

West Tisbury Library Board of Trustees
Minutes for the
Meeting of August 9, 2007
at the West Tisbury Public Library

Present:

Trustees: Leslie Baker, Hermine Hull, Ginny Jones, Elaine Pace, Dan Waters

Staff: Nelia Decker, Beth Kramer

Preliminary:

In the absence of Secretary Linda Hearn, Dan Waters volunteered to take minutes for this session. The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. The Trustees reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. They were unanimously approved, with revisions. There were no reports from the Secretary or the Friends.

Old Business:

Beth announced that, since the Vineyard Food Pantry had agreed to begin accepting donations, the Food-for-Fines amnesty program had gone into place on August 8th. She asked that Hermine put an announcement in the West Tisbury town column of the Martha's Vineyard Times.

New Business:

Hermine proposed that, with two years of extraordinarily difficult circumstances now behind us, the library staff be thanked in some special way, with appreciation be shown for their "yeoman's service." Ginny suggested that a general reappraisal of staff pay might be the most lasting and substantial way of expressing our gratitude. This led to a general discussion of how the personnel and budget subcommittee might tweak job descriptions to bring pay scales up within town bylaws.

It was left that Beth would rewrite job descriptions, restructuring the staff to minimize overtime. She will do so in time for the deadline for town budget certification, submitting a draft for the Trustees' meeting in October and the final version for the meeting in November. Beth will contact Maria MacFarland about Personnel Board requirements, to facilitate this process.

Beth noted that in the past month, 15,000 people had visited the West Tisbury Library, or over 70 people for each hour open. Hermine returned to her original proposal that some gesture of gratitude be made to the staff, perhaps taking them out to lunch or dinner, or subsidizing a tab at Back Alley's. It was left that Beth would ask the staff what their preferences might be.

Beth distributed the library report for July 2007. Hermine and Beth gave a report on the state of the library. They agreed that, for the sheer flow of humanity, it had been “quite a summer.” The water cooler, for instance, needed to be refilled every day. The level of staff education is much higher than in the past, and generally the state of the library is “terrific.” Everyone is looking forward to the quiet of fall, in order to plan for the future. We have been lucky with the summer help, volunteers and shelvees. A Help Wanted ad has been placed to fill Beth’s old position. Beth has been taking workshops, and signed up for Basic Library Techniques classes through SEMLS. She has also spoken to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners about sending materials on directorship, as well as trusteeship.

Hermine and Linda met privately with Beth and Nelia about the working relationship between staff, Friends and Trustees. They felt that, brought together around Beth (who is very inclusive), the staff, Trustees and Friends would enjoy a great deal more intercommunication. They discussed the evaluation process and decided that it should continue. Beth’s official start date was July 13th, placing her evaluation sometime around December.

Elaine stressed that, although communication may be harmonious at this moment, it is nonetheless advisable to preserve clear boundaries between staff, Trustees and Friends in order that each section of the library function as it should. This led to a general discussion of the role and purview of Trustees in the library.

It was felt that the Trustees bylaws may be outdated and in need of review, and a subcommittee was formed for this purpose. Dan agreed to chair this subcommittee, requesting guidance from Elaine. Elaine said that the first question to be asked is: “Does the job need to be done at all?” She suggested that for the September 13th meeting, board members review the bylaws and target one, two, or three policies they feel need attention. At that time, if there is agreement, the subcommittee can go ahead as proposed.

Hermine, Ginny and Beth formed a budget subcommittee.

In other new business, Beth proposed a relaxation of the “no cell phone” policy, with an eye to reducing staff anxiety about policing cell phones. She felt that it is causing unnecessary stress on the staff when many library users are using their phones primarily as a conduit for information while operating computers. As an experiment, Beth suggested asking library users to set their cell phones to “vibrate,” listen to their phones while working on the computer, but keep conversations to a minimum. Nelia added that the library needs to be responsive to progress, and avoid seeming “technophobic.”

Because the the Martha’s Vineyard Library Association’s Rules of Conduct prohibit the use of

cell phones in the library, yet in a show of support for our new director, Elaine moved to relax the “no cell phone” policy for a trial period of one month, authorizing Beth to enforce the new guidelines, and asking her to report back to the Trustees at the September 13th meeting as to the response of the community. Dan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Waters

Acting Secretary