

Portland Library Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
Van Beynum Room
January 18, 2024

Board Members Present: Olenka Castelli, Don Eiler, Betsy Graziano, Melissa Kelley, Laurel Steinhauser

Absent: Myra Finkelstein, Jade Richardson

Others Present: Jennifer Billingsley (Library Director), Shaun Manning (BOS), Ralph Zampano

Laurel Steinhauser called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and welcomed new board member, Olenka Castelli.

1. Election of Officers

Jennifer asked for nominations for Chair. Betsy Graziano nominated Laurel Steinhauser, seconded by Don Eiler, all were in favor, motion carried.

Laurel asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Betsy Graziano nominated Don Eiler, seconded by Laurel Steinhauser, all were in favor, motion carried.

Laurel nominated Betsy Graziano as Corresponding Secretary, seconded by Don Eiler, all were in favor, motion carried.

2. Public & Staff Comment

No public comment.

3. Additions and Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made by Melissa Kelley, seconded by Don Eiler, to approve the agenda, all were in favor, motion carried.

4. Review Minutes:

a. Action on the Minutes of the December 21, 2023 Meeting

Betsy Graziano made a motion to approve the December 21, 2023 meeting minutes, seconded by Don Eiler, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

5. Corresponding Secretary's Report

Betsy Graziano said she plans to take the leaf to have it engraved. Jennifer asked her to wait till the end of the week. Jennifer will ask Public Works to affix the rock under the tree.

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6. Old Business

a. Discussion regarding establishing a calendar for policy review

Jennifer asked if the group needs to be more systematic in reviewing the policies, but doesn't think a committee is needed. The staff have a framework for evaluating policies are currently focusing on the meeting room policy since there was a small change last year so that the policy matched the fire code. Beth and Patty are look at it, then Kim and Jennifer, and they hope that a draft will be brought to the February meeting depending on the extent of the changes. For now, rather than an overarching calendar Jenn will pick one or two policies and bring them to the Board for review. It seems to make sense to take a couple at a time. Members were asked to review the old meeting room policy and will receive a redline document with changes before the next meeting. The goal is to review them over the next year and to include the staff members.

Maureen asked about the cost of using meeting rooms. Jennifer said as of now, there is no charge and if we added a fee they don't know how it would work to charge money if the group was bumped for a town meeting. Laurel shared that Parks and Rec will be using the Mary Flood room for a certification course and needed to charge to cover costs and how it creates a gray area. Several options were discussed. Policies can always be re-evaluated from time-to-time. "Friends" cover costs for presenters for programming costs. Ability to charge fees could be restricted to town departments or library-sponsored events so an outside company couldn't do beer night for example. There isn't much space to rent so it is good to keep the commercial end out of it. Jennifer said Board of Ed tutors have been given first dibs on the study room. (Medical reasons or space could be why sessions like this might be held at the library instead of a school).

b. Budget Update:

Laurel congratulated Jennifer for submitting the budget early. The budget was approved by the Library Board at the last meeting. Documents were submitted to town by Jennifer. Ryan said to keep the format and "don't change it if it isn't broke."

7. New Business

a. Long lost item fine and fee amnesty discussion

This has to do with long-lost items (more than five years). Jennifer said from a record maintenance aspect, they would like to clear those items especially since we are in a consortium with other libraries. Lost items may keep people from coming back into the Library. Jennifer is thinking maybe they could ask people to come in and talk with them and they will wipe those missing items off their account. Don asked how many instances are missing in this

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category. At one time if a donation was made to the food pantry, the late items were forgiven. Laurel suggested looking at other libraries to learn what they are doing. We need to know how many items are lost and in this category. Jennifer will pull some data together, maybe using a pre-covid parameter. The end objective would be to make people feel more comfortable in returning to the Library.

b. Capital Needs Discussion

A discussion ensued regarding long-range capital needs. The roof does not come out of the Library budget, so Jennifer spoke with Tom Robinson and Ryan O’Halpin and would like to be included in this process. Outdoor space idea may be a future radar item. The acoustic panels were on the radar last year as well as some furniture for updating. Don suggested asking the staff if the acoustics is a real problem. It could be broken down into smaller chunks over several years rather than doing the whole thing all at once.

8. Friends of the Portland Library

Maureen Muir provided the following update:

1. The Friends passed the Budget for the 2024 year. We are in healthy shape. We also established our calendar for the current year.
2. On January 13 we held a Read and Recycle and took down the Holiday Book Sale. We had many volunteers, but again had a small turnout of people bringing in books.
3. Carol Ingram’s “Art That is Felt” is currently on display in The Mary Flood Room. The Artist Reception, sponsored by The Friends, was held on January 19, 2024.
4. The Clock Committee presented the plaque honoring our recently retired director, Jan Nocek to the Executive Committee. It will be placed under the Clock behind the entrance area.
5. We created a new position of Corresponding Secretary
6. Margot Chapman and Marilyn White are exploring grants with Library Director Jennifer Billingsley. The focus is on supporting reading literacy at Chatham Court.

9. Chair’s Report

Laurel thanked Jennifer for presenting the strategic plan to the BOS. They did a great job. A reminder was given for board members to complete their ethics training which is available on-line.

10. Director’s Report

In addition to Jenn’s report, some formatting changes were made in the report in the three pillars/initiatives. They are open to suggestions for the formatting and will probably start off

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each Board Report in this format, giving an opportunity to give updates like in the budget. Jennifer said one staff member may be retiring soon. Patty B did a great job on the bulletin boards. Laurel was impressed with the numbers for this past year. The board contact sheet was updated.

11. Other Discussion

A brief discussion ensued regarding “The Hungry Caterpillar” and a book from the 1940’s called “The Poky Little Puppy” from 1942.

12. Adjournment

Don Eiler made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Melissa Kelley, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Hoy
Recording Clerk