

- 1) At 7:31pm the online meeting was called to order by Ms. Karp. Present were Hildy Karp, Tracy Carroll, Marietta Zacker, Lora Tazewell, Brian O’Leary, Emily Brown, Ritu Pancholy, Jill Faherty, Friends Representative Kathie Abrams, Village Trustee Karen Hilton, South Orange Community Member Alyssa Aronson, and Jenna Leis.
- 2) **Introductions:** The Board welcomed new member Ms. Pancholy. Brief introductions were made by those in attendance. Ms. Pancholy is excited to be joining the Board. She is an employment attorney by trade and she and her family are active library users.
- 3) **Minutes of the February 2023 Library Board Meeting:** Ms. Karp pointed out a typo under the director’s report, building update section i. The word ‘store’ was changed to ‘stored’. A motion was made by Mrs. Carroll to approve the meeting minutes from the February 22nd, 2023 board meeting with this correction. It was seconded by Mr. O’Leary and approved by all with the exception of Ms. Pancholy who recused herself due to be absent from that meeting.
- 4) **Friends of SOPL update:** Ms. Abrams updated the Board on the latest news from the Friends.

The Friends recently received a request from the library for \$7,800 to support the summer reading program this year for children, teens, and adults. Funds will be going towards programming, materials, books, entertainment, and incentives for participants. Ms. Faherty said that the library is planning to purchase books to give away to patrons this year for participation. The Friends approved the request and Ms. Abrams will get the check to the Library soon. The Board expressed their appreciation for the Friends and their support in this endeavor.

Ms. Faherty and Youth Services Librarian Keisha Miller recently did a presentation to the Friends on the new World Books online and VOX books collection. These were both funded by the Friends and the VOX books were in honor of member Linda Chandross, who recently passed. Ms. Abrams said it was a lovely presentation and hope that more parents will attend in the future, as it was great information. Ms. Miller plans have more meetings like this in the future with the goal of starting a Parent Squad.

The next jewelry sale will be held on May 6th and 7th. The Board should expect an email asking for volunteers and encouraging attendance. Over the last two years they made about \$30,000 in sales and hope to do just as well this year.

The in-house book sale continues at the library. There is currently a shelf dedicated to it by the elevator. A few Friends members tend to it regularly. Most libraries have a similar set up and the sales continue to add up.

- 5) **Foundation Update:** Mrs. Carroll attended the most recent Foundation meeting and said that they discussed a number of procedural things as well as the annual campaign. They continue to move forward with training for members on how to approach potential big donors. There will be more opportunities for these trainings in the future.

Ms. Zacker said that Foundation Member Eve Peterson has been helping tremendously to make sure the policies are all in line and that members are aware of their tasks in conjunction with supporting the library.

- a. *Capital Campaign:* In regards to the Capital Campaign Ms. Zacker shared with the Board some pictures recently taken at the library by photographer Doug Zacker. He came to the library the previous week to do a photoshoot of daily operations of the library as well as programs going on. These photos will be used in brochures to support the campaign to the public. Mr. Zacker will be back this coming Saturday taking pictures at a library event from 11am to 4pm. If any Board members are available to come by and have their headshot done that day, please let Ms. Zacker know. These will be used in materials so the Board's faces are known. If members have one already it can be used but Ms. Zacker encourages everyone to come as it would be nice to have all headshots taken in the library.

- 6) **Bills Payable:** Ms. Karp had a question in regards to the annual piano tuning in this month's bills and if this was something done every year. Ms. Faherty was unsure if this was the case before she started working at the library but one was done last year in preparation for a teen program when the piano was used. The most recent one was done in preparation for a piano series the library has been hosting.

A motion was made by Mr. O'Leary to approve the bills payable from Operating account totaling \$12,042.03 and the Trustees account totaling \$990.25. This was seconded by Ms. Zacker and approved by all.

7) **Committee updates**

- a. *Finance:* Mr. O'Leary reported that at the previous Finance Committee meeting they continued the conversation around possible consortia for the library to join. Ms. Faherty has continued to work with two possible consortia, BCCLS (Bergen County Cooperative Library System) and PALS (Passaic County) to receive price quotes. There has been a lot of interest from the community and the Village Trustees in joining a consortium. It would be great to join one before the move to a temporary location during the building project.

Due to the nature of negotiations as well as a request from both consortia the prices are not to be shared publicly. The Board will be going into a closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss further. The closed session is not to

make a final decision, just to evaluate the options with the Board and to make sure they are better informed.

Ms. Hilton asked if this will require an RFI or RFP to move forward. Ms. Faherty wasn't sure at this time. She thinks it wouldn't as it is similar to when the library purchases a new database where one is not needed but will check with the Village for a definitive answer.

In regards to committee membership, current Board members are Mr. O'Leary and Jamie Saeed. Andrew Ha did attend meetings but had to step away for reasons that will be discussed later in the meeting. Any Board members interested in joining can speak with Mr. O'Leary. They typically meet the week before a Board meeting for about an hour. Ms. Karp asked if it would be useful to have a non-board member join the committee. This could be a community member with finance experience. She asked the committee to think on this and let her know. Mr. O'Leary will bring it up at the next meeting.

- b. *Personnel:* Mrs. Carroll said that the Personnel Committee will be meeting soon with Ms. Faherty to have an understanding of expectations halfway through the year and to discuss where she is in regards to her goals. Mrs. Carroll will reach out soon to schedule it.

Ms. Pancholy had brought up prior to the meeting to Ms. Karp the idea of having procedures in place for complaints and issues from the staff. She has experience creating these policies for organizations and wants to have a clear policy in place in the case of any harassment or similar issues. In 2023 she said this is a necessary thing to have in place. Mrs. Carroll also brought up the idea of having this available for public complaints as well.

- c. *Communications Committee:* Ms. Faherty stated that the Communications Committee continues to meet monthly. Ms. Saeed is currently the only Board member on the committee; other members consist of library staff and community members with communication and marketing expertise.

Their main project currently has been focused on promoting this year's summer reading. They are looking into the possibility of doing direct mailing to advertise the program as well as putting something in the News Record.

As discussed in previous Board meeting an advertisement was gone out to hire someone in a temporary marketing position. The job posting is live and they have received two applications so far. Ms. Faherty discussed expanding their search out of the SOMA area. This position is being funded by the Foundation through the funds collection from last year's annual appeal. The position is a short-term consultant who reports to the library.

- d. *Building Advisory:*

- i. *Building Project:* Ms. Karp reported that since the RFP for a Construction Manager for the building project has gone live the committee has been

relatively quiet. The plan is to start regular meetings again at the end of this month, early April. These meetings will include the architect, Andrew Berman. He has currently been working close with the library staff to get the nitty-gritty specifics of the plan and is now ready to start bringing it to a wider audience. Discussions have been with key members of the staff in order to create a layout and respond to patron and staff needs. There is no final layout as of this moment.

As of now there are no other Board members sitting on the committee regularly besides Ms. Karp but as discussed previously, members are welcome to join them for parts of the project they have an interest in.

The RFP for the Construction Manager deadline for proposals is April 4, after which the committee will review the proposals.

8) Director's Report:

a. *Building update:*

- i. *Connett Building:* Ms. Faherty updated the Board that they are still waiting for approval from the State to remove the documents being stored in the basement. Remediation of the building cannot move forward until this is done. They are expecting a call any day now.

The furnace in Connett has recently been fixed. In January it failed inspection due to a leak. But it recently passed and the inspection documentation was posted.

- ii. *Current Building:* As the Board has been made aware the heat in the current building has not been working well. It is currently being provided by the HVAC system on the roof. Ms. Faherty is working with the Village Building Department to locate an affordable replacement part for the furnace to provide heat for the next winter. Parts are extremely expensive due to its old age and the servicing company Ramas had given them a very high quote. The timing of the move to a temporary location is being taken into account with this.

- b. *Programming and Services Update:* For the month of February the library put on a total of 38 programs for all ages, all of which were on site. During the Month of March, the library is offering 60 programs for all ages. The increase is because it is Makers Month across New Jersey.

In addition to these programs the library will be hosting Makers Mayhem on March 25th. Simultaneous programing will be happening from 11am- 4pm inside the library due to the expectation of rain. They are expecting a large crowd as in previous years between 100 – 150 people have been in attendance.

Along with Makers programs the library has once again been hosting tax support from AARP volunteers. This has been taking place every Tuesday and Thursday morning and will be running through April 13th. It has been very popular with each week booked full for appointments.

The library has also been aiming more programs towards older adults. New Adult Services Librarian Erica Dragonetti has been facilitating lots of crafts aimed towards older adults. They have so far been very popular with excellent turnout.

As previously mentioned this week kicked off a series of musical programs. The series is called Bach in the Subways and started today for Bach's 338th birthday. Birgit Matzerath played for about 45 minutes to a sizable crowd. This is an international program and the library is currently the only one in New Jersey participating. It is ongoing and will take place every other day at noon through the end of the month.

Two new monitors have been installed in the library to promote programs, one in the children's room and the other behind adult circulation. Each displays a slideshow of programs, local news, new books, etc. for patrons. They have provided great visibility to the library programs and have received compliments from patrons who feel more informed.

Ms. Faherty said that there has been a lot of focus on merchandising of what the library has to offer. As mentioned in the Friends update there are the new VOX books collection. These books all have a built in audio component and are a popular new form of audiobook.

The library has also been merchandising collections of staff picks and monthly themes. These displays are overseen by Ms. Leis and have been seeing a lot of turnover lately.

- c. *Annual State Report*: Earlier this month the annual state report was submitted to the New Jersey State Library. Ms. Faherty worked with the Head of Reference and Library Services, Lindita Cani to pull numbers and statistics for the report. She shared with the Board the high points of it to show how the library has changed in the last year.

There was an overall 8% increase in new library card holders for South Orange residents and a 51% increase in new non-resident card holders. Some of the increase in non-resident card holders can be attributed to surrounding towns libraries being closed or having limited operations, such as Maplewood, West Orange, Orange, and East Orange libraries.

There was an overall average increase of 9% in attendance at the library. The staff have been taking regular counts each hour of patrons. Ms. Faherty did not have any long term numbers to compare these two so the increase is up from last year.

The website has seen a 4% increase in traffic. With the new communication consultant, the goal is to get this number up. A 10.8% increase was seen in the budget, most of which went towards salaries and benefits.

Reference transactions went up 124% for both in-person and over the phone. It is unknown why there was such a high increase at this time. Summer reading books read saw an 18% increase.

There was a 21% increase in internal Wi-Fi traffic. Last year did see the addition of outside Wi-Fi transmitters for public use. Usage of public computers was flat as they continue to be popular. The computers are usually full so there is no room for growth unless more were added to the floor.

In regards to material usage there was an overall decrease of 11% in holdings. This can be contributed to intensive weeding of the AV collection including DVDs, CDs, and audiobooks on the basis of usage. There was also an inventory done of the entire collection, after which records of missing books were deleted in order to update the records. These missing materials were over a period of 10 years. The records are now reflective of what is actually in the library. The library has increased its purchase of new, best sellers and continues to focus on purchasing e-materials as they are popular and will not need space in the temporary location.

The library also increased its databases by 38% and now have about 25. Costs for this have come from the operating budget as well as contributions from the Friends. More additions are being looked at including some financial resources for patrons.

Ms. Karp asked if any of these numbers were back to what they were pre-COVID in terms of circulation, people in the building, programs, etc. Ms. Faherty would have to look up any exact numbers but in speaking with Ms. Cani she said that some of them are back to pre-Covid levels. While some, such as reference transaction, are much higher. The program count numbers aren't quite back to normal. The teen population is one that has taken a hit and Ms. Miller is working to grow that back up. Older adults have also been slow to come back and Ms. Dragonetti is working to pull them in as well.

Ms. Faherty can make the whole report available to the Board upon request. Mrs. Carroll informed the Board that these reports are available from the State Library upon request for any public library in New Jersey.

- 9) **Board composition:** Board member Andrew Ha will be stepping down effective immediately due to personal health reasons. Ms. Karp asked that if anyone has input on potential members to let her know. Recommendations with finance, architectural, or any expertise relevant to the building project are welcome. Ms. Faherty will be reaching out to the library staff as well for their input.

Elections are coming up in June. If anyone has an interested in taking on a different role amongst the Board please let Ms. Karp know. If not the slate will be voted on as is.

- 10) **New Business:** Ms. Tazewell informed the Board that the librarians of the SOMA community met this week to put together ideas for this year's summer reading. Ms. Miller is preparing to make school visits to speak with students and promote it. Ms. Tazewell is confident this will bring an influx of teens back into the library. During the pandemic they were unable to do their usual outreach and she thinks this will make a difference this year.

- 11) **Current and Upcoming:** Next Board meeting scheduled for April 18th at 7:30pm and will be held in person at the library.

- 12) Mr. O'Leary motion to have the Board go into executive session at 8:42pm. This was seconded by Ms. Tazewell and approved by all. The session was in regards to discussing consortium options which may be made public at a later date.

- 13) Mr. O'Leary motioned to end executive session at 9:42pm. This was seconded by Ms. Brown and approved by all.

- 14) The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:42pm

Respectfully submitted by Jenna Leis

