



**SWAMPSCOTT**  
— PUBLIC LIBRARY —

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## **BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES**

Neal DeChillo – Chair, Tript Sembhi – Vice Chair, Debbie Friedlander – Secretary

### **MINUTES – MARCH 4, 2024**

The Trustees of the Swampscott Public Library held a meeting on Monday, January 8 at 5:30PM. The meeting was held in the Director's office of the Library, 61 Burrill St, Swampscott, MA. In addenance: Neal DeChillo, Tript Sembhi, Debbie Friedlander and Jonathan Nichols.

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 5:29PM
  2. Approval of January 8, 2024, Minutes: Minutes approved.
  3. Director's Report:
    - a. \* Director's Activities: Jonathan was introduced to MaryAnne McMaster, the new Employee Experience Manager, colloquially known as the HR Manager. The department is in the process of reconfiguring the evaluation process. Consequently, library staff evaluations have been put on hold until HR confirms the new process.
- \*The Friends of the Swampscott Library are amid approving their budget.
- Jonathan offered edits based on current and ongoing needs of the Library falling under the Friends charter. This resulted in requesting an increase to the budget to \$43,000 for 2024. The primary reason for this increase is due to increased cost(s) of running library sponsored programs, which have become much more expensive. Speakers demanding travel costs has added to expenses. Additionally, the library is experiencing an increasing number of children from Marblehead, Nahant and a noted number from Lynn using the Swampscott Library services. Jonathan presented data to the Friends to support the requested budget increase,

including how popular and well attended the programs are. Discussions included fund raising efforts for which Jonathan does do much of the marketing. With the launch of the Friends new website, they'll be able to engage more substantively with marketing and sales of items.

\* The Friends will have their own page on the library website along with a direct link to their site. Anyone either wishing to donate to or purchase anything from the Friends, will click the link(s), bringing them directly to the Friends site. From there they'll complete their monetary transaction(s); again, directly from the Friends website.

In terms of proposed spending, Jonathan's biggest push is for the Children's area to get their full budgeted amount.

\*Jonathan was appointed to the Nobel Executive Board as of today, February 5, 2024.

b. Department and Staffing News: n/a

Other News and Updates: Meeting with Sean Fitzgerald, Jonathan Nicols and Library Trustees is confirmed for this Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 1PM.

Meeting will be held at Town Hall in Sean's office.

4. New Business:

- a. FY25 Budget: Jonathan met with Amy Sarno, Director of Finance & Administration to discuss the budget. Presented a level funded budget (2% cut) and a 10% cut budget. Though not requested, presented an additional 2%, 5% and 8% increased budget. Discussions were had about staffing levels as well. Jonathan made a strong case for additional headcount in Children's, along with a request for approval to hire another

fulltime 35-hour person. Lisa is terribly over worked. They are discussing a myriad of options to address this need. Especially important to note is the library is now in a new higher 15-25,000 population bracket, whereby services the library must provide have increased according to State mandates. Fear of staff being overworked to meet these new standards is of real concern. Jonathan presented data from libraries in our new bracket: As an example, Stoneham and Lynnfield have double our staff and budget(s) of over \$150K more than that of Swampscott Library. Finally, there are the budgetary consideration for salary line items which are ballooning due to union contract earning scales.

## 5. Old Business

- a. Renovation Discussion: Jonathan heard back from Max Kasper, Swampscott Facilities Director. The company the town contracted with to submit a construction cost summary/report for the projected renovation of the library has submitted an estimate of \$1.75 million.

\*The \$800K is still on the budget for this coming fiscal year, a figure put forth by Max Kasper. Neal received a call from a Select Board Member wanting to discuss this proposed expenditure. Neal provided detailed context, including immediate requirements. Jonathan would prefer if the \$800K could increase closer to \$1.2 million as construction costs have steeply increased. He notified the Capitol Improvement Committee of this.

\* Neal will reach out to Select Board Member, Katie Phelan, our Select Board liaison to the Library. The committee did approve the \$800K. The next step is to put it forth to Town Meeting for a final vote and approval. Though the question remains whether the \$800K will address the much-needed sewer system and

foundation repair along with expanding the patio, etc. Jonathan has requested a copy of the construction cost estimate. In discussing phasing the completion of the entire library renovation project, Facilities Director, Max Kasper, believes the foundation and sewer work can be completed for \$350K. Perhaps, for instance, the rear entrance would be completed in a later phase.

\*Jonathan made Max Kasper aware of a letter written by Neal DeChillo, Chair of the Library Trustees, regarding the library's much needed renovation project with the intent to keep it front and center in the Town's budgetary calculus.

- b. Project and Grant Updates: Maker's Space is already painted. The flooring needs to be completed. A new quote is required as the old one expired. Once a new quote is completed the flooring can be purchased. Prior to the Maker's Space flooring installation, painting of children's room must be completed.
- c. MassCore –Jonathan signed off on the plans today. There's a 2–3-month lead time for delivery and install. The library is allowed to have prison labor onsite (only non-violent offenders are employed for this work. They're usually months away from release. Every offender has their own individual trustee overseeing them). A suggestion was enthusiastically agreed upon to bring in pizza for these workers.

\*There's an additional \$7K to the original cost of \$26.3K to have them deliver and install. Town DPW will also be onsite for additional help.

- 6. Miscellany & Adjournment: Trustees approved holiday closures for the year. The library staff were given three options, choosing Option 1) close at 5PM the day before the holiday, close the day of the holiday and the day after.

A blind donation is being made to the Library Trustee Merrill Lynch account. The monies are transferred from a Fidelity account. To figure out the who, what and where of this donation, Tript

will provide Jonathan our Fidelity account numbers. This will ensure Merrill Lynch can and will release the donation amount information.

\*Unlike larger libraries ours doesn't have space allocated for Stroller parking. Of late there have been an inordinate number of strollers being brought into the library. It must be noted there is barely any room to navigate even one stroller. Ongoing problems occur in the basement hallway near the children's room. The strollers are simply too big for the space, thereby unable to get through the doorway without knocking on and damaging walls, moldings, etc. For assistance and recommendation, Jonathan reached out to other libraries to glean what they're doing to mitigate this issue. Nearly 75% of the libraries don't allow them in their facilities – at all. They've policies mandate strollers must either be left outside or collapsed. In addition, Jonathan also reached out to Swampscott Fire Chief, Graham Archer or his input. Chief Archer recommended strollers not be allowed in the building due to safety concerns. After considering his options, Jonathan would like to recommend allowing strollers only on the main floor. This prompted a discussion of needing to add a Stroller Lot to the renovation plan. Tript brought up the rear entrance as the most appropriate spot for this.

\* With having made a decision regarding strollers, Jonathan proposed starting a pilot allowing parents and child caregivers to again, bring strollers only onto the main floor. With the library thoroughly committed to safety, parents and child caregivers will be informed they can no longer bring their strollers downstairs. More importantly, doing so is a fire hazard as even one stroller blocks egress.

\* Heads up: With the shuffle of opening up the front space, some patrons, especially those who use the library space on daily basis, are complaining the strong sunlight prevents them from reading comfortably. Given patrons only need to request staff to pull the shades down, Tript

suggested putting up a sign to remind folks they can “*ask a staff member to pull down the blinds.*”

Motion to adjourn approved: 6:50PM

**NEXT MEETING(S):**

April 1, 2025 at 5:30PM