Minutes of the Library Trustees Meeting

Bushnell-Sage Library

February 8, 2024

Present: Pat Levine, Anne Beattie, Barbara Reeves, Trustees

Deena Caswell, Library Director

Sig Spiegel, President of Friends of the Library

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

The Minutes of Jan. 11, 2024, were approved by all three of the Trustees.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: (see attached)

D. Caswell reviewed her monthly report. She presented information about Optima. The inter-library delivery service has expanded delivery an additional day, which allows for circulation increases and a more stable workload for staff. She discussed Discover Books and will mention their service to the SBRSD library. Three “hot spots,” WiFi access locations, have been added to the budget and more will be added in the next year’s budget. There has been a great increase in their use this year. She explained for the Trustees the difference between Hoopla and Libby, which are both programs that provide access to books and all types of media to Bushnell-Sage patrons.

D. Caswell and the Board discussed placement of Electric Vehicle Charges on the library property. She also stated that she needs permission from the Trustees to close the library due to poor weather conditions.

The Sheffield Room policy was reviewed. Pat Levine spoke of the need for cataloging our special collections so that they would be available to researchers.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS:

Elevators repairs are in process. The tree trimming of the small trees in front of the library is not progressing at this time. The front door of the library is cracked and in poor condition. Deena made the Town Hall aware of this and will follow up.

CHILDREN’S PRORAM COORDINATOR:

D. Caswell and the Board revisited the position title and job description from last month’s meeting. The Board felt that the term “librarian” should be reserved for D. Caswell’s position alone and suggested a term such as “manager” might serve for the position’s title. There remains some language to be edited. The Board will vote at the next meeting to approve or disapprove the final wording.

FY25 BUDGET:

There was nothing new to report about the budget at this time.

TRUSTEE ITEMS:

Pat Levine proposed that the Librarian’s May evaluation be an informal discussion and that the formal evaluation take place in December. The Board will revisit the idea at the next meeting.

FRIENDS of the LIBRARY:

There were no new items to discuss.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting was set for Thursday, 3/14/24, at 3:00 p.m.

A motion was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Beattie

**Bushnell-Sage Library**Director’s Report for February 8, 2024

Completing our big library weed has resulted in nearly one hundred boxes of discarded books. We were recently contacted by Discover Books, a company focused on sustainability in the used book market. After smaller weeds (fewer than a dozen boxes), we reach out to the Friends of the Great Barrington Libraries who will take our discards for use in their book sale. We were pleased to have a new partner to help us rehome a larger amount of discards that will find their next life through resale, redistribution, or recycling. Our pickup, originally scheduled for February 2, will now take place on February 9. Thank you to department head Dave Ruot and the Sheffield highway department for assisting with the pickup.

I’ve reached out to town administrator Rhonda LaBombard about scheduling a presentation to the Select Board about library activities over the past year, including the Crossroads exhibit and associated programming. After talking with Julie Hannum, head of the Finance Committee, I asked Rhonda if both the Select Board and Finance Committee could be present.

As mentioned previously, we’ve seen a circulation increase of over 5000 materials from 2022 – 2023. Circulation staff has been managing the heavier workflow with a smile – we’re happy that Sheffield and our community have been finding resources within the CW MARS system to meet their educational and entertainment needs. Previously, our interlibrary loan delivery service (Optima) had delivered bins of materials to us Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. After talking with the delivery team at Massachusetts Library System, we have now added a delivery on Thursdays. We hope that this will help the flow of books become less overwhelming for staff.

Demand for our WiFi hotspots is strong, especially around holidays and school breaks. I had included an increase in our software line in the FY25 budget to purchase additional hotspots. After feedback from circulation staff, we made use of state aid money to add two new hotspots – we should see those added to the catalog shorty.

Planning and programming for Crossroads: Year 2 continues. Our next community conversation will take place Thursday, February 29 at 7 p.m. at Dewey Hall. The topic will be housing in Sheffield. Invitations are going out to community members and local stakeholders.

I also met with local author David Guenette, who writes a fictional series set in the Berkshires that incorporates the impact of climate change. He’ll lead a session in the spring discussing how he incorporates research and current events into his writing, as well as a further look at how climate change will affect our region. I’ll be working with the Sheffield Historical Society and other partners to identify additional speakers for the spring/summer.

Youth programs took a pause in January but will return in full force in February. Our popular LEGO Construction Zone resumes on Thursday afternoons through the spring and Read to a Dog continues on Friday afternoon. New programs include “Music and Movement” for children 6 mo – 3yrs, and a youth fiber craft series on beginning sewing in partnership with trustee Barbara Reeves. Stef also visited the Mt. Everett high schoolers during their free period with school librarian Alexis Kennedy to talk about library offerings.

Our January BSL Book Club read *The Maid* by Nita Prose. Four community members joined to discuss this light mystery with a quirky protagonist. Our February selection is *Romantic Comedy* by Curtis Sittenfeld.

Ten people joined us as Tom Werman visited for a reading and book signing of his new title, *Turn It Up! My Time Making Hit Records in the Glory Days of Rock Music*. Fans of classic rock enjoyed hearing him share stories of well-known artists and the ones who got away.

We’re happy to welcome Jessica (Jessi) Bangs to our circulation staff. Jessi recently relocated to Ashley Falls with her husband to help support his grandmother on the family farm. She has a background in early childhood education and special needs youth. Her cheerful and friendly demeanor will make a great addition to our team.

On Friday, January 26, I took part in the Berkshire Library Legislative Breakfast at the Milne Library in Williamstown. Over fifty supporters of libraries from trustees to Friends to staff gathered to share stories of library impact and success. We were fortunate to have Senator Paul Mark and Representatives Tricia Farley-Bouvier and John Barret speak about the importance they place in our Berkshire libraries.

Stef and I both attended the webinar Communicating the Value of your Library to Elected Officials. Stef is also continuing with language lessons in American Sign Language (level II). All staff have completed the state’s conflict of interest training.

I have been invited by Mass Humanities to participate in Sharing Stories and Listening to One Another: The Declaration of Independence at 250, happening in Washington DC March 7- 8. More details to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Deena Caswell