

Hingham Public Library  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
November 17, 2010

The meeting was called to order in the Trustees Conference Room at 8:05 p.m.

Present: Trustees Abbott, Carey, English, Goldstein, Mahony, Mehegan, Mitchell, Murdy, Ross, Siegfried; Director D. Corcoran, Library Business Administrator J. Allen, Secretarial Assistant L. Welch; Children's Librarian A. Byrne; Hingham Advisory Committee members Karen A. Johnson and Mary Jane O'Meara.

**Minutes of prior meeting, scheduling of next meeting.**

On motion made and seconded, the minutes of the September 15, 2010 meeting were APPROVED unanimously. C. Abbott reminded the Board that the next meeting will be held January 19, 2011. He welcomed Karen A. Johnson and Mary Jane O'Meara, members of the Town Advisory Committee, to the meeting.

**New Library website preview**

D. Corcoran introduced Children's Librarian Anna Byrne to demonstrate the current version of the new Library website, which is still in development. He said Ms. Byrne, heading up the development team, had put a huge effort into this project, much of it on her own time. He also thanked Reference Librarian Peter Thornell for his important contributions to the effort.

As she demonstrated the new site's features, A. Byrne said that while the present site had been very successful, after the proposed changes it would be more focused, offer greater ease of use and enable faster access to information by eliminating extra "clicks." Besides a new overall appearance of the home page — with the Susan Luery outdoor sculpture at the top near the Library name — new features include a calendar which allows the user to move a cursor over any date to display scheduled Library events, and an archive of previous months' activities. Users will be able to find information on downloading audios, and can enlarge the type-size for ease of reading. All the essential information would now be at the top of the page. In response to questions, Ms. Byrne explained that Library policies as well as a menu of databases are on the site. She said the team hopes to introduce the new site to the public in January.

Speaking to the importance of the Library's accessibility through the Internet, D. Corcoran said that there has been a dramatic increase in use of the website every year — the number of hits in FY 2010 was more than one million. Trustees expressed approval of the proposed new site, while making a few suggestions. C. Abbott thanked Ms. Byrne for her presentation.

### **FY2012 budget development; Treasurer's report**

E. Siegfried, Vice President for Finance, presented the FY2012 budget report. He said the Library had been asked to submit three alternate budgets, with different assumptions: 1. level services; 2. level funding; or 3. a 2 percent cut. The Library has taken a \$57,000 reduction over the last two years, and is down 4 percent over two years. A level services budget would mean an increase of about \$6,000; level funding would require a wage budget cut of about \$6,000, which would entail reduction in page hours. A 2 percent reduction would require an expense cut of \$26,000 and would mean the elimination of two part-time library technicians and forgoing \$4,000 in expenditures for Library pages. Level funding appears to be the most likely outcome.

D. Corcoran told the Board that he would be submitting capital budget items, including \$20,000 for computer replacement and \$120,000 for replacement of the Library's ancient boilers. He would also be asking for \$46,000 for the reinstatement of Sunday hours, as part of the operating budget. He also informed the meeting that a new requirement for the Library's budget presentation this year is the inclusion of benchmarks, comparing the Library with a standard list of peer communities in terms of circulation, program attendance and net lending/borrowing. He said there are about 20 peer towns, including Hingham, and that most of Hingham's transaction and service peers are in Metro West.

E. Siegfried asked if level funding would mean the Library would have to ask for another Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) waiver from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Mr. Corcoran said it would, and that the FY2011 waiver application is currently in preparation. He said FY2012 would be the third year the waiver would be necessary. The proposed budget would be presented to the selectmen in early December and then to the Advisory Committee. Mr. Siegfried complimented Director Corcoran for preparing a tight and well justified budget proposal.

Turning to the Treasurer's report, E. Siegfried said the endowment balance had been \$1,119,000 as of October 31, and stood at \$1,114,000 as of yesterday (November 16). It is up 8 percent from December 2009, and is now the highest it has been since June of 2008. The peak in the last three years was in November

2007, when the endowment totaled \$1,322, 000. At the end of October 2010, it was about \$200,000 — or about 16 percent — below the 2007 high.

Speaking to revenue and expenses, Mr. Siegfried pointed to the “unrestricted contributions” line of \$11,119 on the quarterly income statement, and noted that \$10,000 of that number represents a generous bequest from the estate of Carol O’Donnell.

Turning to the matter of Sunday hours, Mr. Siegfried informed the Board that an opportunity had arisen in the last 10 days from the Rhode Island Foundation, representing an unnamed benefactor. The Foundation gave the Library \$42,000 for Sunday openings in FY2010. This year the Foundation had offered to fund half the cost of opening the Library on 17 Sundays, January through May 1, on the condition that the Town pay the other half. The Town has indicated the possibility of providing the match, but at a pay rate of time and a half, not double-time, which has been the historical rate for Sunday hours. Mr. Siegfried said these terms had been presented to representatives of the Library bargaining unit, and he thought the proposal had been well received and expressed the hope that the terms would be acceptable. D. Corcoran said that opening the Library on 17 Sundays, at the time-and-a-half rate, would cost about \$20,000.

### **Development Committee; New Century Mailing, Annual Fund Raiser**

C. Abbott complimented E. English on the quality of the New Century Fund appeal letter, which has been mailed. E. English thanked Joan Allen for her help with the letter, and she noted that the letter offers a Library book bag and five coupons usable toward books at the bookstore, for a gift of more than \$125.

### **Long Range Planning Committee.**

D. Mehegan presented the 2011-2015 Long Range Plan. He reviewed the process by which the committee had convened several Community Circles — the equivalent of focus groups used in corporate marketing — consisting of several categories of citizens, to get their thoughts, knowledge, and advice on the Library’s role in the community and on recommended future directions. The circles included representatives of the arts, business, youth, Library staff and citizens over age 50. We had also been fortunate to be included in a survey of several South Shore public libraries by Reach Advisors of New York, which yielded valuable insights into the needs and desires of the Library’s patrons. The Long-Range Planning Committee had held several meetings to review and revise the plan as drafted by Director Corcoran, and was now prepared to submit it to the full Board for approval.

D. Mehegan complimented D. Corcoran for the depth and detail of the Plan, and particularly for the forward-thinking provisions with regard to new media and the changing nature of technology, and also for its commitment to expansion of life-long learning programs, child literacy, and support for library needs of young adults. D. Corcoran described it as the most challenging plan he had worked on, because of the enormous ongoing changes in the technology and public uses of libraries. Interest in the Library's present life-long learning programs, for example, had increased greatly. S. Murdy said that the plan clearly had benefited from the public views — they had added to its comprehensiveness. Several other trustees spoke highly of the plan.

T. Carey asked when a plan would normally be adopted, and Director Corcoran said that it is overdue, that having such a plan in place is a requirement for eligibility for certain grants. Discussion turned to timing. C. Abbott said that the Trustees could take the plan under advisement and vote on it at the January meeting, call a special meeting, or could approve it at this meeting, subject to nonsubstantive changes. T. Carey commented that we do not want a day to go by without the opportunity to receive grants. There was discussion of publicity of the plan, and it was hoped that a newspaper story could be encouraged. N. Ross suggested it might be made available at Town Meeting, and T. Carey proposed that it be available prominently on the Library website as a PDF file, so that the townspeople can see that we are planning in a professional way. After further discussion, on motion made and seconded, it was VOTED unanimously:

To Adopt the 2011-2015 Long Range Plan, Hingham Public Library, subject to nonsubstantive additional changes as many be deemed necessary by the Long Range Planning Committee in consultation with the Library Director.

### **Operations Committee; John Richardson letter**

T. Carey reminded the Board that D. Corcoran had received a letter from John Richardson of Hingham alleging that certain historical materials, including Hingham Cemetery records, photographs of Arabian horses owned by the Bradley family, and an Indian deed from colonial times, had been misplaced by the Library, and specifically suggesting that the alleged disappearance had been “an inside job.” At the September meeting, Mr. Carey had been appointed chair of an ad hoc committee to review the allegations. He told the Board that since then, D. Corcoran had completed an investigation of the allegations, and that Mr. Carey had met with Director Corcoran to be sure that all avenues of inquiry had been pursued. As a result, the committee was satisfied that there is no evidence that the Library ever had the photographs of the horses. The best information that could be found

about the Indian deed was that it had once hung in the old Library in Hingham Center and that it had disappeared before the new building was built in the mid-1960s. He said that the document in question was not the deed that had formerly hung in the Selectmen's office in Town Hall — that deed had been properly secured.

As for the cemetery records, it was still unclear which records were in question, and there will be a meeting with the cemetery officials to try to pinpoint them, before any question of misplacement can be addressed.

Mr. Carey said that as a result of the review, it seems that the Library has not in past times had sufficiently formal mechanisms for the acceptance of historical materials given to it or deposited in it, that procedures had been pretty casual. He said we should not accept anything without an accurate and detailed inventory to be kept on file, to prevent such questions of safekeeping from arising in the future.

Mr. Carey also said the committee had considered what the proper procedures should be for access to and uses of the historical room at the Library. Some of the materials there should be kept in a more appropriate place. We should comply with the best practices for holding of historical records. The better the job we do day by day, the less chance there will be that something could go wrong. The committee will meet with the Historical Society to discuss an inventory plan, will continue to work on this matter, and will report again to the Board in January.

E. English asked about the vault in the Library as a place to keep historical records, and T. Carey said that it does not meet the Secretary of State's standards for such use. D. Corcoran informed the Board that a company called Inlook Group, an archives management specialist, had been retained to study these matters and that the Board will be given the draft report when it is ready. One policy issue that he said needs to be settled is that of the Library acting as custodian of collections, such as the cemetery records, not owned by the Library. The professionals' position is that we should not act as custodian of historical materials, but rather all such materials in the Library should be owned by the Library; accordingly, we should return all non-owned historical materials currently in the Library to their owners and, in the future, we should refrain from taking custody of such materials. In special cases, an exception to the rule might be made but there should be a written agreement between the Library and the owner of the materials.

### **Director's Report**

D. Corcoran reported that recently he had completed the "Public Contracting Overview Seminar," sponsored by the state Inspector General. The three-day

course covers public purchasing, designer selection bid laws, as well as laws on public ethics and public records. He also had attended the Internet Librarian 2010 Conference in October, which provided wide-ranging exploration of new technological opportunities and challenges. He was struck by the young talent at the seminar and was gratified that so many people conversant with the new IT technologies are eager to bring their talents and knowledge to library work.

Mr. Corcoran expressed the hope and expectation that Donna DelRosso, a top Library staff member who had been out for six weeks recovering from an emergency appendectomy, would be able to return soon. He praised the staff for coming together to cover Donna's duties in her absence. He also expressed appreciation for Library Business Administrator Joan Allen's excellent work on preparation of the state aid application, and the application to the State Board of Library Commissioners for waiver of the Municipal Appropriation Requirement. Finally, he recognized the work of Peter Thornell in conducting classes to teach patrons how to download books and audios.

Mr. Corcoran reported on progress in repairing the leaky windows around the main entrance. They had been improperly installed when new, and the new work should rectify the problem. The next heavy driving rain will be the true test. He also reported that the SourceOne consulting study on the Library heating and air conditioning system had concluded that "combined heat and power" technology was not feasible for the Library, and had recommended that the existing boilers be replaced. He said such replacement would be at the top of his capital budget request for FY 2012.

D. Corcoran cited a letter he had received from the firm conducting the town audit, raising a question about the proper valuation of Library capital assets. Mr. Corcoran said he wished to refer this question to the Finance Committee for recommendations. E. Siegfried said he was sure this letter did not represent a criticism of the Library's internal controls, but rather a desire for the Library to be more closely coordinated with the Town's procedures. He said the Finance Committee would be meeting with the Town on this matter.

### **Old Business: State Aid Application/MAR Waiver**

J. Allen explained that the Library must ask for the MAR waiver because we are \$73,000 short of the three-year average plus 2 ½ percent municipal appropriation requirement. D. Corcoran said that many communities are in this situation in these tight economic times, and added that the Library meets all other standards. H. Goldstein asked if there is any limit on the number of times that the Library could apply for this waiver. D. Corcoran was not sure of the answer, but

would find out. J. Allen mentioned that the Board of Library Commissioners makes its waiver decision on February 3.

There being no other business to come before the board, on motion made and seconded, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Mehegan  
Secretary