

✓

**MANSFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting - February 8, 2023**

**Attendance:** Nancy Breef-Pilz, Jean Mallon, Leonard Epstein and Director Catherine Coyne. Jean called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

**Secretary's report.** The report for January 11, 2023 was reviewed and unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's report.** The report for December was reviewed and unanimously approved. Nancy reported that she had withdrawn \$3,000 from the Fidelity account and deposited it in the trustees' bank account at North Easton Savings Bank.

**Correspondence.** Catherine reported a recent Everything Mansfield Facebook posting commenting on the library's "Blind Date With a Book" program.

**Librarians reports.** The librarians' reports were reviewed and highlights discussed. She reported a busy month with the staff doing a great job during her medical leave. Covid remains a concern among the staff. Jean noted that she was particularly impressed with the library's recent work with the public schools.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Strategic plan.** Two of the planned focus groups have met with others scheduled soon including the teen group which will meet virtually on February 23, during school vacation. Barbara will be synthesizing results and recommendations. The staff focus group will meet on Friday, February 10. Catherine and Whitney will be working on the town history portion as part of the overall strategic plan project.

**Friends of the library.** 120 people have responded to Catherine's query about interest in joining the Friends. She will circulate a membership form since it is not yet on line. The group's annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 26 at 6:30.

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
JUN 29 P 2:04  
MANSFIELD  
MASSACHUSETTS

**NEW BUSINESS**

**FY 2024 budget.** The board reviewed the proposed budget which has been reduced by \$18,700 in line with the town's fiscal difficulties and the need for reductions in all departments given the town's \$5 million deficit. Catherine noted the importance of maintaining the required MARS minimum library funding, again emphasizing that it accounts for less than 1% of the town's budget. The board discussed MEG funding, noting that the goal is to equalize library assets and services. Mansfield's allotments are partially based on being a net lender (*viz.* to other libraries). Catherine has been thinking about potential uses of our MEG budget, which has historically been for furniture and equipment, *i.e.* not used in place of budgeted items. Right now, in addition to the ongoing need to increase our computer equipment, she is considering upgrading some of the library's furniture including more comfortable chairs, couches, etc. Apparently some patrons have commented that the furnishings still "look like the '80s." Nancy expressed concern about the rising cost of utilities and the potential need to revisit those budgeted items in the event of a shortfall during the year. Catherine expressed satisfaction with the library's current position which will be to have used approximately 75% of this year's budget by the end of March.

**Behavioral issues.** Catherine reported recent incidents of inappropriate behavior in the library including an ersatz football game involving several teenagers. They were asked to leave but came back a few days later. In an effort to diffuse further problems, Stacy told the group they “looked bored” and asked if they would like to help set up for a forthcoming program which they agreed to do. Apparently part of the problem is with reduced school days. The school resource officer with the Mansfield Police Department will try to send a car by the library more frequently on early release days.

The incident has left the staff uncomfortable and Catherine is planning a training program to help, a two hour workshop in April for dealing with teens. The Massachusetts Library System has such a program and Catherine has spoken with Christi Farrar there. The library will be closed in the morning (probably April 5 or 12), with a staff lunch afterward.

Another event involved a homeless woman who was seeking a warm place to be. She is known to the police who have said she is not violent and has been spending nights in a local laundry. She has been told that she can't lie down to sleep in the library and will move when instructed to do so so she has not created a major problem. She has used one of the quiet rooms and apparently talks to herself. Jean made the point that resources are available, including meals six days each week at the Attleboro Interfaith Collaborative. Catherine and Whitney have registered for a program next week dealing with homeless people and will share their findings with the staff. The Board of Health may also be helpful and has (or at least had) a social worker on staff.

**Cultural shifts.** Jean shared reprints of a recent Boston Globe article, “Libraries are targets in culture war.” Groups are challenging available books, story hour choices for children, and other issues. This is another problem requiring staff training and a webinar program is available for the purpose. Catherine will have the entire staff watch the video and will send the link to board members. Jean is very concerned about this trend, noting that the difficulties are most often from well organized groups with very conservative and restrictive agendas. Because of this increasing challenge Catherine wants to review the rules concerning use of the meeting room which will require a joint effort with the COA.

**Next meeting.** March 8, 2023, 5:30 PM. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

*Leonard Epstein*

---

Leonard Epstein, Secretary

The foregoing minutes were approved at the MARCH 8, 2023 meeting of the Mansfield Board of Library Trustees.