

**Bennington Free Library
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes September 17, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Munson, Brian Cunningham, Susan McKenna, Deirdre Ryan, Beth Tegart, PJ Venti, Jeannie Jenkins (Select Board Liaison) and Wendy Sharkey (Executive Director)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jon Goodrich, David Newell, Kelley Legacy, Norma McShane, Bruce Smith

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER:

- Welcome to Jeannie Jenkins who will serve as the Select Board Liaison to the Library
- Without a quorum, agenda items requiring a vote were put on hold.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Minutes from the June 11, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting to be formally approved and adopted at the November 19, 2024 meeting

PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS:

- Matt Harrington of Harrington Brands presented an overview of services they could provide to develop a Strategic Plan for the Library, including hands-on facilitation, discovery, and brainstorming sessions to define our mission, values and vision.
 - Board members to vote to move forward with strategic planning;
 - Scope and cost of services to be reviewed;
 - PJ, Kelley and Wendy to explore funding and grant opportunities to help offset cost of services (\$5,000-\$10,000).

FINANCE REPORT:

A. Annual Fund

- This year's fund drive has begun and as of 9/26/2024, the Library has received \$8,425 from 63 donors, or 14% of our 2024-2025 goal of \$60,000.
- PJ reminded the Board that we strive for 100% participation each fiscal year.

B. Revenue and Expense Reports

- The R&E Reports for June, July and August were circulated for discussion and review.
- Without a quorum, the Revenue and Expenses Reports will need to be approved at a special meeting in October. Wendy to schedule with Kelley.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- Mike will present a full slate of officers for adoption for the 2024-2025 fiscal year at a special meeting..

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Buildings and Grounds

- Wendy reported that there have been some flooding/seepage issues entering the building through the night entrance caused by heavy rains and a blocked drain.
- Wendy also reported that during a standard safety inspection, the former Main Street which is considered a fire exit that the front steps will need repair/replacement and the installation of a handrail to bring it to code. The Board asked Wendy to explore repair options and cost estimates for review. Mike to explore if an alternative egress can be designated as the fire exit.
- Held over from the June meeting - the Board continues to discuss the much needed exterior signage/lettering for the Main Street facade of the building. Mike asked Jon to request a formal proposal/quote from GVH Studio for aluminum lettering; Susan asked Jon to also request a second quote from GVH for painted lettering. Proposals should include a design rendering. Beth will contact the Historic Preservation Commission to confirm what is required and when in order to receive permit approval to include in our application to the DRB.

B. Fundraising

- Without successfully securing a title sponsor, the Mini Golf Tournament, tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 28 & Saturday, March 1, 2025, was postponed for a year.
- PJ raised the possible need to explore (re)forming a Friends of the Library volunteer support group as part of the strategic planning process to help raise funds and advocate for the library services and programming.
- An enhanced reading of Loiusé Penny's play "Murder by the Book" is scheduled for Sunday, November 17th at 2pm at the Bennington Center for the Performing Arts.
 - Tickets are \$25 per person and available online, at both libraries, and the Bennington Bookshop?
 - The Library is organizing a Bake Sale for the performance. Wendy will send an email to the Board requesting bake goods - along with specific details how to wrap items and list ingredients, and where and when to drop off items.
 - At this time, Board members will not be asked to volunteer that afternoon but are encouraged to attend the performance.
- As part of Harvest Fest, a Pop-up Book Sale is scheduled for Saturday, October 19th; Wendy will be soliciting for volunteers.
- Save-the-Date for the Holiday Book & Craft Sale on Saturday, December 14th.

C. Personnel and Policies

- The following policy updates and job descriptions will be presented at the November Board of Directors Meeting for formal approval and adoption:
 - Wendy has updated the job descriptions for the Cataloger and Reference Librarian positions to better reflect their current roles and responsibilities.

- Updates made to the Collection Development Policy
- Interviews are underway for a Circulation & Communications Manager

D. Nominating Committee

- At the recommendation of Bruce, Dr. Sarah Blizzard, Associate Director of Greater Bennington Community Services (GBCS) was solicited as a candidate to join the Board. Sarah was asked for a letter of interest, and Mike will present to the Board for a vote as part of the formal nominating process.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS (full report circulated in meeting materials):

- The Children's Room held another successful Summer Reading Program - *Adventure Begins at Your Library*
- The 2024 Vermont Reads statewide one-book community reading program announced this year's selection as *Gather*, by Kenneth M. Cadow. *Gather's* themes include rural life, resilience, class differences, addiction and recovery, housing and food insecurity, a deep relationship to the land, and the power of community. BFL is partnering with the Mount Anthony Middle School and Turning Point Recovery Center of Bennington. Both organizations will host activities at their locations for their communities. The Library will host a variety of activities as well. Complimentary copies of the novel are available at the circulation desk.
- The Library was selected for the Vermont Humanities Snapshot Series program. This is a first for BFL! Vermont Humanities' Snapshot Series includes free talks held at public libraries around Vermont and streamed online from September through May. The BFL will be hosting the program series, *What Does It Mean to Create Legacy? The Power of Personal Narrative Poet* on Thursday, November 14th at 7pm with educator Naima Wade. Wade will unpack how personal narrative can create meaning and belonging for individuals and in society at large. Drawing on her own experience of "living with visible melanin in Vermont," and using poetry and historical examples, she invites participants to reflect on how we can create our own healing legacies and nurture a more just and equitable society.
- Bennington College Intern, Zak Struck worked an average of 30 hours a week in the Children's Room re-organizing the Young Adult collection; researching and ordering YA materials, and assisting in many of the summer programs, as well as the assistant leader for the Bennington Rocks! Humanities camp. We are grateful to Zak for their dedication and interest in the BFL.

OTHER BUSINESS:

With no further agenda items, the meeting was adjourned.

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE (FY 2024-2025): (Third Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.)

- November 19, 2024
- January 21, 2025

- March 18, 2025
- May 20, 2025
- June 17, 2025

Respectfully submitted,
PJ Venti