



**Shrewsbury**  
Public Library  
INSPIRING LEARNING, EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY

## **BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

**September 26, 2023, 7:00 PM**

### **7:13 PM Call to order of Board of Library Trustees Meeting:**

Present in person: Deb Lebeaux, Jeff Billingham, Clare O'Connor, Barbara Trudel, Noor Ali, Lisa Powers, April Prince, Poornima Tekumalla, and Library Director Priya Rathnam. Absent with notice: Moe Boisvert

### **Review and act to approve minutes of June 21, 2023, meeting:**

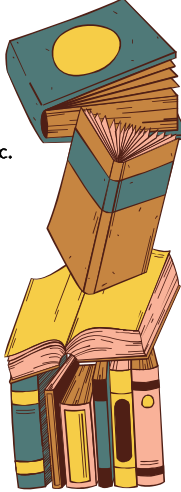
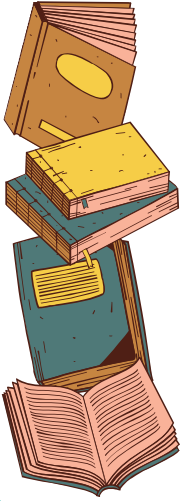
Minutes were reviewed and approved with a correction to add Lisa Powers to the present in person list. A motion to approve the corrected minutes was made by Clare O'Connor, seconded by Jeff Billingham, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Review and act to approve report of Director's activities of June, July, and August 2023:**

Director Priya Rathnam discussed that in addition to the many activities listed in her reports, in the summer she also compiles the two annual reports she must submit to the MBLC. One includes staffing qualifications and related data and the other is a detailed financial report. State Aid is based on the latter. A motion to approve the Director's activities was made by Clare O'Connor and seconded by Lisa Powers, and the report was unanimously approved.

### **Programs and Services: Director's report of programs and services offered in June, July, and August 2023:**

- Priya shared that it was a busy summer, as usual, and that summer reading program involvement was robust. Participant statistics:
  - Children, ages 0-6: 2,453
  - Children, ages 7-11: 1,280
  - Children total: 3,733
  - Teens 12-17: 102 registered on Beanstack, 400 program attendees, 270 book reviews written
  - Adults: 44 registered readers finished a collective 230 books
- Priya reported that the Braille books we borrowed from the Perkins library did not circulate except the children's title. Priya will return the books soon, and Perkins will send others. The Braille books occupy a lot of space on the shelves and involve a lot of work for the Tech Services librarians because Perkins is not a part of CW/MARS, but everyone agreed that it is enriching and educational for the community to see and interact with the books even if they are not checked out.
- The Trustees commended the library usage statistics for June and July, and especially for FY23 as a whole:



**FROM JULY 2022  
THROUGH JUNE 2023,  
THE SHREWSBURY LIBRARY...**

- Welcomed 389,176 visitors and 1,935 new library patrons
- Loaned 340,482 books, magazines, movies, video games, etc.
- Loaned 81,027 e-books, e-audiobooks, etc.
- Borrowed 35,220 items from other libraries through the interlibrary loan system
- Hosted 947 adult, teen, & children's programs with 26,521 people in attendance
- Delivered 8,527 items via our outreach service during 559 visits
- Allowed 9,416 computer sessions for 9,458 hours
- Accommodated 4,264 Study Room reservations
- Provided 2,248 free or discount passes to area museums
- Fulfilled 272 3-D Print requests
- Notarized 746 documents

#### Financial and Legislative:

- Review and act upon YTD report as of 9/26/23: We are on target for expenses and library materials at 30.1%. The reason some line items are already at or slightly above 100% is because salaries are encumbered for the year, and we see the totality of that in the YTD report. A motion to approve the YTD report was made by Barb Trudel and seconded by Poornima Tekumalla, and the report was unanimously approved.
- Review and approve FY25 Action Plan: The Action Plan is based on the Strategic Plan. The Trustees agreed that the Plan looks terrific. A motion to approve the Action Plan was made by Noor Ali and seconded by Poornima Tekumalla, and the report was unanimously approved.

#### Facility, Equipment and Grounds:

- Priya communicated with Town Manager Kevin Mizikar and with Keith Baldinger at Public Facilities about the need for two custodians to properly maintain the library, which is open 12 hours a day four days a week (and a total of 63-67 hours per week) and has an incredible amount of foot traffic. We are the second busiest library in the CW/MARS system, after the Worcester Public Library. The SPL had both day and night custodians before Covid. The Board discussed having Trustee presence at a Select Board meeting to continue to communicate our needs in advance of the budget cycle. The Board may also engage the Select Board when they are here for office hours the third Saturday of the month.
- The outdoor lights are on! The electrician found the control panel downstairs, so that issue is finally resolved. The timing is excellent as daylight hours begin to diminish.

#### Gifts and Grants:

Priya reported that the library received a \$30,000 LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant for Creative Communities. This will be used to offer STEAM programs for children, teens, and adults; to partner with faculty and students from area colleges to offer instructional classes on the usage of various Library of Things items, 3D printers, and other maker equipment; and to facilitate DIY activities for residents. The funding will run from this October to next September.

**Personnel:**

- Library Director Priya reported that former children's room staff member Diana Karas was hired for the new role of Outreach and Marketing Librarian. Diana overlapped with outgoing Outreach Librarian Deb Mayo for training purposes. Diana has already met with the Events Coordinator and the Program Coordinator in the Recreation department, has gone to Southgate to meet with the Men's Club, and went to the Farmer's Market with Sonja and Melissa to promote library services and make new library cards.
- To replace Diana, the new part-time children's librarian is Carlina Arsenault. She has worked at the Northborough library and has young children herself.
- For the full-time Technology Specialist position, replacing Dana Volke, the library hired Louthoria Yazzie. Lou came from Florida, where she worked for a large county library system. Most recently Lou was working for the Shrewsbury Department of Public Works.
- The recent resignations of Jess D'Atri and Sierra Chastain-Rittue require searches for a new Reference Librarian and Digital Services Librarian. Priya has shared with Town Manager Mizikar that we need to be more competitive in the salaries for these positions. The positions are taxing, and in the last five years we've had three different people in each of the jobs. Priya would also like to provide more flexibility in the roles, including what employees are responsible for and how they share their workload with other staff members. Priya and the Board agree that we need 1.5 or 2 reference librarians and possibly a page or volunteer to help patrons with the photocopier and computers.

**Shrewsbury Public Library Foundation:**

- A joint committee of Friends, Trustees, and Foundation members convened in August and again in September. Deb Lebeaux reported that the group made progress on developing an Annual Report. The Report will list and thank donors, educate the community about what each board does and has accomplished, and help residents distinguish among the three boards. The joint committee will meet again in October.

**Friends of the Library:**

- The Annual Friends' Board meeting is next Wednesday, October 4, and the presentation after the business meeting will be "A Pleasant Pairing: Tea and Chocolate with a Downton Abbey Theme" with Kim Larkin. Deb encouraged everyone to attend. She also reported that the Friends bookstore is doing well.

**Policies:**

Nothing new to report.

**Miscellaneous**

- Update on middle school students on Friday afternoons. The recently revised policy of requiring students up through grade six to be continually supervised by a caregiver has definitely had an effect—there are fewer middle schoolers visiting on Fridays after school, and though there are still some who misbehave, they are manageable. Oak Middle School students should be getting their school IDs soon. This year's later school start/end times have also helped.
- Review of community feedback on the Land Acknowledgement statement. The DEIB has not had any meaningful follow-up from the Nipmuc tribal leaders. The Select Board has also taken up the issue, but without input from Indigenous people, the Board declined to make a town-wide decision at present. The Select Board said it was okay for the library to use a statement if we like. Cheryl Holley of the Nipmuc Nation told Jess we do not need tribal approval or input, it's up to us to draft our own statement. The Trustees received letters from community members Lisa Steele and B. Dale Magee,

MD, about the land acknowledgement. Ms. Steele expressed interest in the library hosting programs and displaying researched information about the pre-European history of Shrewsbury but feels that a land acknowledgement simply read before meetings does not serve an educational goal. Dr. Magee urged library leadership not to take a position on social justice issues, in order to maintain the library as a neutral, welcoming place for all. The Board does not view conveying historically accurate information as taking a position on a social justice issue. Rather, the Board sees a land acknowledgement as a means of furthering the library's mission of providing educational opportunities and righting past wrongs. Along these lines, it is imperative that we ensure the accuracy of any statement we create or post. Board members also feel strongly that any acknowledgement must not be performative: it *must* have substance and action—programming and materials—to back it up. Ideas discussed included developing a collection of books and resources that residents can use to learn more about our town and region's Indigenous history. This collection could include resources around self-study. Library Director Priya shared UMass Chan Medical School's land acknowledgement as a good example that goes beyond the performative. The Board's consensus was that this is an important matter, and we need more time to implement an acknowledgement in an accurate, thoughtful, and comprehensive way.

- Review of reconsideration forms submitted by a patron for three books because of visually explicit sexual content and objections to having those materials available to younger visitors. The patron expressed that if the books were movies or video games, they would be rated R or NC-17. The Board discussed what the BOT role is in policing where books are in the library and if they are in the library at all and concluded that the library is about access. Young patrons can check out R-rated movies at the library, and the internet is at their fingertips. If parents or caregivers want to filter what comes into their homes, that is their prerogative; caregivers are responsible for overseeing any vulnerable or sensitive patrons, but they can't control what others read. The books to which the patron objected are well reviewed and are placed in the same library sections as they are at other libraries. The objecting patron acknowledged that the books are good, he just had discreet objections. Priya will get back to the patron. The Board appreciated that the patron's communication was thorough and balanced.
- Approval of procuring vinyl wrap for outreach van. Diana has done research and Priya reached out to the town manager's office, who said that SELCO has vinyl graphics on their vehicles and that the town is considering a vinyl wrap for one of its vehicles. The town has reached out to Sunshine Sign, the company that has done our library signs. To wrap a larger vehicle costs about \$10,000. To wrap a smaller one (i.e., the size of our van) is about \$5-6,000. The design has not been determined. The Trustees agreed that the wrap would be good promotion of our outreach service and the SPL in general. Funding would come from state aid. A motion to approve was made by Claire O'Connor and seconded Lisa Powers, and the motion was unanimously approved.
- Approval of state aid funding for temporary Reference Librarian position, up to 30 hours/week for up to 90 days. A motion to approve \$10,342 in funding was made by Noor Ali and seconded by Lisa Powers, and the funding was unanimously approved.
- Approval for authors to sell their books and CDs at events:
  - K M Harikrishnan, author of *Three Muscat Years: Adventures of a Young Fauji and His Friends*, will give a talk on September 28.
  - Lauren and Danny Perez will give their talk *Lauren & Danny Perez, AKA the Radikals - Investigators and Archivists of the Unknown* on Monday, October 30.
  - Gladius will be performing a concert on Saturday, November 4 and will be selling CDs.
  - Matt Robinson will be giving his talk *Lions, Tigers, and...Bulldogs? An Ivy League Writer's Road to Publishing* on Tuesday, January 16.

- Bob Ainsworth will be giving his talk *Has Anyone Seen \$500 Million in Art Lying Around Boston?* on Tuesday, January 30.
- The library would like to host Noor Ali, author of *One Teaspoon of Home: Desi Food Poetry*, date TBD.

A motion to approve book and CD sales was made by Clare O'Connor and seconded by Barb Trudel, and permission was unanimously approved.

- Approval for engagement photo shoot in the library. A motion to approve the photo shoot was made by Deb Lebeaux and seconded by Barb Trudel, and permission was unanimously approved.
- Approval for candy/treat box at library to collect candy for Recreation Department's Truck or Treat Night. A motion to approve the collection was made by Clare O'Connor and seconded by April Prince, and permission was unanimously approved.
- Approval for exterior installation of green book sculpture from the Natick Public Library. It should last for several years. A motion to approve the sculpture was made by Jeff Billingham and seconded by Barb Trudel, and permission was unanimously approved.
- Discussion of Trustee email. The Board now has a group email address for library business, [spltrusteeboard@shrewsburyma.gov](mailto:spltrusteeboard@shrewsburyma.gov).

A motion to adjourn was made by Clare O'Connor, seconded by April Prince, and was unanimously approved.

**Next meeting:** Next monthly meeting on October 24, 2023

**Remaining Board meetings in 2023:** November 28, December 19

Respectfully submitted by Trustee and Secretary April Jones Prince