

Grafton Library Trustees Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 6:03.

Present

Trustees: Andrew Cushing, Karen Johnson, Jeff Nunes

Public: Leif Hogue, Cindy Kudlik, Gary Whitney, George Curran, Katelyn Coolley, Brenda Pierson, Deb Clough, Paul Vogt, Susan Tresch Fienberg

Immediate Business

Minutes Approval

The trustees voted unanimously to approve the 10.20.22 minutes.

MOU with Selectboard

There was a discussion regarding the purpose of the MOU: Is it to designate which of the library's operating expenses are covered by tax revenue and which by the library's own funds? If so, the expenses to be paid by the town should mirror the essentials required to operate the library, and there should be agreement between the Trustees and the Selectboard regarding the expense categories that fit that description.

Andrew will convene a smaller group to revise the MOU and present a new version for approval at the December meeting of the Trustees.

Cake Wednesday

Kate has asked Deb and Brenda to propose to participants that they meet outside of library operating hours or at another location due to feedback from other patrons regarding the degree to which this gathering discourages them from using the library on Wednesday mornings. Participants expressed reluctance to change the time or location of the gathering as most combine their participation with using library resources and other Wednesday errands. Brenda explained that she never intended to launch a group when she began bringing her cakes to the library on Wednesday morning eleven years ago. She simply wanted to share the cakes with whomever happened to be there. She and Deb also commented that the group is typically dispersed by 10:30.

Andrew noted that Kate is the second librarian to express concern over the impact of Cake Wednesday on other patrons, and that the trustees need to make sure staff feel supported. Several people suggested that a compromise might be the best way to address this issue, such

as making Cake Wednesday a monthly event rather than a weekly event, or scheduling it shortly before the end of the morning shift so that attendees could check out books at the beginning of their time together while continuing to meet after the library shift ends. Susan commented that volunteers are already taking responsibility for opening and locking the library for programs that take place outside of operating hours. This is permissible as long as the volunteer does not access the library computer or perform other staff functions.

Andrew proposed that a compromise be developed and presented at the December trustee meeting.

Budget Session

Andrew announced that the library's budget review session with the Selectboard and Budget Committee will be on Tuesday, 11/22, at 5:05.

Strategic Plan Annual Review

Susan presented an overview of our progress toward meeting the objectives of the strategic plan over the past year and solicited feedback from the members of the Strategic Planning Committee that were present at this meeting (Andrew, Karen, Cindy, Gary, George). She organized her comments to align with the plan's strategic priorities, as summarized below:

1. Improve communications with Grafton residents to increase awareness of library and community resources and activities.
 - We are now publishing a semi-annual library newsletter mailed to all Grafton households. Three issues have been distributed thus far, with printing and mailing costs covered by FoGL.
 - Although we did not build a new library website, Kate is making excellent use of the new town website to promote library services and programs, and patrons are encouraged to sign up for library alerts via the town website.
 - Kate distributes a terrific monthly e-mail newsletter promoting all programs in the upcoming month and posts regularly on Facebook.
 - Event flyers have been distributed at various locations across town.
 - Progress on the proposed sign on Route 4 has stalled. However, FoGL has committed to funding the sign with proceeds from the 2022 Spring Fling fundraiser.
 - Enhanced outreach has attracted new folks to the library and library programs, with overall visits ranging from 124 – 174 per month over the past 10 months.
 - A new collaboration with LBS (called "Grafton Greeters") has been launched to provide welcome baskets to new Grafton residents. In addition to handmade gifts, a donated book, and discount coupons for local businesses, basket contents will include three new

brochures describing town government and services, local organizations, and recreation resources. These brochures will also be made available at the library and the new meetinghouse marketplace. FoGL and LBS are funding this project.

- Voter information and election flyers have been distributed at the library and other locations in collaboration with the Supervisors of the Checklist.
- We have not taken action to disseminate information regarding public benefits and human services available to Grafton residents. If we choose to retain this task, it should be shifted to the coming year in the implementation plan.

2. Track and learn from activity and utilization data; use data to inform decision-making.

- Kate and Lynn have created an excellent Excel chart for reporting monthly utilization statistics. Attendance data for new clubs and programs have informed decisions regarding which to retain and which to sunset.
- Staff maintain a simple-to-use tally for tracking how people hear about library programs to help us determine the most effective forms of outreach.

3. Identify and address facility issues that pose barriers to pursuing the library's mission and vision.

- Susan created an inventory of facility needs associated with implementing the strategic plan. This exercise only reinforced what we already know about the library's limitations:
 - It cannot comfortably accommodate quiet use and programming at the same time, and space for programming is extremely limited.
 - The lack of an indoor toilet and plumbing pose problems for staff and patrons alike.
 - Parking is inadequate for activities attracting more than a few people.
 - The collection is tightly constrained by the limited space.
- STF set the stage for developing a plan to address facility issues by preparing a summary of all the planning work and decisions that led to the barn library proposal.
- The Trustees reviewed options for adding an indoor toilet and plumbing. None of the options seemed practical or cost-effective.
- Per Katelyn's recommendation, the Trustees decided to engage a new porta-potty vendor who will provide a new unit and clean it weekly. This addresses serious problems with the state of the old porta-potty but adds significant expense to the operating budget.
- The Trustees voted to pursue the development of a new library facility as a long-term solution to the library's facility issues and to advance the library's mission and vision.

4. Optimize the library's operating hours.

- The Trustees set a policy that calls for scheduling all new group programming outside of library operating hours. This maximizes use of the building while limiting conflict between quiet use and group programming.
- The Trustees decided to postpone any decisions about changing the regular operating schedule because they didn't want to implement too many changes at once. This issue should be taken up in the coming year as there is interest in modifying the schedule in order to make the library more accessible to more patrons.
- Because the library's utility budget is so constrained, the trustees decided not to add a quiet-use-only or a socialization-only shift this year.
- The library staff rearranged the library's shelves and furniture to optimize the use of our limited space. This rearrangement makes the library much more user-friendly.

5. Increase engagement of volunteers in support of library programs and services.

- George reviewed rules governing the use of volunteers in settings with paid staff. Since volunteers cannot take on the functions of paid staff, we cannot use volunteers to extend the library's regular operating hours.
- Susan created a job description for volunteers who coordinate the new clubs. This job description ensures that the Director oversees and is fully aware of all club communications and activity.
- Kate keeps state's best practices for library volunteers on hand.
- Susan volunteered to coordinate the book club.
- Rick Fienberg volunteered to lead the new astronomy club.
- Susan was recruited to produce and prepare the mailing of the semi-annual print newsletter.
- FoGL continues to organize and facilitate community events throughout the year, which are in keeping with the library's goals and objectives (i.e. providing opportunities for Grafton residents to gather and connect.)
- Expanding programming further will mean recruiting additional volunteers.

6. Increase collaboration with nearby libraries and other Grafton organizations to advance the library's mission.
 - LBS, the library, and FoGL are collaborating to launch the new “Grafton Greeters” project, which is well aligned with two strategic priorities as well as the library’s mission and vision:
 - Increasing awareness of town and community resources
 - Collaborating with other Grafton organizations
 - Providing opportunities for neighbors to connect
 - Advancing community spirit
 - The Rec Committee has supported library programming by allowing us to use the Cook Shack for astronomy club meetings.
 - Kate has reached out to Canaan and Danbury town libraries, the middle school, and the high school to promote our events, but there have been no collaborative efforts thus far.
7. Develop programming that responds to local needs and interests.

Adult & family programming

- We have five ongoing interest groups/clubs, four of which are new this year:
 - book club
 - astronomy club
 - fiber arts club
 - puzzle club (a new idea, not mentioned in the strategic plan)
 - a fledgling garden club, which planted the new library garden and will reconvene in the spring to plan additional projects
- Book club has exceeded our goal of attracting an average of 10 participants per meeting, with as many as 15 showing up in recent months.
- FoGL sponsored a popular NH Humanities program on NH cemeteries, which drew a big audience at the East Grafton Church. Mary Gasiorowski organized a cemetery scavenger hunt to complement the program.

Children’s programming

- Kate has piloted a number of great concepts – including “A Walk in Grafton,” Game Night, and Coding Club – but attendance has been sparse.
- The new “bookworms” reading-motivation program for kids has attracted six enthusiastic participants so far.
- We haven’t yet pursued grant-funded summer programming, but may be able to do so this coming summer. Planning will need to begin ASAP to secure needed funding.
- We’ll continue testing new ideas for youth programming in the coming year and will investigate interest in starting a homework club at the library

8. Secure grant funding to support new programming and facilities.

- We secured a \$4,160 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to purchase a new staff computer and three new laptops for patrons.
- We have compiled a list grant sources that provide capital funds for new library facilities.

Directors Report

There were a total of 174 library visits, 222 checkouts, and 4 new patrons in October.

37 trick-or-treaters visited the library on Halloween and several created “bookworms” promoting books they have read while they were there.

Both the Fiber Arts Club and Puzzle Pals saw increased attendance in October.

The new “Grafton Greeters” group has asked for space in the library basement to store supplies for welcome baskets that will be delivered to new Grafton residents. This group also asked that they be able to include a book in each basket from the library’s supply of surplus donations. The trustees voted unanimously to approved both requests.

Treasurer’s Report

Karen presented the “Budget vs. Actual” report, which shows library expenses through October that have been paid by the town. This report will be amended to reflect all money spent on budgeted expenses, including bills paid with library funds, before the upcoming budget meeting with the Selectboard.

Karen also noted that the town has paid the Overdrive subscription bill, which means that the interest on the town trust fund designated for books (\$360.77) will not be needed to pay this bill and can be transferred to the Director’s account for purchasing new books for the shelves.

Karen announced that her uncle has donated \$1,000 to the library with no restrictions. The trustees voted unanimously and with gratitude to accept this generous donation.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51

NEXT MEETING: December 15, 6pm at the library

Respectfully submitted by Susan Tresch Fienberg