

Pawlet Public Library
Monthly Meeting of Board of Trustees
MINUTES
November 5, 2019

Present:

Trustees in attendance: Janno Gay, Diane Mach, Kathryn Lawrence, Sally Caras

Trustees absent: Marty Kravitt

Library Director: Mary Lou Willits

Invited Guest: Harry Van Meter

Attending: Janine Seitz, Jed Rubin, Mary Ellen Norton

Call to order: 6:01 pm, Janno Gay opened the meeting with a call to order. Diane Mach seconded.

Public Comment

None.

Norms: A Review of Operating Norms

The meeting began with a reading of agreed-upon Operating Norms by Diane Mach.

Minutes

Janno motioned to approve the October minutes, seconded by Diane, motion carried.

November Agenda

Janno called attention to the meeting agenda and called for any additions or changes. None were put forward. Janno moved to approve the November agenda, seconded by Diane.

Director's Report

Director Mary Lou Willits raised a subject discussed earlier but not yet voted upon: the need to formalize the operating cost of paying the assistant librarian to cover the director's standard shifts during the director's annual paid vacation. Sally referenced prior discussion and moved to approve the operating cost adjustment. Diane seconded the motion; the board approved.

Following is a sampling of items profiled in Mary Lou's monthly Director's Report for discussion at the November 5 meeting:

- PPL has attracted a strong pool of candidates for the new Community Connector job, as well as grants that fully-fund the part-time position for year one.
- PPL's annual fund-raising appeal is underway.
- Pawlet Homeschool Group (parents and students aged 6 to 12) meets at PPL every Wednesday for morning reading classes with Catherine Hunter (PPL's literacy coach) and afternoon classes with tutors engaged by the parents.
- PPL staged two book events in October, both funded by a CLIF grant awarded to Pawlet Public Library: a story-telling program at Mettawee Community School for 150 students (K-6), and a book promotion project with Meadow Wee Daycare, a Pawlet preschool. Funded by Pawlet resident Meg Sullivan, the grant is designed to help public libraries

and elementary school libraries work together on projects that boost children's literacy. Additional family-oriented literacy projects are in the works.

- Saturday, October 26, PPL hosted its annual Children's Halloween Parade, attracting 70 adults and children (and four baby goats!). Several townspeople in costume joined the parade. Afterwards, the group repaired to the library Reference Room for cider and treats. The Children's Room was open for reading and playtime, too.

Pawlet Public Library Facility Needs: Communication, Discussion & Warned Vote

As discussed at the October 1 meeting, the board put in motion a plan to communicate a clear picture of the library's changing facility needs and accessibility/compliance issues to the Select Board, within the context of the library's growing role as Pawlet's community engagement facilitator. Sally Caras created a PowerPoint recap of the facility needs and issues, plus solutions discussed to date.

Janno presented the overview to the board and guests for review and discussion, to be followed by a warned vote to establish board direction. Topics covered:

- PPL's current facility use by library patrons and community groups
- Pawlet's changing uses for the facility
- comparison of available meeting spaces for patrons and groups
- which spaces work best for what uses
- current facility ADA-accessibility status, issues and reported difficulties
- four proposals that address PPL facility needs and ADA-access
 - Option 1: add Alpine snow guards to roof, over existing ramp to main floor
 - Option 2: add cover to existing ramp to main floor
 - Option 3: build a 2nd ADA-ramp to lower level, plus add an ADA-restroom
 - Option 4: build Lift Plan Expansion (design by Ralph Nimtz) with mechanical lift/stairs & auxiliary power to lower level & main floor, plus add ADA-restroom
 - Note: of the four options, only Option 4, the Lift Plan Expansion provides a cost estimate.

Janno read two letters from Pawlet residents to the PPL Board of Trustees:

1) Marcia G. Russo and Michael L. Russo (October 28, 2019) who wrote to support efforts to improve accessibility to the Pawlet Public Library. They cited personal experiences with access issues, including *"the ramp incline is too steep for both wheelchair patrons and mobility challenged patrons"* and *"the ramp is totally inaccessible during the winter season due to ice and snow"*. They pointed out that there's no accessible parking space accommodating a power wheelchair; no handicap spaces adjacent to existing ramp; no signage directing those who need ADA-access to the ramp; difficulty getting onto the ramp due to 1" lip; and difficulties getting into the building at ramp top.

2) Judith Eirmann (October 12, 2019) who described PPL accessibility from the vantage point of working at PPL for the past 4 years as a Vermont Associates trainee. She related trying to help a wheelchair-bound patron down the ramp. *"He had good upper body strength and was able to haul himself up the existing ramp using the handrail with his left hand. However, he could not exit down the ramp. The wheelchair was rolling forward and he could not both control the chair"*

and hold the rail to slow the chair. I had to walk backward ahead of the chair, attempting to hold it from speeding down while also grasping the rail so it wouldn't knock me down and, gaining speed, crash at the bottom. Additionally, with any adverse weather conditions, the ramp can become even more difficult, becoming slippery or icy."

Group discussion of the four options followed. Visitors mentioned the need to assess future handicapped parking plus side entrance security monitoring and how the "daunting front steps" currently impede library use by the elderly and those with children in strollers.

Diane made a motion that the PPL board of trustees support Option 4: Lift Plan Expansion. Janno seconded the motion. A vote was called: 4 members voted yes in support of the Lift Plan Expansion. Prior to the meeting, the absent 5th member, Marty Kravitt, called Mary Lou in response to the meeting agenda. He let her know he would be in Canada on November 5 and made no request for absentee consideration.

Treasurer's Report

Kathryn Lawrence led an overview of the PPL Treasurer's Report and financial update. All finances are on track, no surprises. Diane moved to approve the November Treasurer's Report. Kathryn seconded; the report was approved. Kathryn also presented the FY2020-21 PPL budget prepared in cooperation with Mary Lou. Discussion followed. Diane moved to approve the budget; Janno seconded the motion; the board approved.

Norms

At closing: the meeting norms were reviewed.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:38 pm.

Next meeting: December 3, 2019

Minutes submitted November 8, 2019 by Secretary Sally Caras.