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BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

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

The Trustees of the Swampscott Public Library held a meeting on Monday, April 10, 2024 at 12PM. The meeting was held in Town Hall, 22 Monument Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907

In addenance: Neal DeChillo, Tript Sembhi, Debbie Friedlander, Jonathan Nichols, Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator and Marzi Galazka, Director of Community Economic Development.

MINUTES - April 10, 2024

AGENDA:

1. Call Meeting to Order: 12:00PM
Meeting Called to Order: 12:00PM

As Sean Fitzgerald and Marzi Galazka were in attendance, Neal asked if they wanted to make any comments at the start of the meeting.

Sean Fitzgerald articulated his commitment to redevelopment an iconic piece of property on the waterfront. He had proposed a new Library to the public at the Select Board meeting held on the April 3, 2024. Sean suggested for long range planning efforts it was better to think of this building as a municipal one that *could* be a library. Nevertheless, Sean and his team felt it was a truly exciting opportunity to explore. But again, it's just a concept and one that will have to include public input. He stated that 50% of the approximated \$30million price tag can be obtained via public funds. The same funding process was done for new school, utilizing public and town monies to complete the project. Sean highlighted how inconceivable it would have been 5 years ago to have been able to purchase the Hawthorne property. Now, due to the upgrading of our financials and our solid bond rating these sorts of projects can be attainable. Sean and his team expressed strong interest in hearing the board's thoughts and ideas regarding a new library, asking the question, "What does define a 21st century library?"

Neal DeChillo, Chair of the Library Trustees, speaking for the Trustees articulated the reason we were holding this particular meeting was due to the feedback each of us, as Library Trustees, received after the Town Administrator's recent, April 3, 2024 Select Board presentation for a new library. The Library Trustees would like to make clear to the Town what are thoughts are as well as what our role was or was not in the process.

Neal read the statement aloud herein: (include statement). The main issue for the Trustees being the process used to arrive at the plan presented. The plan was developed by Sean and a couple of Select Board members, without input from the community.

Debbie Friedlander spoke to her disappointment of the overall process.

Tript also spoke to the feedback she had gotten. Highlighting the major theme of the feedback was a new Library, more pointedly, a new library to be built on the Hawthorne site in specific had never been discussed at any of the community forums.

Jonathan Nichols, as Library Director made the point the consulting/architectural company was chartered to come up with a design. Not said during the Select Board meeting, he noted should the Town move forward to approve a new Library, the grant process wouldn't be open for applications till 2028, four years from now. Giving Swampscott a 4-year timeframe to garner feedback from the public. Additionally, he went on to emphasize the earliest the Town could break ground would be 2032. Jonathan made known he would strongly prefer the Library Trustees not make a public statement against the current plans as presented for fear it would place him at odds with the current Library Trustees and that this is not an official process.

Sean felt Jonathan made good points stating as the Library Board of Trustees we should be asking how we can balance all the projects. Sean reiterated he is happy to sit with us but asks we act in unison to "accomplish the impossible." Sean brought up he tried to have a meeting with us and had brought up the new library at our meeting 6 weeks ago, to which Neal responded the Town Administrator wasn't considering the question of whether or not we should respond. The Trustees believe the point of contention is one of process and transparency.

Tript emphasized the Trustees are sympathetic to Jonathan's concerns. But as residents of Swampscott, we also realize the community must have input. She

suggested perhaps we can rephrase the statement Neal had written to be read at the Select Board meeting to incorporate we are in complete agreement with community input etc.

Tript wanted it known we harbor fears about asking for additional much needed renovation monies for the Library. There's a sour taste in the public's mouth when asking the Town Administrator and Select Board request monies, no matter the project. She is worried of not being able to accomplish the Library's goals now. Want to make sure the community doesn't forget the Library needs now.

Sean wants to ensure we know the Town is going to continue supporting the Library's renovations, after all the Library is a Town property. It will have to be supported no matter what the future is. Sean wants us to know we can be and work as a team. Neal articulated one of a Board's responsibilities' is to support things are done correctly, not necessarily to support the Director no matter what the issue or project is.

Neal noted that he would revise the statement read earlier at the meeting, but still planned to read a statement from the Library Trustees at that evening's Select Board Meeting.

Jonathan offered a quick update: Mold was found. He is working with Max now. Working on the leak as well. New flooring looks amazing.

Motion to adjourn was made: 12:48PM

Meeting was adjourned at: 12:48PM