

PLAISTOW PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Friday, April 10, 2020

The Plaistow Library Board of Trustees held a Tele-Conference Meeting Friday, April 10, 2020.

Roll Call: James Peck, Chair
Catherine Willis, Vice Chair
Jane Query, Treasurer
Jennifer Kiarsis, Secretary
Rosemarie Bayek
Michelle Sykes, Alternate
Megan Lee, Alternate

Others Present: Cab Vinton

Call to order was made by Chair at 10:33 am. Those who were required to be sworn in (Jennifer Kiarsis, Michelle Sykes, and Megan Lee) had done so prior to this meeting.

Declaration of Emergency

The Chair declared this meeting to be an emergency meeting carried out as a Tele-Conference because the physical presence of a quorum is not reasonably practical within the period of time requiring action due to the risk of infection, in accordance with RSA 91-A:2. III(b). (See document: "Public Meetings and Covid-19", distributed by the NH Municipal Association.)

Several documents that were distributed via email will be included with and become a part of these minutes.

Election of Officers

Motion was made by Rosemarie to elect the same officers to the Board of Trustees: James Peck, Chair; Catherine Willis, Vice Chair; Jane Query, Treasurer; Jennifer Kiarsis, Secretary; seconded by Jane Query. Motion approved: Ayes 5; Opposed 0; Abstentions 0.

Secretary's Report

Motion to accept the Secretary's Report of February 18, 2020, was made by Jane Query; seconded by Rosemarie Bayek. Motion approved: Ayes 3; Opposed 0; Abstentions 2 (Willis, Kiarsis).

Trustee Action Document

A document outlining the past actions of the Board via email relative to the closing of the library, staff issues, procedures, and schedules was reviewed by the Board. There was a discussion about the content of the document and the decisions outlined in it. The Board took a Roll Call vote in order to have the document included as part of these minutes, but with the understanding that not all members of the Board agreed with each action listed in the document.

Motion to incorporate into the minutes the document entitled "Trustee/Director Actions COVID 19". Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Peck, Query, Kiarsis, Bayek. Opposed – Willis.

Director's Report

Cab put together two documents for the Board to review detailing his past actions with staff and putting a plan of action in place for the immediate future, as well as updated Staff Procedures. (See documents: "BOT April 9.docx" and "Staff Procedures 2020-04-05.docx".)

Staff have been working on projects that have been long-term goals but difficult to find time for in the course of regular library operations, including some in the Library's 2018-2020 strategic plan. Cab is working on shifting everyone's focus to projects that are in direct service to the community at a time of heightened need. A few of the things mentioned that the staff have been doing in that regard were:

- Online story time
- New e-resource with video tutorials on crafts (Creativebug)
- Mask distribution & sewing machine lending
- Weeded books available for public on carts outside the Library
- Red Cross Blood Drive went on as scheduled
- Online registration process so new patrons can use our digital services

Plans for the Summer Reading Program are up in the air. Online services such as Kanopy and Hoopla will be heavily promoted. Virtual adult programming is being planned. A survey to assess how the Library can best serve the community will also be distributed soon.

Public engagement with the library's online newsletters, Facebook page, website, and e-resources have all increased dramatically. More community-related action is coming.

Treasurer's Report

Quick review was made of the monthly year-to-date schedules. Because of the coronavirus situation, several lines are under budget, a trend which will continue. No new funds are being deposited into our Library Fund accounts (e.g., passport, lost books, fines) because of the closure of the library to the public.

Jim has taken over responsibility for payroll and bill paying as Jane is unable to do so currently. She thanked Jim for his willingness to do these tasks.

Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by Rosemarie Bayek; seconded by Jennifer Kiarsis. Motion was approved: Ayes 5, Opposed 0; Abstentions 0.

Library Funding Guidance – Assistant State Librarian

Jim included an emailed document from the Assistant State Librarian, Lori Fisher, explaining what the Town could and could not ask of the Board of Trustees in regard to the Library budget. (See document: "Asst State Librarian April 7th on Budgets.doc") Although the Town has no control over our budget, in the face of declining local municipal revenues and cuts to other departments, the Board may decide that following suit is the best course of action. The Board agreed.

Expenditure Reduction Contingency Plan

The Town is showing signs of moving in the direction of cutting costs and possibly furloughing some employees. It may also be getting a short term loan/ increased credit line. At this time, there is no indication that the Town is planning to access its unassigned balance/ "Rainy Day" fund. A bill has been proposed to aid municipalities. Because of all this, Jim and Cab have created a Reduction Contingency Plan. (See document: "Budget 2020 v2.xlsx")

This contingency budget includes reductions in staff as well as non-personnel lines. This will be a guideline should the Town request that we look at our budget for any reduction.

Comments:

- Jim/Cab discussed Rich's hours and whether he needs to be at the Library four days a week for 4.5 hours (18 hours versus the 28 hours we are still paying him for).
- Jane thanked Jim and Cab for their diligence in putting this contingency plan in place.
- Jim mentioned that the theme of this online presence for the Library is to let the public know "We are Here"!
- Cathy had concerns regarding the Town going forward with projects.
- Jim discussed Library funds won't be touched unless absolutely necessary and we have no control over what the Town does.

Rosemarie asked about the student Pages and whether or not they are being paid at this time. Cab explained that various projects are being created for them. Jennifer added that Cab has a ton on his plate right now trying to work with regular staff on at home projects, in-house projects. Pages should be low on his management of staff at this time. A staff reduction if necessary might start with the Pages.

Jim asked that if anyone hears of any solid information concerning how the Town is handling staff situations, please let him know.

Michelle inquired about the Open House planned for May and school scholarships. The Open House has been postponed until further notice. The School will need to be contacted to find out how they are now handling the scholarships.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:32 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Kiarsis
Secretary

Public Meetings and Covid-19

New Hampshire Municipal Association

Updated March 15, 2020

(This situation is evolving rapidly; please check our [website](#) for updated versions)

Due to concerns about Covid-19, many municipalities have asked **how their public bodies may continue to conduct board business while also complying with CDC guidance on social distancing and minimization of in-person interactions.** “Social distancing” means “remaining out of crowded public places where close contact with others may occur, such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.” In many municipalities, it will be difficult to find appropriate space which allows for maintaining social distance and avoiding close contact with members of the public during public meetings. **Nevertheless, municipal boards must meet to ensure that local government keeps functioning.**

Public Attendance at Meetings

Under RSA 91-A:2, when a quorum of a public body meets in person, or communicates contemporaneously with each other, for the purpose of discussing or acting upon matters over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power, the statute requires that those “meetings” shall be “open to the public.”

“Open to the public” is defined in that statute as follows: “[e]ach part of a meeting required to be open to the public shall be audible or otherwise discernable to the public at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting.” RSA 91-A:2, III(c). Therefore, the statute contemplates that the location of the meeting will be a physical location, and the public is permitted to be in attendance at that meeting.

In line with CDC guidance, NHMA recommends that municipalities take reasonable steps to notify the public of the risk of Covid-19, including posting notices *asking* people who exhibit symptoms of the disease not to attend meetings, and provide alternate means of attendance – whether through live webcast or telephonic conference call or other means.

Board Attendance at Meetings

Municipalities have also expressed concern regarding board attendance at meetings. **RSA 91-A:2, III(b) requires that “a quorum of the public body shall be physically present at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting” except in an**

emergency. That statute defines an “emergency” as a situation in which “immediate action is imperative and the physical presence of a quorum is not reasonably practical within the period of time requiring action.” RSA 91-A:2, III(b).

One example of an “emergency” is a serious weather event which causes major infrastructure damage and the town *must* begin taking action to close roads/bridges in order to prevent harm to people or property. In light of the nature of Covid-19 and the guidance on social distancing from the CDC, it may be the case that “imperative action” includes deadlines for land use boards and it may be the case that “the physical presence of a quorum is not reasonably practical within the period of time requiring action” due to the risk of infection. It is impossible to issue blanket advice on this matter due to the rapidly evolving situation, so we would encourage boards and officials to work with applicants, abutters, and interested parties in all situations to try to secure agreements – preferably written – regarding timeline extensions and other matters which may be deferred until a time when risk of infection has passed.

If a board does decide that Covid-19 merits qualification as an “emergency,” the determination must be made by the chair of the board. RSA 91-A:2, III(b). Note that “the facts upon which that determination is based shall be included in the minutes of the meeting.” RSA 91-A:2, III(b).

If it is the case that one or more members (but less than a quorum) of a board cannot be physically present for a meeting, “a public body may, but is not required to, allow one or more members of the body to participate in a meeting by electronic or other means of communication for the benefit of the public and the governing body...only when such attendance is not reasonably practical.” RSA 91-A:2, III. “Any reason that such attendance is not reasonably practical shall be stated in the minutes of the meeting.” RSA 91-A:2, III(a). Note, of course, that a body which allows members to participate electronically must still abide by the requirement that a quorum of the body be physically present except in an emergency, as outlined above.

Further Advice

NHMA encourages public boards and bodies to keep abreast of the news about Covid-19 through the CDC and DHHS websites (information available on the [NHMA Resources Covid-19 Page](#)), and work with their citizens and within their government to implement practices which will mitigate the effect of the disease. It is a good idea to designate someone on the board to keep track as agreements are secured to delay hearings on applications or delays implemented in accordance with CDC and DHHS guidance. That way, when things get back to normal, there is a clear record of what follow-up a board needs to do.

NHMA is also encouraging municipalities to consider alternative means of public participation, including virtual options. If it is possible to allow the public to appear at hearings telephonically or via an internet-based option where they can hear those who are

presenting or speaking and, as necessary, be heard, that is an option which may both serve the interest of allowing public attendance and participation while also adhering to CDC and DHHS guidance to practice social distancing. If that is not possible, public bodies should consider allowing and encouraging the public to submit written comments in advance of public meetings and hearings that are read aloud at the meeting or hearing. This will allow those who would like to participate but do not wish to attend a public gathering to still be heard. But always keep in mind that under the current state of the law, the public cannot be *required* to use these alternatives for participating and must be allowed to attend a public meeting or hearing in person.

When meetings and hearings are held, municipal officials should strive to follow CDC guidelines for public gatherings, including:

- Posting signage encouraging people to wash their hands when entering the building, staying home if sick or if they have been exposed to someone who is sick, and covering their mouths when they cough or sneeze;
- Spacing seating farther apart than usual to promote social distancing, including the distance between board members, if possible; and
- Wiping down common surfaces before and after meetings.

Stephen C. Buckley

Legal Services Counsel

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Trustee/Director Actions -COVID-19

3/2 Sherri & Rosalie Averill asked to do 14-day quarantine after Rosalie returns from student trip to Italy

3/7 March trustee meeting cancelled for lack of topics, not coronavirus.

3/9 Cab attends first town COVID meeting

3/13 Jim & Cab notify trustees on decision to keep library open but revisit it on 3/16 after Jenn D. attends town COVID meeting. Following announcement posted on web site and in library:

Trustees have been staying in constant contact with each other, the Library Director, and Town public health officials throughout the current public health crisis.

For now we are planning to keep the Library open, and we will revisit the decision on Monday when Library representatives will attend the meeting of the town's Emergency Management team.

We are aware that Timberlane schools will be closed for two weeks, but in developing our own response we will follow the guidance from the public health authorities of the town, state, and CDC.

3/14 Cab goes on 1-week vacation. Scott on vacation at home. Jenn Dawley placed in charge. Sherrie returns to work.

3/16 Jen attends town hall meeting. Decision to close library to patrons effective 7 PM on 3/17 and cease all programs except the blood drive. Jim gets unanimous vote by phone. Closure Announcement attached is put on windows, on web site and on Facebook. Town manager, BOS Chair and Town Health Officer notified.

3/18 Staff Procedures reviewed & approved by Health Officer and following CDC guidelines adopted for safety of staff

3/22 Trustees agree to allow staff in building following strict procedures per telephone poll

3/23 Cab attends town hall meeting. Decision to close completely Friday to allow 72 hours cleansing of building on Fire Chief's recommendation consistent with Town Hall. Decided to put out free book wagons. Staff only in building 9 to 5, M to Th.

3/26 Ramping up on-line services and added online library cards.

3/26 Gov. Sununu issues Stay-at-Home Order effective midnight 3/27. Municipalities not covered.

3/29 Jim sends email to trustees asking their vote on one of four options:

1. Shut down completely with work from home only, immediately.
2. Shut down completely with work from home only after staff have time tomorrow to gather what they need to take home. Close at noon.
3. Continue working as we are 9 to 5 with the strict procedures we have in place.
4. Limit staff in the building down from the current maximum of 5 now to 3 or 2 or even 1.

From JMP: "Based on a consensus of the trustees, decided to reduce the staff to 3 (including Cab) under our current stringent procedures starting 3/30. All staff will be paid except substitutes (Dot & Kate) and our minute taker. We are paying pages so far but will revisit that on Friday if we can't come up with work to be done at home. No pages are allowed in the library at this time. We will monitor the data and directives from our governor as well as the CDC and the DPH, and will revisit our decision this Friday."

3/30 Jim & Cab handle bi-weekly payroll and bill payments. Deposit on hold of ~\$300.

4/3 Decided to increase staff in building back to 4 upon Cab's request. Trustees concurred.

4/6 Jim calls Special Trustee Meeting via teleconference on Friday 4/9 to discuss contingency plans and COVID 19 status

Shutdown-related Activities

- Creating new policies & procedures, updating new & existing policies & procedures as needed, canceling newspaper subscriptions, setting up Koha (canceling notices, stopping fines, extending patron card renewal dates), online registration for new cards (“e-cards”), shutting down \$9000 NH Humanities grant (postponed 12 mos.), participating in web meetings w/ other Directors & librarians (91 yesterday morning)
- Mostly focused on long-neglected internal projects: weeding, lowering stacks that are too high, shifting, re-organizing, book repairs, shelf-reading
- Some new materials still coming in & being processed
- Cross-training: Sherri learning book repair – looking for other opportunities
- Learning how to do things from home, including holding virtual staff meetings

New Services

- Phone calls to patrons who are regulars, might need check-in’s
- Offering online story hour w/ Miss Jenn on Facebook Live
- Added a new online learning product (Creativebug for crafts)
- Mask distribution project: Audrey, Patricia Hibbard, & Jenn
- Sewing machine distribution for mask makers: 1 checked out, 8 others available & almost ready for circulation
- Discarded books on carts outside for pickup

Old Services

- Blood Drive – blood shortage w/ fewer events, each donation can save up to 3 lives

Impact

General

- Just 3 new registrations online to date
- Masks: Eagle Tribune article (https://www.eagletribune.com/news/new_hampshire/community-comes-together/image_00568ee3-bc29-5765-b7bd-64439f893dd7.html); how many masks to date?

Online

Facebook

- 1,570 followers: 85% of new followers since Jan 1 happened after March 18
- Tripled number of weekly posts since closing
- Interactions w/ visitors per day up 68% since we closed

Email newsletters

- Open rate for recent newsletters +50%

Website/ 1st vs 2nd half of March

- 16.7% increase in visitors

- 17% increase in new visitors
- 31.9% increase in sessions
- 33.8% increase in page views
- 29.5% increase in session duration

Digital services (ebooks, etc.)

- Daily averages for March to now, pre- vs. post-closing
- Overdrive: not a huge spike numerically: 13 to 15.8 checkouts per day), but 21.3% increase
- Hoopla: same story, but 15.9% increase in daily checkouts; daily cost up just 4.6%, though (cheaper audiobooks more popular)
- Kanopy: same story (35 total checkouts since Mar 1), but checkouts & minutes watched per day up by 31% & 89%, respectively

Future Plans

- Summer Reading Plans up in the air – lots of discussion around the state (& country!)
- More frequent email newsletters
- Promoting our online services much more heavily: highlight one every 2-3 days; short video tutorials
- Adding new online services or expanding checkout limits to existing services (budget permitting)
- Promoting the Census more heavily
- Sending out survey to patrons – How can we help? (also teachers & librarians in the local schools)
- Sending a press release to local papers on how libraries are still serving their communities
- More outward-focusing, direct service to patrons
- Also, brainstorming interactive program ideas EG public submissions of videos (e.g., for National Library Week, Apr 19-25, favorite poems for National Poetry Month, art work, stories for the archives about life during the coronavirus
- Take-home craft/ STEM activity kits for families
- Ramping up virtual programs – more for children; getting adult side going; involving more staff, & possibly, members of the community (e.g., Police Chief, pastors, etc.)
- Book clubs not launching easily
- Program on misinformation in the coronavirus age
- Drive-in movie in the parking lot w/ inflatable screen
- Offering 1-on1 remote tech support to patrons
- Guidance on filing for unemployment
- Big idea – helping coordinate a mutual aid society for Plaistow
(https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/y3mkjv/what-is-mutual-aid-and-how-can-it-help-with-coronavirus)

UPDATED STAFF PROCEDURES

March 5, 2020

With the likelihood of more staff interaction this week, I want to stress again the importance of following our official public safety protocols. If you do not follow these, we all risk losing the privilege of being able to work in the library.

This is a recap of & update to the existing procedures --

1./ Check for symptoms before you come to work. Do not come in if you, or someone you're regularly in close contact with, has a fever, persistent cough, or shortness of breath.

Also stay at home if you're sneezing excessively (for example, because of allergies), or you're experiencing other less common symptoms of infection: tiredness, aches & pains, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of sense of taste or smell.

2./ Maintain physical distance from one another -- a minimum of 6 feet, ideally more.

3./ Set up your own individual workspace & do not touch or leave things at others' workspaces. Carry your own pens & pencils around with you.

Do not use the front desk as a common area; Jen & Sherri should adopt one side or the other. In particular, the phones, mice, keyboards, pens, papers, etc. are off-limits to everyone except them. If there's an issue, find a solution that honors these guidelines.

4./ Practice good hygiene. Touch your face as little as possible and wash your hands regularly -- for at least 20s, particularly after touching door handles & other commonly-touched surfaces. Studies have shown that these surfaces have extremely high viral & bacterial loads. Wipe them down after use, or minimize physical contact (e.g., by using a paper towel to open bathroom doors).

5./ These are important rules and every staff member is authorized to enforce them. Any issues can & should be reported to me.

6./ The choice whether to wear a mask is up to you. Here's the CDC's latest guidance: "CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission."

ACV (4/5/2020 email)

From: Fisher, Lori via Nhais-I
To: nhais-l@maillist2.nh.gov
Sent: April 7, 2020 at 9:10 AM
Subject: [Nhais-I] Budgets, budget cuts, budget committees

Good morning,

After our director's call on employment yesterday, I decided to reach out to a municipal attorney regarding questions that came up about budgets, budget committee emergency meetings, and what can be done to a library's budget IF IT HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED AT TOWN MEETING. Please note that situation in caps.

1. The town's budget committee cannot do anything about a town budget that has already been passed by the town. Per RSA 32:22, the budget committee can request a review of expenditures from each town department, and encourage them to spend less. But they cannot mandate any changes to a budget passed by the town.
2. Once a budget is approved at town meeting, the library trustees are the only ones per RSA 202-A:11 that can expend the library's appropriation. That also means that the trustees are the only ones who can mandate cutting library spending so that there is money left over to go back into the town's general fund at the end of the fiscal year.
3. The board of selectmen can mandate other town departments do a % cut of their budgets to have money that will go back to the general fund at the end of the fiscal year. But the BOS cannot do that to the library given RSA 202-A:11. HOWEVER...remember that there will be a political cost if all other town departments cut spending and the library does not.
4. In a town where the budget has been approved by town meeting, cutting expenditures will NOT reduce this year's tax bill. The tax rate is based on the amount appropriated by residents at town meeting. What would happen is that any unspent monies at the end of the fiscal year would roll back into the town's general fund, possibly setting the town up for a lower tax rate the next fiscal year (if the budget does not increase).

All towns and cities in NH are members of the NH Municipal Association, so any library that has questions about this process can certainly either call them at 224-7447 or email at legalinquiries@nhmunicipal.org. Also, you can consult with your town attorney on these issues.

I hope this is helpful!

Lori

Lori Fisher
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NH Councilor – American Library Association (2019-2021)
Advocacy and Legislative Committee Co-Chair – New Hampshire Library Association

Assistant State Librarian April 7th on Budgets.docx

PLAISTOW PUBLIC LIBRARY
Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual
 January through March 2020

	First Qtr Variance vs. Budget	<u>FY 2020 Budget</u>	<u>5%</u>
BOOKKEEPING	425	5,100	
FACILITY EXPENSES			
BUILDING INSURANCE	(1)	16,859	
JANITOR	0	29,515	(2,550)
LANDSCAPING	775	7,900	(1,500)
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	(2717)	14,290	
SERVICE CONTRACTS	(1347)	7,710	
Total FACILITY EXPENSES	<u>(3290)</u>	<u>76,274</u>	(4,050)
LEGAL	(500)	500	
LIABILITY	(1000)	1,000	
MATERIALS	(1893)	35,000	(7,000)
MISCELLANEOUS	115		
ONLINE RESOURCES	2434	8,000	
PAYROLL EXPENSES	0		
FSA FEES	(248)	273	
HEALTH INSURANCE	(7313)	74,513	
LIFE/STD/LTD	(32)	2,880	
MEDICARE	(96)	4,177	
RETIREMENT	(30)	20,108	
SALARIES	(703)	288,087	
SOCIAL SECURITY	(403)	17,862	
WORKERS COMP	(1000)	1,000	
Total PAYROLL EXPENSES	<u>(9825)</u>	<u>408,900</u>	(1,800)
PERSONNEL			
Total CONTINUING EDUC'N	(301)	2,000	(1,500)
PROFESSIONAL DUES	(735)	750	(500)
Total PERSONNEL	<u>(1036)</u>	<u>2,750</u>	(2,000)
POSTAGE	12	500	
PROGRAMS/PUBLIC ACTIVITIES	(210)	10,000	(3,500)
REIMBURSABLE	(600)		
SUPPLIES	(179)	11,500	(2,000)
TECHNICAL SERVICES	1364	6,000	
UTILITIES			
ELECTRIC	(1385)	20,500	
GAS	(1827)	12,000	
TELEPHONE	(15)	1,150	
Total UTILITIES	<u>(3227)</u>	<u>33,650</u>	(5,000)
BUDGET COMMITMENT			(4,650)
	<u>(17,410)</u>	<u>599,174</u>	<u>(30,000)</u>