of households in our service area have at least one active user of the library, meaning that they have had some activity in the last year with their library card. Savannah also tracks our e-newsletter activity. For our new patron email series, the open rate is over 70%. Our general newsletter open rate is over 50%. Savannah allows us to really understand our demographics and patrons. The next e-mail will target only households with young children and will advertise December break programming. Future applications of this software will help inform communications and fundraising strategy.

Financials

Maura reported that in the second month of the fiscal year there is nothing out of the ordinary for income or expenses. She referenced the balance sheet and noted that assets have been growing each month. She gave a quick overview of various accounts, including our operations account and capital reserve account that are both held by M&T Bank, and an LPL Financial money market account that earns interest. Additionally, we have three accounts for the new building. We use the CBNA checking account to pay expenses, we have an LPL Financial account that earns interest and we have an account at the CNY Community Foundation to make it easier for donors who have money held by the Community Foundation to support us. Those three accounts are valued at about half a million dollars in assets. She also reported that our investments are going back up after several months of trending down.

It is recommended that every year as a board we vote to override the tax levy limit imposed by municipal law. The state doesn't release our tax cap information until mid-April, which is after we would need to approve asking taxpayers for an increase in the levy, so it's prudent to approve the override just in case. At this point any increase needed would likely go over the tax levy limit since we are so far behind other libraries (having only initiated public funding in 2016), so we will likely need to ask for this every single year. The motion considered by the Board reads as follows:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to General Municipal Law §3-c(5), the Board of Trustees of the Skaneateles Library Association overrides, for the purpose of the Skaneateles Library Association fiscal year 2024-2025 budgeted, the tax levy limit imposed by Municipal Law §3-c(3).

Susanne made a motion to pass the resolution which was seconded by Larry. All trustees voted in favor of the motion with no abstentions. The resolution passed.

Maura introduced a recommendation from the finance committee to place a ballot proposition during the school district budget vote asking taxpayers for a \$25,000 increase in our tax levy. Currently our

tax levy covers 73% of our operating expenditures. When we first started receiving the tax levy in 2016, it covered over 80% of operations. As that percentage continues to drop, we have to use more and more of our investments to cover expenses. Our expenses have grown in part due to a significant increase in the minimum wage during that time. We have also tried to increase salaries to keep pace with inflation. We currently use over \$70,000 from our investment to cover expenses each year. We will continue to need to use more than that down the line as we move into a building that will cost somewhat more for us to operate. The finance committee recommends requesting increases in the tax levy annually moving forward. Andrew made the point that our per capita cost to tax payers is much lower than other neighboring libraries. All other association libraries nearby receive over 90% of their operating expenses from local taxes. Those libraries have also been receiving public funding for decades. Manny asked why we don't consider a higher increase. Maura felt it was important to be cautious in what we ask for, especially since there will be other asks of the community moving forward.

The resolution proposed by Maura reads as follows:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to Section 259 of the Education Law, the Board of Trustees of the Skaneateles Library Association proposes the submission of the following question to the voters of the Skaneateles Central School District at the annual meeting of the Skaneateles Central School District to be held on May 21, 2024: Shall the sum to be raised by annual levy of a tax upon the taxable real property within the Skaneateles Central School District for the purpose of funding the Skaneateles Library Association be increased by \$25,000 to the sum of \$403,560 annually?

Bob asked if we had estimates of operational costs for the new building. The response was yes and it was noted that preliminary analysis of our budget, once at the new building, has been done since 2019 and continues regularly. Dave made the motion to approve the resolution and Ralph seconded the motion. All trustees voted in favor of the resolution with no abstentions or objections, and the resolution is passed.

Maura shared a visual representation of our budget which is also posted on our website. This is a great tool for trustees who might be asked questions by the public. She also noted that not all other OCPL libraries post this information on their websites, but we feel it's important for our community to understand how their taxes dollars support library services.

Barrow Art Gallery (BAG) Updates

Amy reported that the December 1st holiday party was very well attended. She reminded trustees that the annual appeal is running. We are applying for grants and we really need 100% participation from the Board. Amy encouraged everyone to give what he or she can. Amy and Ali met with Doug Whitehouse to talk about how to create a board. This is part of a grant we were awarded. The Barrow's annual meeting will be on January 16th at 6 p.m.(?)

Communications Committee

Susanne shared the most recent Stroll Article that covers highlights of the 2023 calendar year. The committee continues to support the capital campaign in multiple ways. We also plan to do communications training for the board and committees again in the first quarter of 2024.

Fundraising

The Fundraising team recently finalized a commitment that they've been working on since the beginning. In total, we have received four major gifts of \$100k or more, including one gift of \$100k, two gifts of \$250k, and one gift of \$1M. We have had success with grassroots fundraising efforts to cover three \$25k study room sponsorships. We have also received over \$50k from our trustees. The campaign total currently is just over \$3 Million. If you factor in the building transaction, we are near \$4.5 million. A detailed fundraising summary was provided to trustees.

Fennell Street New Building Committee

We recently received cost estimates from our Construction Manager, LeChase, that were significantly more than expected based on schematic design details. LeChase cited increases of almost 35% over estimates by architects and other industry experts, which we have been regularly tracking, to the timeframes actually construction is planned. At this point in the design process, there are also needed contingencies built in. These increase the project's cost by several million dollars. A subset of the building committee will work on a reconciliation and better understanding of cost elements in the 35-page detailed cost proposal, and will determine cost major drivers. Oudens Ello expenses related to the remaining design phases (DD and CD) will be negotiated with LeChase. Decisions re affordability and design options will be made in coordination with the Fundraising Committee. Building size, materials used, and phasing will impact cost.

While the current design is very flexible and allows for multi-use spaces, our librarians, as well as members of the building committee are considering which elements could be removed without significantly impacting the overall design, function and feel, and operational costs of the new building. Size reductions to 16,500-17,500 sf may be needed. The mandate to the committee was to build the optimal building for the next hundred years, so based on research and benchmarking, a larger size between 19-20,000 sf is preferred, but we will have to develop a range of options for reducing costs. The reality is that construction costs are forecast to continue to escalate, so we need to weigh lower initial spending with the overall savings obtained by completely the entire project in a shorter time. Delaying the project will not make it less expensive.

Susanne reiterated that this new information is not cause for despair. We now have real cost data we can work with and we can make important, informed decisions about what we need/want to prioritize and realistic fundraising goals for 2024.

Trustees Advisory Committee

Kathryn joined the OCPL Trustees Advisory Committee (TAC) in Susanne's place. This group of trustees from other suburban libraries has put together resources and events to better inform library trustees. She urged trustees to attend a virtual workshop on January 30th called *Trustee 101*. The workshop will cover the different kinds of libraries within the system, rules, regulations and standards for trustees, the open meeting law, highlights of the new handbook, etc. More information will be distributed to trustees as it becomes available. The facilitator of the group is also willing to shape a workshop specifically for us if that would be of interest.

Used Book Sales

Maura also shared that the Dickens Book Sale made \$2,690, which is another record. We are continuing to develop used book revenue goals for 2024 with a variety of outlets (online, annual and special event types of sales). Based on supporting research and our own experience, it is currently

planned that the sale of used books will continue to play an important revenue raising role for the library now, and in the future.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn Regular Meeting – 7:56 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 16th at 6 p.m. (In Person – Library Hall)

Library Volunteer Appreciation Thursday, December 14th 4-6 p.m.

Submitted by Meghann Sandak, Secretary