

Hingham Public Library
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
May 25, 2011

Call to Order

The 139th annual meeting was called to order by President Abbott in the Trustees Conference Room at 8:00 p.m. Present: Trustees Abbott, Barclay, Carey, Garrity, Goldstein, Mahony, Mehegan, Mitchell, Murdy, Riley, Ross, and Siegfried; Library Director Dennis Corcoran, Library Business Administrator Joan Allen, Secretarial Assistant Liz Welch, Reference Librarian Peter Thornell, guests Irma Lauter, Suzanne Harnden, Louise Pagliccia, and Grace Rizzotto-Griffiths.

Date of Next Meeting; Approval of March Minutes

President Abbott welcomed John Riley, new Chairman of the Hingham Board of Selectmen, to the Board of Trustees. After noting that this was the 139th annual meeting, Mr. Abbott reminded the Board that the next meeting would be held September 21, the third Wednesday of the month. On motion made and seconded, the minutes of the March 16 meeting were unanimously APPROVED.

E-books at the Library

Director Corcoran introduced Reference Librarian Peter Thornell for a presentation on the status and prospective growth in the use of e-books at the Library. Mr. Thornell, whom Mr. Corcoran called “the heart and soul of the music collection,” has been a Library staff member for twelve years. He writes a blog on the Library web site about graphic novels as well as other books and movies. He is the Library’s representative to the Old Colony Library Network’s Technical Committee and also serves as a judge of the Massachusetts Book Award in poetry.

Mr. Thornell said that interest in e-books — books that can be “borrowed” on an electronic reading device — is intense and growing, the most dynamic element in the Library and one most often asked about by patrons. In most cases, the

users have their own reading devices, and books can be read on a home computer. Demand has increased as the prices of devices have declined. However, while we have long had downloadable audio, we are behind on building our e-book collection, which we must build from scratch. The OCLN catalog has about 751 titles. The Library, through our participation in the OCLN Overdrive program, which allows us to purchase titles not necessarily available from the network, has 784 titles.

Seventy-three percent of the titles are circulating, which Mr. Thornell called a phenomenal demand when compared with 11 percent of CDs circulating. Amazon.com's Kindle, the most popular e-book reading device, is not currently compatible with our collection, but when it becomes so at the end of the year, demand for e-books is expected quickly to double or quadruple. While young people easily pick up and adapt to new technologies, more readily than older patrons, the latter also want and benefit from e-books, especially persons with vision problems or for whom a large-print book is heavy and awkward.

Mr. Thornell said we are only at the beginning of this demand for good e-book content, and we have to be prepared to deliver what we always have offered, in this new format. On the question of the future fate of printed books, he expressed the view that they will survive, but offered the view that the Library is not just "a center for books, but for discovery and learning," and that e-books help provide those experiences for our patrons.

There was discussion and questions about the process of acquisition and the numbers of e-books available. Mr. Corcoran explained that even though 784 books might not seem many, the demand is always for new books, not so much for the "backstock," so the total number matters less than having the particular books in demand. E. Siegfried asked if purchase of hard copies of books will be cut back, and Mr. Corcoran said that there would eventually be some reduction, a shift which the Library is already committed to with printed reference works. T. Carey noted that e-books are not exactly a collection, but rather a license to make the titles available. Mr. Corcoran acknowledged that there will be legal questions in terms of definition and other issues that will need to be ironed out as the Library e-book service develops. Mr. Thornell was thanked for his work and for his presentation.

Bookstore Operations Report

Director Corcoran gave the Board a brief history of the Library bookstore, as a preface to calling on Irma Lauter to report on her work at the store. It had started small, in 1997, he said, and has since grown a great deal and become a vital part of the library. In view of its increased use and sales, he had long felt that there was a need to regularize its business practices. Irma Lauter, a longtime town volunteer with wide experience in business, had agreed to help with that effort.

Ms. Lauter told the Board that it had been very satisfying to work with Mr. Corcoran and with Business Administrator Joan Allen on this project. New business practices had been put in place in the store, having to do with efficient handling of cash, correct pricing of the books, and policies for the acceptance of book donations. There are still improvements in processes to be made. “We do not want to be giving books away,” she said, noting that many of the books donated are of fine quality and it would not be appropriate to sell them for a few dollars. For example, a number of books of historic interest, recently donated, might be offered in a special sale.

Ms. Lauter and Ms. Allen noted that book-bag sales in January and April — a bag of books in two sizes, \$2 and \$5 — had brought in a total of \$2,300. A sale of special books in the last week had yielded another \$400. On the matter of proper business practices, it was noted that in the past, some book dealers had had too free a hand in numbers of books purchased, and that volunteers on duty had no way of knowing what books were really worth. Therefore, books hereafter will be priced upon consultation of used-book on-line vendors. Mr. Abbott thanked Ms. Lauter for her valuable contribution, and for her presentation.

Operations Committee; Reunion Request; Emailing of Trustee Documents

T. Carey reported that the committee had met with the representatives of the Hingham High School Class of 1962, which in March had requested permission to hold its 50th reunion at the Library on June 23, 2012. The committee had then met to discuss the group’s proposal, and had decided unanimously to recommend favorable action by the full Board. Mr. Carey said the event could be a pilot experiment, not to establish a policy regarding other rentals, but to find out what is involved and to reveal burdens and problems for the library, if any, in the event of

future such requests. It is not a large group and the event is only one night. The Town Counsel had reviewed the request and voiced no objection. Mr. Carey noted that Director Corcoran had provided to the Board a written analysis of the wage and facility-use costs involved, which placed them at about \$2,500, including the room rental fee of \$1,500 and the services of two custodians and two library technicians. The event would be catered, and the reunion committee would need to secure a one-day license to serve alcoholic beverages, which would be handled by a licensed professional with adequate insurance. Mr. Corcoran said he would be willing to volunteer at the Library on the evening in question, at no cost.

On motion made and seconded, it was VOTED unanimously:

To authorize use of the Hingham Public Library, under such conditions as the Library Director and Operations Committee shall require, for the 50th reunion of the Hingham High School Class of 1962 on Saturday, June 23, 2012 between 7-11:30 p.m.

Speaking for the Reunion Committee, Grace Rizzotto-Griffiths said the total cost estimated by the Library was higher than the committee had expected. In view of that fact, she said that she and the other committee members would have to consult with the members of the class before pursuing the request further. Nevertheless, she thanked the Trustees for their positive response to the class's proposal.

T. Carey then turned to the idea, raised at the March meeting, to send supporting documents to Library Trustees, prior to scheduled meetings, by email, rather than by regular mail. The Board agreed to the proposed change, to start in September, with the proviso that any members who prefer hard copies may continue to receive them. It was decided also, however, that Trustees, in accordance with the by-laws, will receive hard copies of documents for the annual meeting.

Treasurer's Report

E. Siegfried reported that the Library endowment had totaled \$1,268,000 as of April 30, up 17 percent from the same date in 2010, or a total increase of \$188,000 year to year. The endowment is currently producing annual interest and dividends of \$17,000 per year, for a yield of about 1.3 percent. Since the end of April, the market value had fallen by 4 percent, about \$50,000, to \$1,217,000 as of May 24.

However, Mr. Siegfried noted that the value of the endowment had increased by \$467,000, or 62 percent, since its low of \$749,000 in February 2009.

The balance sheet shows \$253,000 in cash in four accounts as of April 30. Mr. Siegfried reminded Trustees that the wisdom of this arrangement had been questioned at the March meeting, since cash in money market or other accounts is earning little or no interest. Accordingly, the Finance Committee met May 4 with Ali Walsh of the Middleton Company, which manages the endowment. After that meeting, and consultations with C. Abbott, D. Corcoran, and J. Allen, the Committee decided to move \$136,000 from cash accounts to the endowment account managed by Middleton. The transfer took place May 16, leaving a cash balance of \$117,000, which should be sufficient for current needs.

On the 10-month income statement, ending April 30, Mr. Siegfried reported that receipts to the New Century Fund had totaled \$54,856, which is \$4,456 more than the year before, an increase of 9 percent. We have received \$12,049 in “other unrestricted contributions,” of which \$10,000 came from a bequest from the estate of Carol O’Donnell. The Library’s receipts from fines continue to be about \$5,000, or 10 percent, below budget through April. Revenue from fines was \$60,000 in FY 2010 and we had budgeted for \$62,000. State aid for FY 2011 will total \$25,280, \$4,220 below the budgeted amount of \$29,500. Bookstore revenue through April was \$9,371, which is about \$2,700, or 40 percent, above budget.

Mr. Siegfried pointed out that the full-year revenue budget for FW 2011 was \$211,000. At this point, ten months into the year, we have received \$191,320. Barring some unforeseen development, he said, he projects a full-year revenue total of approximately \$205,000, for a shortfall of \$6,500. That shortfall is attributable to the following:

- A \$13,000 shortfall from lack of special fund-raising events — such as the auction — since we have no such event in the offing;
- \$4,000 less than budget in state aid;
- \$9,000 less than budget in fines and lost material revenue.

These three items add up to \$26,000, and are only partially offset by the O’Donnell estate’s gift, and the success of the New Century Fund, in generating \$10,000 more than was budgeted. The Trustee budget for FY 2011, ending June 30, 2011, projected an operating cash deficit of \$18,000, primarily attributable to the \$17,000 loss in net lending revenue from the regional library system. Adding

the likely \$6,500 shortfall to the \$17,000 loss in net lending revenue, Mr. Siegfried estimated that operating cash deficit for FY 2011 to be almost \$24,000. As in the past, this deficit will be funded from the accumulated cash balance and the endowment, which points up the need to find ways to increase our revenue. Mr. Siegfried noted that we cannot cut our expenses because the materials budget of \$200,000 is required to maintain our state certification.

FY 2012 Budget Recommendation and Vote

Speaking to the proposed FY 2012 budget, Mr. Siegfried said that it includes \$15,000 under “special events/projects.” Since there are no plans for such events, he raised the question of whether it makes sense to budget for it. Without that \$15,000, the shortfall for 2012 would be not \$24,330, as presently projected, but closer to \$40,000. In addition to the special events item, projected sources of funds for the FY 2012 budget include \$52,000 from the New Century Fund, \$25,280 from state grants, \$18,000 from investment income, and \$55,000 from fines and lost book charges.

J. Riley asked about the prospects for new support from the Rhode Island Foundation, which had made generous contributions over the last couple of years. Mr. Siegfried said that there was no certainty of such funding for FY 2012, and Mr. Corcoran added that he doubted that it would be forthcoming. M. Barclay observed that with the increase in the usage of e-books, which have no late fees, he was skeptical of the \$55,000 budgeted figure for late fees. The question of raising the late fees was raised, but D. Corcoran said that our fines are already the highest in the network and expressed the view that we should not expect to rely on this source going forward. After further discussion, on motion made and seconded, it was VOTED unanimously:

To adopt the FY 2012 Trustee budget, with total revenue of \$209,380 and total expenditures of \$233,710, for a deficiency of \$24,330.

Nominating Committee/Elections

K. Mahony reported that the Nominating Committee had met and agreed to make the following nominations for officers of the Board: Charles Abbot;

President; Edward Siegfried, Vice President for Finance; David J. Mehegan, Vice President and Secretary; Thomas Carey, Member of the Corporation.

T. Abbott noted that only members of the Corporation may vote for new members, so that a separate vote would be taken for that nomination. On motion made and seconded, it was unanimously VOTED:

To elect trustee Thomas Carey a Member of the Corporation of the Hingham Public Library.

On motion made and seconded, it was then unanimously VOTED:

To elect as officers of the Hingham Public Library Corporation: Charles Abbott, President; Edward Siegfried, Vice President for Finance; David J. Mehegan, Vice President and Secretary.

Following the vote, Mr. Abbott was joined by the full Board in expressing thanks to and admiration for H. Goldstein, outgoing vice president, for his strong contributions as trustee and officer of the Board. He has always been a vigorous advocate and supporter of the Library, and could always be counted on by the Trustees, Mr. Abbott said.

Development Committee

S. Murdy told the Board that he expected a meeting of the committee to be held soon. There had not yet been a meeting with the Scituate Library Foundation to discuss its fund-raising success. Mr. Murdy noted his understanding, however, that Scituate has one very generous supporter who has played a large part in the Foundation's recent success. He called on A. Garrity, who briefed the Board on plans for a fund-raising event featuring Leigh Keno, the antiques dealer and appraiser seen on the television program Antiques Roadshow. Plans were still taking shape as to the exact nature of the event, which is expected to be held sometime in October.

FY 2012 Holiday Calendar

The calendar of holidays was presented. D. Corcoran noted that it was the standard list. Since Christmas and New Year's Day fall on Sunday, the legal holiday would be celebrated on the following Monday. On motion made and seconded, it was VOTED:

To accept the Hingham Public Library holiday calendar for FY 2012.

Director's Report

D. Corcoran called attention to the excellent work of Reference Librarian Anne Dalton in writing an application to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a \$6,000 Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions, intended to be used for proposed improvements to the Library's Wilder Historical Room. He said we hope to know by September if the grant is given. He then congratulated Kathy Leahy, Head of Reference and Adult Services, for writing a successful \$2,000 NEH grant application to fund a series on author Louisa May Alcott. To be offered in the autumn, the series will be entitled "Louisa May Alcott: The Woman behind Little Women."

Mr. Corcoran recognized trustee A. Garrity for his appraisal of artworks that had been given to the Library by Pat and Jim McAllen. The work, which included a painting by Hingham's Frank Vining Smith, was appraised at \$2,725.

The Town's Energy Action Committee is reviewing the energy audit, which includes the Library, and Mr. Corcoran said we eagerly await the results of the review. He then informed the Board of a new product called "Smart Pay," an online revenue management system that, when linked to the OCLN management system, could allow patrons to pay fines and other charges online, which might lessen the revenue losses in that category. There would be an up-front cost in implementing the system, and a per-transaction fee for patrons. Mr. Corcoran said the system needs further study before any decision could be made on purchasing it.

FY 2012 Sunday Opening

Director Corcoran presented four possible alternatives for Sunday opening of the Library, based on the approved budget of \$20,000 and current costs and practices. They are, option No. 1: 13 Sundays, from January 8 through April 1, 2012; option No. 2: 12 Sundays, September 11 to December 4, 2011; option No. 3: 13 Sundays, from October 2 to March 27, 2012; Option 4: shorten hours from 1-5 p.m. to 2-5 p.m., which might cover 16-17 Sundays with the \$20,000. After brief discussion, the Board took no action on the alternatives, reasoning that it needs to know the outcome of collective bargaining relative to Sunday work compensation before making commitments to a Sunday schedule.

Change in Trustee Meeting Time

After a brief discussion, on motion made and seconded, it was VOTED:

To change the start time of meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Hingham Public Library from 8 p.m. to 7 p.m., beginning at the September, 2011 meeting.

C. Abbott abstained.

Volunteer Luncheon

C. Abbott said the annual luncheon, to show appreciation to the many volunteers, was a wonderful event, and he thanked trustee E. English and Library Business Administrator Joan Allen for their hard work on the event. Mr. Corcoran said that they had made it look easy, and that the volunteers are extremely grateful at the expression of appreciation. Ms. Allen said that 62 persons had attended.

New Business

S. Murdy showed an old wooden plaque, with names engraved on black plates, which had been made to show appreciation to persons who had contributed \$5,000 or more to the Library in the years prior to the capital drive for the enlargement of

the Library. He said he recalled a proposal of the Building Committee that these names be placed on a sign in brushed metal, similar to that done for the contributors to the more recent fund drive, and he suggested that consideration be given to carrying this idea through.

Adjournment

C. Abbott noted that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' orientation for new trustees is to be held June 7 in Hanover. There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion made and seconded, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Mehegan
Secretary