

Holliston Board of Library Trustees Meeting Minutes of October 4, 2023

Members present: Karla Alfred, Kara Peterson, Kristy Wiwczar, Mareoun Bo Yai, Gwentyth Swain, Nancy Baron

Also Present: Deric Wilson, Director, Aislinn Weaver, President of the Friends of the Holliston Public Library

Karla Alfred called the meeting to order at 7:04PM and read the statement regarding suspension of certain provisions of the open meeting law and the authorized use of remote participation. A roll call of attendance was taken.

I. Approval of September 6, 2023, minutes.

Minor edits were suggested to clarify wording.

Moved to accept minutes as amended: Karla Alfred

Seconded: Kara Peterson

Vote: All in favor.

II. Director's Report

Someone tripped on a grate in front of the children's room entrance three weeks ago. The director is soliciting bids to repair/replace. A request is being submitted for the warrant for an expanded ADA upgrade to both fix the grate and make the area accessible to all. The door handle in that area is also being replaced.

In September, building project surveys continued to be turned in. Nearly 400 responses have been submitted. People surveyed are positive—pleased that their input is being requested. Greater accessibility for all is one theme that Deric has seen in the responses. Negative feedback follows that noted in previous meeting minutes for September. Kristy asked if the respondents are a good demographic sampling of Holliston residents, and Deric noted that they run the whole range of ages. He also said he will work on some way to solicit more input from senior center users.

It's possible that Flagg Field, a potential building site, will not be available, but the current building and the DPW site on Arch Street remain viable options.

In adult programming, Desserts with the Director offered another opportunity to meet with the director, who used the opportunity to talk to patrons about the building program. He praised the pastries from Gaetanos. Additionally, the morning and evening Mah Jong classes were quite full and participants are eager to continue beyond the initial sessions.

III. Building Use Policy Review–After Hours Programs

The rule of thumb has always been that a library staff member has been on site when there are after hours programs, but there is no clear policy and events have been okayed on a case-by-case basis. Deric suggested that a policy would be useful and he will draft one for the next meeting.

Aislinn brought forward a Friends of the Library idea of having a “Sip & Shop,” an adult book fair with refreshments (potentially including alcohol). This sale could include books that library staff are hoping to add to the collection and that people might be interested in buying for the collection. Proceeds would go toward library programming. If serving alcohol, Karla indicated that the Friends would need to card at the door and make this a 21 and older event. The idea was well received, and Aislinn will move ahead with planning.

IV. Minimum Staffing Policy–Updates

The director has done some outreach to other libraries to see what their policies are on what happens when there are too few staff members to safely keep the library open. Deric also spoke with staff and found that staff supported keeping the building open for one hour at minimum staffing, while seeking another staff member to come in.

On Saturday, a staff member could not come in and staff levels were lower than typical—just 2 people working in the building. Another staff member came in for part of the afternoon, and under the proposed policy, the library was closed at 1:30 half an hour prior to the usual closing.

Deric has drafted the new policy and the Trustees will be able to look at it and comment on it at the next meeting.

V. Children’s Room Update

Children’s programming is continuing without major interruption in spite of the absence of a Children’s Librarian, as other staff have stepped in to help with storytimes and other programming pieces.

VI. Children’s Librarian Search Update

The director hopes to schedule 6-7 interviews next week, with the view to make an offer to a candidate to fill the vacant Children's Librarian position by the end of the week.

VII. Volunteer Appreciation

This event will take place on October 19 and Trustees are invited to attend. It's an opportunity to let volunteers know how much their help is appreciated.

The director talked to some volunteers about paid occasional on-call work as substitute staff to help out during times when staffing is stretched.

There has been some staff turnover, and a new staff member started yesterday. There may be future opportunities to train substitute staff members for more settled hours as needs arise.

VIII. Other Business

A. Board Vacancy.

The director says Travis Ahern requests a date by which the Board will have solicited interest in a new trustee to fill the vacancy. This is a joint appointment between the Library Board and the Select Board. Nancy suggests the board could solicit interest by October 27; those interested could attend the next Library Board meeting (November 1) where they would be interviewed; and the Library Board would deliberate and then forward a candidate to the next Select Board meeting. Prior to this the vacancy will be advertised in the Holliston Reporter.

B. Sensitivity Concern.

The director received a notice through our website, via a form, regarding cultural insensitivity. Specifically, the Desserts with Director event was scheduled after, but not during, Yom Kippur and the person sending the form felt that this timing was insensitive. The notice came from a person using a fake email which made it impossible for the director to respond. The event went on as scheduled.

Karla underscored that when patrons have issues or complaints to air, the Board is happy to hear them as long as they are from an identified source so that a dialogue is possible.

C. Possible Signage.

Kara Peterson brought to Deric the idea of adopting signage to say "Welcome" in several different languages, similar to that used at Framingham Public Library. Karla suggested contacting the public schools to find out what languages are most spoken in Holliston. Deric is receptive to the idea.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Gwenyth Swain.

Seconded: Kara Peterson

Vote: All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM

Next Scheduled Meeting: November 1, 2023, at 7PM by remote participation.