

Chester Library Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes: August 20, 2018

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1. Call to Order

The Chester Library Board of Trustees held its regular meeting on Monday, August 20, 2018, at the Chester Public Library, 21 West Main Street, Chester, Connecticut. In attendance were Terry Schreiber, Karin Badger, Elizabeth Tucker, Denny Tovey, and Peggy Carter-Ward (arrived a bit later) Also present: Stephanie Romano, Library Director, Lauren Gister, Selectwomam, Carol Carpenter, Audience of Citizens. Terry Schreiber called the meeting to order. Karin Badger was asked by the Chair at this time to take the minutes, due to the absence of the Recording Secretary, Judy Brown and a recording device.

2. Secretary's Report

Motion by Terry, second by Denny, to accept July 2018 minutes submitted by Sandy Senior-Dauer.

3. Treasurer's Report

Peggy emailed the report before the meeting. \$18,500, (\$1.29 interest) balance in combined Saving and Checking Essex Savings Bank accounts. Motion by Terry, second by Elizabeth to accept.

4. New Business

Discussion of letter received regarding renewal of million dollar grant Chester's long range plan of development

Lauren Gister went over the previous application for renewal in 2017, where no questions were asked by the state library board, and all grants were extended. Lauren sent a letter in July 2018 asking for a second extension (*Attached*). She received an email response with questions (*Attached*). Discussion followed of response to state library board questions, in which asked for ideas.

Lauren stated she could "rough out" a response but could not commit to a referendum, or date for one, with no money attached. The building committee has been disbanded, but Lauren stated that if "we can get this to referendum (with a possibly revised design), I will reinstate the committee with some new members and some old." She said she feels a \$7 million+ project would not pass in the current climate with the makeup of the boards and commissions. She asked if the project could be "scaled back." Peggy said there was no time to make changes (before reapplying for extension); Denny stated that the original grant was for an 8,000 sq. ft. new construction. Denny remarked that renovation plans had been tried by the LBOT, but that elected officials had decided on North Quarter Park.

Denny asked about another study, paid for by the town. Lauren said she did not know if another study would be funded. Karin stated that enough public money had been spent, and if they wanted another study, it should come from the (GWJ) Trust, and that there has been no demonstrated public will for this project.

Discussion followed of alternatives: Key Bank property: Terry said that was in a flood plain. Denny: if a revised design developed, what could the town afford? What would be the budget? Deep River Library wants to expand their 3rd floor, and would be interested in joining with Chester. They are not interested in going in on a new building with Chester. Discussion of other libraries expansion plans, grants, and fund-raising efforts. Lauren said Chester has not explored various grants, as Chester does not have a Town Planner or a grant writer, and she does not have the time or expertise. She will be meeting with a grant writer to possibly hire, and has talked to Deep River about possibly sharing services.

POCD (plan of conservation & development) A new survey will be put out, with questions developed by a sub-committee, to hopefully prioritize projects. The Library has been in the POCD since 2009, Denny wanted to know what were the other projects?

5. Secretarial Services

Judy Brown will be back in September to take the minutes.

6. FAQ

Elizabeth submitted revised draft. Peggy had emailed her edits and responses. Elizabeth will edit, finish and post. Grant information needs to be revised.

7. Librarian's Report

Stephanie Romano: Summer reading program is wrapping up, other children's programs were well attended. August 1, 2018, Chester Library went to Bibliomation, Connecticut's largest library consortium, which needs to be promoted. A new book club will start the 3rd week of October.

Cary Hull is working on a preservation grant for the STEM program, (program ideas that feature science, technology, engineering, art, and math, held in a library), should know in December 2018.

8. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm. Unanimously Approved. Next meeting is Monday, September 17, 2018.

Attachments:

Letter to State Library Board for renewal of grant

Response & questions from State Library Board

Draft Minutes, subject to approval, respectfully submitted by Karin Badger

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July 30, 2018

Ken Wiggin, State Librarian
Connecticut State Library
231 Capital Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

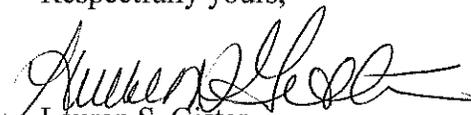
Dear Mr. Wiggin,

The Town of Chester has been working hard to make its dream of a new library come true. Last year, for several reasons, including design, financial impact to taxpayers and a serious delay in having a known state budget, a one year extension of Chester's State Library Grant was obtained.

In the meantime, a very public Board of Finance meeting was held in the fall specifically to discuss the financial impact of building the library as designed. The Board of Selectmen's request for a referendum vote to move forward on the project was denied at that time due in part to the lack of a state budget at the time and the constantly changing estimates of state revenue to the Town of Chester. In addition, Chester is in the middle of the update of our statutorily mandated Plan of Conservation and Development, due to be complete by the end of 2018. Part of the focus of this crucial strategic planning document is the question of how to accomplish the building of this functional and accessible library that better meets the needs of our residents, including issues of fundraising and design.

This project represents a significant investment in the infrastructure of Chester, and many different constituencies have been involved. There are extensive plans for significant fund raising once the project is approved. We are now in a bit of a "wait and see" position until the completion of our strategic plan, which should give further guidance about how and when to proceed. I respectfully request the Connecticut State Library Board grant an additional one year extension to the \$1,000,000.00 library grant to the Town of Chester, so that we can properly and responsibly plan for the future of our Town. Please put this item on your agenda for the September meeting; I plan to attend to answer any questions you may have at that time.

Respectfully yours,


Lauren S. Gister
First Selectman

First Selectman

From: Newman, Tom <Tom.Newman@ct.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 10, 2018 9:00 AM
To: First Selectman
Cc: Library Director
Subject: Library Construction Grant Extension Request

Hello Ms. Gister,

The State Librarian has received the Town of Chester's request to extend the matching funds deadline on the Chester Public Library construction grant project. I am the administrator for the construction grant program and Mr. Wiggin has requested that I find out some more information regarding your request before the Board considers a second one-year extension. Here are the questions we have at this time:

- Should the State Library grant the extension, will the Town definitely commit to holding a referendum and if so, when would the referendum take place?
- If the Town can't commit to the referendum, what assurance can you give us that the referendum will take place within the extended time?
- Assuming a positive referendum, what is the estimated time period between the referendum and the start of construction?
- If current plans for the library project differ from the original plans presented in the 2014 application can you provide us with a brief description of those changes? Specifically, has the project been scaled back or reduced in size at all?

Thank you for providing us with this additional information. It will assist the State Librarian with his recommendation to the State Library Board.

Tom



Tom Newman | Construction Grants, Division of Library Development
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