

Pawlet Public Library

Monthly Meeting of Board of Trustees

MINUTES

December 5, 2023

Present: Trustees in attendance: Harley Cudney, Grace Larson, Kathryn Lawrence, Joni Lee

Community Members: Linda Welch, Linda Layton, Ruth Lampi, Lucy Mornau, Sue LaPorte, Molly Beverage, Samuel Saul, Kat Youmel, David Lyon, Lynne Andersen, Zach Beck, Cori Rail, Martha Schoenemann, Jed Rubin, Winslow Lee, Lyndsi Barnes, Aaron Levine, Diane Mach, Rhonda Schlanger, Phoebe McChesney, Anita Pomerance, Roscoe T. Stark, Carol A. Moore, Martin Kravitt, Monica Kravitt, Sara Rodich, Steve Williams, Barbara O'Connor, Elizabeth Torak, Jen, Mercy Larson, Tom Ayers, Paula Ayers, Cana Williams, Adelle Santwire, Ninia Dubois, PEGTV

Call to Order: 5:30 Harley calls to order.

Public Comment:

- Harley states that considering the number of people that would like to comment, comments will be limited to 2 minutes.
- On advice of legal counsel, the Board welcomes public comments but will not be able to answer questions at this time.
- All letters submitted by Thursday morning will be included in the addenda of the minutes.
- Aaron Levine: reads the letter from VLA's Oceana Wilson (included in addenda).
- Martin Kravitt: brings up dismissal of the volunteer proceeding the director's dismissal, claims there was no reason other than inability to schedule time with a homeschool group, asks the Board to reinstate the director immediately, and warns that a legal battle will ensue.
- Monica Kravitt: asks why there was a salary raise prior to the dismissal.
- Rhonda Schlagen: over the past 2 years there has been an effort to make the library more accessible and equitable, she feels Lyndsi has done this, and that she is more qualified than the current pay grade would suggest. She asks what is the role of the Board?
- Barbara O'Connor: what procedures were followed that led to this dismissal? What were the steps that lead up to it? Where is the Board's legal counsel?
- Jed Rubin: fully supports the action of the Board, he was not impressed with Lyndsi's performance.
- Sue LaPorte: reads the email from the Board dismissing Lyndsi, and claims there has been unmerited gossip in the community. She also brings up the fact that naming Adelle as acting director was never voted on in a warned meeting.
- Ruth Lampi: programs and fundraising have been great under Lyndsi, she is overqualified, young, and passionate as no other director has been, Pawlet won't change

or grow without people like this, can we find a way to communicate that doesn't involve litigation?

- Anita Pomerance: Lyndsi has been helpful, but Anita understands that in the corporate world the reasons for dismissal are not often made public for various reasons.
- Steve Williams: asks about the VT Library Association – are there rules about dismissal?
 - Harley replies that he is not sure, but as a Municipal Library we have our own bylaws regarding personnel.
- Mercy Larson: the reasons for this decision should be made public, but at this point it is reasonable to assume there is more to the decision than has been appropriate to share.
- John: Lyndsi often didn't show up for work, but was otherwise a delight.
- Jackie Becker: glad that people are talking about this, but let's trust the Board.
- Lucy Norman: the library is an important part of her social life, she has volunteered for the library, Lyndsi has done many great things, but she has also heard about absences by the former director as well. She also points out that HR handles what we can't talk about tonight, and often that is about protection for the employee as much as the employers.
- Elizabeth Torak: this is a community institution and the Board's decision undermines it.
- Roscoe Stark: Doesn't know the details, but ethically seems problematic.
- Cori Rail: submitted a letter in support of Lyndsi questioning the Board's conduct as elected officials, particularly regarding open meeting laws, following Robert's Rules of Order, and not voting to make Adelle acting director. She calls for the Board to reinstate Lyndsi, attend Board training, and fully comply with Robert's Rules of Order.
- Molly Beverage: vouches for Harley's character, states she has heard no details from executive sessions, but trusts that the Board had serious concerns. The library is important to so many people, there have been unfounded rumors going around town, we need to talk about it.
- Lyndsi Barnes: reads the statement protesting her treatment, as she presented to the Select Board.
- Sara Rodich: she is a part of a homeschool group that had been using the Middletown Springs Library space, but outgrew it. They approached the Pawlet Library but were told that the library had no space for them. They felt unwelcome and no longer come to the Pawlet library.
- Cana Williams: employment is an HR thing, and details of executive sessions should not be shared with spouses. As far as the director, conditions of employment/contracts should be public, the Board has an obligation to share this information, and the dismissal via email is unprofessional.

6:21 - 5-minute break is called, public comment is over.

November minutes – Kathryn moves to approve November minutes, Joni seconds, all approve.

Agenda:

- Grace motions to table discussion of library budget and annual report until the January meeting. Motion carries.
- Added to agenda is setting up a meeting with special council.
- Sue LaPort has brought up the issue of Adelle being referred to as acting director without Board discussion/approval. The Board needs to discuss this in an open meeting. Joni

motions to redact the mention of Adelle as "acting director", Kathryn seconds, all approve.

Secretary's Report:

- The Board has been presented with 21 letters regarding personnel issues to date, and any more received before Thursday will be included in the addenda.

Treasurer's Report:

- Community foundation numbers have not been reported yet, when they are Kathryn will send to the Board.
- Kathryn gives the current numbers in account.
- Kathryn has also looked into investing some funds, and will continue to do so and keep the Board updated.
- Raffle fundraising fell slightly short of projection.
 - Adelle points out that several raffle items were late coming in, we should be sure to get them earlier next year so they can be appropriately advertised.

Assistant Librarian Report:

- 11/14/23 there was an emergency readiness inspection, which the library passed.
- There was also a weatherization inspection – it was reported that windows and insulation should be updated, and the hot water should be switched from oil to electric for improved efficiency.
- Adelle, Nina, and Linda have been covering the front desk.
- Adelle gives a report of library usage.
 - Kathryn asks if we can get statistics on Libby usage.
- Adelle has been dealing with payment for interlibrary loan and Kanopy.
- Adelle has contracted with Twang Busters to come back for another concert.
- There will be a Christmas party at the Library on December 16, 2023, 11am-1pm, Adelle and Nina have organized this. There will be story time and craft project for children (Molly and Karen), possibly music, and snacks (Molly will bring cookies).
- Adelle has been looking into having an adult still life painting class at the library, and would like to restart story hour.
- Karen Huerte (retired teacher and grant writer) has offered to do classes for English Language Learners at the library. Adelle is in discussion about this.
 - Joni mentions that we should keep in mind transportation for this class and possibly for children's program, as well as possible coordination with area schools.

Unfinished Business:

- Ceiling leak/roof repair: Harley has been working in this, it has been looked at, and a determination will be made whether it is just a ceiling repair or if work needs to be done on the roof.
- Volunteer training: Adelle is willing to do training (preferably one-on-one) and anyone interested should email her.

New Business:

- Harley would like to adjust Adelle's salary to \$22.05/hr for this interim time. Joni motions to approve, Kathryn seconds, all agree.
- There will be a warned meeting, with public comment, which will include an executive session with council, as soon as it can be arranged.
- Kathryn points out that the current safe is not being used, is old, and should be replaced. She has done some research on what would serve the library best. Kathryn and Harley will consult on the final decision.

Kathryn motions to adjourn, Joni seconds, meeting adjourns at 7:14pm.

Dated December 7, 2023, Grace Larson, Secretary.