

MINUTES

CHILMARK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY TRUSTEES' MEETING SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Present: Trustees Candy Shweder (Chair), Janet Weidner and Jane Kaplan; Library Director Ebba Hierta; Allison Cameron Parry, member of the public

Meeting called to order at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Minutes: The minutes of the August 17, 2021 Board of Trustees' Meeting were moved, seconded and approved unanimously as amended.

Financial report: The budget is on track with where it should be.

Communications: Sarah DeBettencourt's letter of resignation of August 12, 2021 was read. We wish her well and are appreciative of the excellent work she did for the Library.

Director's report: Circulation was down in August compared to July, as was the case for all Island libraries, which were down 16%. The Library Director is not alarmed as the decline was an Island wide trend.

Old business: The adoption of a COVID vaccine mandate for Library employees was discussed. The implementation of such a mandate is not a political statement but a response to a specific and serious problem for the Library. Presently all five employees are fully vaccinated, but two are immunocompromised, and another cares for a cancer patient at home. If an unvaccinated person were to be hired, that person would have to work from home, which would not solve the Library's current staffing shortage and would require the Library to continue its reduced services due to the shortage. With proper staffing, the Library would be able to eliminate adult browsing by appointment, and instead have walk-in browsing. Further, the position to be filled, that of Assistant Director/Youth Services, requires that the employee work with the most vulnerable patrons - unvaccinated children. Children currently represent 20% of the Covid cases in Chilmark, and Dr. Fauci advises that adults that are around children be vaccinated and wear masks. It would be irresponsible to have an unvaccinated employee working in the children's room and with Chilmark school children during school Library visits. Without a mandate, the Library Director would not be able to enquire into an applicant's vaccine status during job interviews.

The following motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved by the Trustees: The Board of Trustees shall adopt a rule that as a condition of employment all employees, which include volunteers and interns under our jurisdiction, shall have proof of full COVID vaccination by October 30, 2021, and that any requests for a medical or religious objection be submitted to the Library Director for consideration by the Board of Trustees.

New business: A current staff person is currently handling adult programming. Tracy Thorpe, who had a master's program in children's illustration, has been assigned as the temporary children's librarian at a pay grade of 7 and can act as the temporary children's programmer.

The Library had to close during the Labor Day weekend due to the absence of a staff member. The current staffing is razor thin and cannot withstand unexpected absences. For the winter, current staff levels only allow for one employee on the circulation desk. We should therefore consider either increasing the hours of existing staff or adding a third part-time position, so that more staff will be

available if others are on vacation or sick. Due to the reduction in expenditures caused by COVID last fiscal year, the fiscal year 2022 budget has extra funds, which would allow the Library to limp along until April's Town Meeting, where a proposal to deal with the situation could be voted upon. The extra funds could be used to hire additional help, even if the proposal was not voted by Town Meeting. The Trustees directed the Library Director to draw up such a proposal.

The Chilmark School librarian from last year is returning and school visits to the library will resume. However, it will not be possible to socially distance with twenty children in the children's room. Thus, the class will need to be split and children will visit only to select materials. The COVID protocols will need to be adjusted so that symptomatic children will not be allowed to visit the Library, even though they are allowed in the School. The School uses a quick test of symptomatic children, which is not as reliable as other tests. School visits cannot be resumed until the Library's children's librarian is hired.

Public comments: Allison Cameron Parry advocated for more of an emphasis on younger children's programming. She also enquired about allowing tutoring to be done in the Library. The Library Director explained that the tutoring issue had previously been considered by the Trustees, who allowed an accommodation of one such session per month. The Library does not have sufficient space for regular tutoring, and it would not be appropriate for Library to be running a commercial venture on the premises.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 13, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. The Meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

Documents:

Agenda for Trustees' Meeting Tuesday, September 14, 2021, 11 a.m.

Minutes from Trustees' Meeting, August 17, 2021.

FY 2022 Budget to Actual financial report

Library Director's report to the Trustees - September 14, 2021

Letter dated August 12, 2021 from Sarah S. DeBettencourt to Ebba Hierta and The Trustees of the Chilmark Free Public Library.