

MINUTES
West Tisbury Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
at the West Tisbury Public Library

In Attendance

Trustees: Hal Garneau, Melissa Hackney, Linda Hearn, Hermine Hull, Ginny Jones, Dan Waters

Director: Beth Kramer

Friends: Suzi Wasserman

Public: None

Linda Hearn called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Minutes

Ginny Jones moved that the minutes from the meeting of September 8, 2009 be approved as submitted. Hal Garneau seconded the motion. The motion passed by a majority vote, with Linda Hearn and Hermine Hull abstaining because they were absent from that meeting.

Friends Report

Suzi Wasserman began with condolences about the passing of Paula Black. Suzi reported that the Friends Summer Book Sale was the best ever, raising more than \$21,000 — an increase over the \$17,000 of 2007 and the \$18,000 of 2008. After deducting expenses of \$2-3,000, this year's sale netted about \$19,000. Suzi attributed this to various factors, including a simpler pricing system (a huge volume of \$1 books) and the fact that the sale straddled July and August, allowing both sets of monthly summer renters to make purchases. She said the Friends received many positive comments about how the sale was a great way to recycle, and what a wonderful tradition it was. The final figure also included a generous donation.

In August, the Friends held assets of \$131,000. Suzi reported that the Friends are considering a major expense: to upgrade and replace the current copier with a coin-operated machine. "It might be less user-friendly, but it should be worth it," she said.

Librarian's Report

Beth Kramer handed out a press release from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) reaffirming their commitment to maintaining core services. Proposed changes to **605 CMR 6.00: Library Improvement Program — Public Library Construction** include increasing the amount of grant awards for single and joint projects, and increasing the eligible cost allowance for land values for land for a project site to \$800,000.

Beth said she will be discussing various issues related to library expansion with Rosemary Walthos, building consultant of the MBLC, which has recently increased its grant support for library construction from 35% to 50% of the building cost. She said she would be carrying a placard ("Don't Close the Books on the Library!") in Boston on November 4, demonstrating against state cuts to the library budget. Among the projected cuts will be the elimination of regional services such as SEMLS, which have been an enormous benefit to small libraries like

West Tisbury's.

Beth reported that in the past month patron visits were up 17%, circulation was up over 9.5%, and that the library continued to be very busy, posting the steepest circulation increase among the Island's libraries. In two days, Beth said, she would complete the last class in Basic Library Techniques, satisfying Massachusetts state requirements for certification for Library Directorship well in advance of the 2012 deadline.

Beth also gave an update on the various grants she has applied for, or will be applying for, on behalf of the library. The staff have been attending courses in computer literacy, Facebook and social networking, family literacy, and service to kids and teens with autism.

Beth noted that the passport agency regulations have changed, and that traceable mail and delivery are now required. She reminded the Trustees that the library's Halloween party is Saturday, October 31 at 3 p.m.

Policy

In old business, Dan Waters continued the ongoing policy discussion. With a minor wording change, Ginny Jones moved that the board approve the Volunteer Policy as presented. Hermine seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

After considerable discussion and changes in wording for the sake of clarification, Ginny moved to adopt the preamble to library policy drafted by Dan. Hermine seconded the motion, and the policy was adopted unanimously.

Foundation

In a continuation of other old business, Melissa Hackney said she had looked at the foundations of regional and national libraries, and talked at length with people involved in the Edgartown Library Foundation, focusing on the purpose of a library foundation. Based on these, she presented the Trustees with a proposed statement of purpose that was broad enough to cover both an endowment and a building improvement fund.

Melissa reminded the Trustees that, in the end, the West Tisbury Public Library Foundation will be an independent group. How far, she asked, should the Board of Trustees take the process of establishing a foundation before it becomes self-determining? Advice from the Edgartown Library Foundation supported getting significant support from the Friends.

One question to settle before considering the statement of purpose for a yet-to-be-formed foundation, she said, was: "Can the Friends serve our fund-raising purpose with their 501(c)3 status?" But the Friends are a member-based organization, which is structurally incompatible with the functions of a foundation. Instead, she said, it would be better to have a foundation board that was as broadly representative as possible. The Friends purpose clause is broadly worded enough, but the bylaws would need to be changed to do away with members. This would represent a fundamental change in a Friends organization that continues to serve the library very well in its present configuration.

Suzi noted that in order to alter the Friends' Articles of Organization, a 2/3 vote would be needed. And in order to take such a vote, it would be necessary to determine who, exactly, were the members of the Friends — a logistical hurdle at present. Beth asked why the Edgartown Public Library decided to separate its foundation from its Friends group. Likely it was deemed counterproductive to disenfranchise contributing Friends members in the process of establish a fund-raising organization. Suzi noted that the West Tisbury Friends could provide seed money for the foundation, and already have some money in a building account.

In the general discussion that followed, Suzi noted that a foundation would be an attractive vehicle for large-scale donors in a way that the Friends are not. Dan suggested that the foundation would have the fiduciary expertise to liquidate non-cash donations (equities and real estate, for example) and to invest the funds — tasks the Friends are not currently equipped to take on.

Ginny said the foundation might take up the slack if the town began to underfund library functions. Calling this a Catch 22 situation, Suzi cautioned that if the foundation becomes too wealthy, it may tempt townspeople to shift library funds elsewhere in the town budget. “The library needsd to remain clearly a town obligation,” she said. On the other hand, Dan noted, if the town might be asked to fund a building project, voters need to see the library making a clear effort to pull its own fund-raising weight. Suzi asked: “What will the outside cost of the 501(c)3 application be?” Melissa replied: “I’m working cheap.”

Melissa said that the Trustees' next task is to identify a small board to start the foundation — a board that will take it on for the next few years as “their project.” There will be a Trustee (voting or non-voting) on the foundation board, but the majority of the board should be independent and self-determining. Ginny commented that the Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative might be a resource for finding compatible and experienced foundation board members.

Melissa said that a clear plan and purpose are critical to the success of the foundation: “If we are agreed that this is a building campaign, *that's* when we should start talking to people.” When the Facility Needs Committee has reached a determination as to the advisability of expanding the library building, Melissa said, she would help draft a narrative to tell potential foundation board members. In the meantime, she asked Trustees to come to the next meeting with names of potential members of the foundation's first board. She recommended areas of expertise including: finance, fund-raising, promotion, and management. The goal is to find five to seven people, not including a Trustee and a Friend.

Facility Needs Committee

Hal Garneau presented a report of the Facility Needs Committee's first meeting. Currently the committee consists of Hal, Linda, Ginny and Beth, with Hal serving as chair. At their October 5 meeting the committee agreed on a mission statement and a plan of action, and discussed increasing the committee to include other members of the community. The committee will meet on the first Monday of each month, with the next meeting at 10 a.m. on November 2, 2009 at the library.

New Business

Beth mentioned that she had hired a new head of circulation (Laura Coit) and two part-time staff. Hermine noted that the cupola and children's room doors need work. Ginny reported that Leslie Baker and Hermine (the art committee) had re-hung the art in the Town Hall, which had been on temporary loan to the library during the Town Hall construction project. The suggestion has been made that there be a curator of town art.

Correspondence

Ward Just sent a \$500 donation toward library book purchases, explaining that it came as part of the New England Independent Booksellers Association prize he had won for lifetime achievement. The award included a grant for a library or other institution for the advancement of literacy, and Mr. Just chose the West Tisbury Free Public Library as his preferred recipient. Beth said she had immediately written on behalf of the library to thank Mr. Just for his thoughtfulness.

There being no public present, there were no comments from the public.

The meeting adjourned formally at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Waters
Clerk