

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
LIBRARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 25, 2020
4:00 p.m.

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- I. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 4:13 p.m. by Marie Shaw. *Betsy MacLachlan*
TOWN CLERK, GROTON, CONNECTICUT
- II. **Roll call (present via Zoom or phone):** Jennifer Miele (Library Director), Shawn Greeley (Library Staff), Matthew Shulman (prospective board member), and Board Members Katherine Brighty, Marilyn Comrie, Rosemary Duval-Arnould, Hali Keeler, Sashi Nadanaciva, Barbara Nagy, Marie Shaw and Carl Strand.
- III. **Public Comments**
None.
- IV. **Communications**
Marie Shaw reported that the appointment of Sashi Nadanaciva as a board member was communicated via a letter from the Town Council. Board members welcomed her.
- V. **Approval of Minutes**
Moved by Barb Nagy, second by Carl Strand and Hali Keeler to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2020 meeting, with the addition of missing text in the Library Director's activities report. Approved unanimously.
- VI. **Review of Statistics**
Jennifer Miele reported that most numbers in February 2020 were up from last year. Google My Business is doing particularly well; she said staff will pay special attention this year to enhance that even more. She said as an aside that downloadable materials are currently doing very well because the library is closed on account of the coronavirus. Staff is looking at that data closely to see what people are interested in, make sure those items are available and prevent any bottlenecks.
- VII. **Director's Report**
Jennifer Miele summarized the monthly report of her activities and library activities. She noted that The Day has been very active in posting GPL activities and news, including an article on March 22 about what libraries are doing regionally to serve patrons while they are closed.
- VIII. **New Business**
1. **Update on the Library and COVID-19**
Ms. Miele reported that the book drop is closed and all items currently on loan have been renewed to May 1. Research suggests that the virus lives for 72 hours on books and plastic, so there was concern about staff handling materials that were returned. In addition, if all the circulated items were returned, there isn't enough space to shelve them. Items will be cleaned when they are returned.
- Staff is working on many projects behind the scenes, things they normally would not have time for. The projects include cleaning and some moving of items within the building. The biggest concern is making sure staff is safe. Everyone is being careful to maintain physical distance

within the building. In addition, Ms. Miele said she is staying in touch with other libraries locally to make sure there is consistency for patrons.

Marie Shaw thanked Ms. Miele and her staff for their work during the shutdown. Matt Shulman noted that libraries are a safe place for people to congregate and said the virus has accentuated the isolation of at-risk populations. He urged board members to reach out to those who might be in need. Ms. Miele said a volunteer has been calling people who normally use the library's homebound delivery. The program has stopped because of the virus, but the library wants to stay in touch with those individuals. She said many patrons who regularly visit the library are also calling to chat. Staff has been glad to hear from them, she said.

2. Budget Update

Ms. Miele reported that departmental budget presentations before the Town Council will be Saturday, March 28. The library budget is coming in at a 0 percent increase. Adjustments to staffing have allowed the budget to absorb increases in operating expenses and contractual raises for union employees.

Several board members commented that the work on the budget was impressive, and was in fact a reduction considering inflation.

Ms. Miele said she asked for what the library needed and that a 0 percent increase was not her goal. She said the library and other departments have been asked to identify financial costs created by the virus, in preparation for requests for emergency management funds or other federal reimbursement.

IX. Old Business

1. RTM Open House Review

Ms. Miele thanked board members for attending and said the feedback was very positive; Ms. Shaw thanked the Circle of Friends for providing food. Board members were impressed by the turnout and by the participation of library staff. They thought the event was successful. They agreed that the event should be repeated at a future date.

2. Public Hearing on March 26

The board reviewed a draft letter to the Town Council advocating for the library budget. The draft, written by Ms. Shaw, would be submitted for the Council hearing on March 26. Board members agreed that the letter should come from the Board as a whole, and that individual Board Members could follow up with letters or emails to individual councilors if they were so inclined before the Council's vote on the budget.

Ms. Miele said she will check on how to submit similar testimony to the RTM. She reported that she has received copies of a number of letters that patrons have sent the Council advocating for the library.

3. Services during Closure

Board members discussed the census, access to internet service and availability of library materials during the closure. It was suggested that the library submit a PSA or article for publication in The Day or the Groton Times to keep people informed.

X. Adjournment

Hali Keeler motioned to adjourn; Katherine Brighty seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Submitted by:

Barbara A. Nagy

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