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Library Trustees Minutes 02-21-2007

Robbins Library Board of Trustees
February 21, 2007

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:22 PM. Attending were trustees David Castiglioni, Katharine Fennelly, Barbara Muldoon, Joyce Radochia and Susan Ruderman. Patricia Deal and Frank Murphy were absent. Also attending were library director Maryellen Loud, assistant director Cynthia Diminture and Finance Committee liaisons Mary Margaret Franclemont and John Deyst.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 10th meeting were approved as written on a motion by Ms. Muldoon; seconded by Ms. Radochia.

Finance Committee Liaisons

Finance Committee liaisons Mary Margaret Franclemont briefed the trustees about the work of the committee. The full committee has only met twice thus far, so there is not yet anything to report. They asked to hear from the Board of Trustees members regarding what to share with the committee about the library budget requests and what needs special emphasis. Ms. Loud expressed particular concern about the building maintenance line item and the library's reliance on part time hours of the Technology Librarian when the library is heavily dependent on technology. Board members noted the issues of Thursday morning and Sunday hours as well the necessity of meeting state aid certification requirements. The Finance Committee liaisons will update the director as the work of the committee progresses.

Communications

1. Oakes Plympton sent a letter to the trustees and administration with several questions and concerns. (dimmer switch for the Community Room lights, signs in the elevator denoting the Lower Level Rear, a request to allow meeting participants to stay until 9:30 PM, a proposal for the selection of the book "Stories of Early 20th Century Life, an Oral History of Arlington" as the 2007 Community Read book title and a request to schedule a book signing for his new book) Discussion took place and Ms. Ruderman will draft a letter in response to the issues raised by Mr. Plympton. 2. Ms. Loud distributed a flyer for the MLA Annual Legislative Breakfast to be held this year at the Watertown Public Library on Friday, March 23rd. She encouraged everyone to attend.

Director's Report

The trustees reviewed the written report of the director. The Board will send a thank-you note to resident Bruce Carter for his generous donation of copies of his aerial photographs which have been on display at the library for the last

month. Clarification was requested about the Fox Revenue Study Committee. Also discussed were regionalization of services, new book drops and the “Conversation Circles” grant for which the library will apply.

Policy on Informational Displays

Ms. Fennelly met with Ms. Loud to review/update the existing policy, with input from Mr. Murphy. At the outset, it was decided to create separate policies for informational displays and art exhibits. Drafts of each policy were distributed. Some discussion centered on entry #8 regarding religious and political displays. The consensus of the group was that displays that include philosophies, general platforms and ideas are acceptable, but those which proselytize or promote particular candidates are not. The spirit of the document was approved, but the final version will be voted on at the March meeting. Ms. Loud mentioned that postcards will be mailed to community groups who have not yet availed themselves of display space.

Policy on Art Exhibits

With some minor changes, the substance of this policy was agreeable to the Board who will take a final vote on it at the March meeting.

Report on Russell Fund Literacy Programs

Trustees reviewed the written report of Liza Halley, Russell Fund Coordinator, regarding the programs which have been held or will be conducted soon with a focus on building literacy. These programs were planned in place of the author programs in the schools that have been funded in previous years. The purpose of the ten diverse programs is to promote literacy and bring children in contact with authors, illustrators, writing, storytelling and poetry. Among the programs are “Stories from Around the World” by Sharon Kennedy, a February author birthday celebration, “Greek Myths for Kids I” by the Hampstead Players, “Family Fun with Poetry” by Jeff Nathan, “Jaws, Claws and Paws” by Karen Chace (animal stories from around the world) and R.E.A.D. – Story Hour with a Dog Team, conducted by Massachusetts Pet Partners. Discussion took place about the programs that have an important impact on a smaller number of children versus the exposure of many children to an author in the school-centered program. This issue will be revisited prior to next year’s Russell Fund requests. Ms. Loud reported that a patron had suggested that participants at programs be afforded an opportunity to make a donation to the library trust funds. Ms. Ruderman expressed some concerns about this approach. It will be further discussed at a future meeting.

Mid-Year Review of Trustee and Administrative Goals

Many of the stated goals have been met or are in progress. Administrative -Exterior lighting improvements will take place. A shelving plan is being explored and staff is still looking at examples of signage. The library information kiosk is in place and a self-checkout station will be installed next year. At the end of the year, there will be an evaluation of the DVD rental collection. Nancy Gentile will conduct a focus group within the small business community, the YA advisory board is active and Ms. Loud has joined the Rotary Club. An LSTA grant has been received for database promotion and a group of staff is working on a website revision. In the absence of school librarians to collaborate on it, the Discovery Kits project may not go forward.

Trustee – Goals are in four categories : Library Services to the Community, Library Personnel, Facilities and Financial. Ms. Fennelly agreed to try working on a cooperative calendar with the Friends of the Library. Space needs are being reevaluated and a study/recommendation will be presented at the next trustee meeting. Exterior “no smoking” signs need to be re-placed to prohibit smoking directly outside the front doors of the building. On the issue of security cameras, Ms. Loud will gather information from other Minuteman Library Directors and will present it at the next meeting. The trust fund policy analysis seems to be at a standstill. Ms. Muldoon will check into the status of this project. No progress has taken place on setting up a library endowment. Approximately \$19,000 has been brought in from the recent fundraising solicitation. Ms. Ruderman believes that there is a need for substantial additions to the donor name database. Ways to accomplish this were discussed. The annual report of donors will be included in the spring newsletter.

Author Program

The program chair, Pat Deal, was absent. Other members of the Board volunteered to provide the introduction, food and beverages for next week's (March 1st) program with Alice Hoffman in the library Community Room.

Other

Ms. Fennelly made a motion; seconded by Ms. Radochia, to allocate up to \$1,000 from the Robbins Art Fund for re-framing of prints. The trustees reviewed an email message from Judi Paradis who is working on a task force to amend education laws to mandate professional librarians in public schools. This would not necessarily be accompanied by additional funding, but would instead divide current funding in different ways. After discussion, a consensus was reached that individual members could actively support the work of this task force, but that the Board would not do so as a group. Ms. Radochia reported that she will soon learn whether Jean Shaheen will be able to be the inaugural speaker for the Margaret Spengler lecture series.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM on a motion by Ms. Fennelly. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 14th at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Diminture