

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2022 Virtual Platform & Town Hall In Person

In Person Attendees:

Select Board members present: Rita Farrell/Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, and Eric Stocker

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator

Other Staff/Volunteers present: Mary Anne Antonellis/Library Director; Library Board of Trustees: Michelle Regan-Ladd, Brad Foster and Kate Cell; Jim Walton/Finance Committee

MBLC Grant Review Team: Lauren Stara/Library Building Specialist, Lyndsay Forbes/Project Manager & Grants Specialist and Rosemary Waltos/Reviewer & retired MBLC Library Construction Specialist

Guests: Stephen Dallmus and Susie Mosher/Friends of the Spear Memorial Library

Virtual Attendees:

Staff present: Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary

MBLC Grant Review Team: Andrea Bono-Bunker/Library Building Specialist, Beth Kramer/Reviewer, William Barry/Architect & Plan Reviewer

Library Board of Trustees: Melanie DeSilva and Savanna Ouellette

Guests: Gail Fleischaker, Doc Pruyne/*The Reminder*, Catherine Hilton, Penny Jaques, Amanda Alix, Jim Hemingway, Mike Vinskey, Rachel Schwab Rehorka, Dina Stander, Gary Rehorka, Weezie Houle, and Penny Kim

At 11:05am, Cell calls the Library Board of Trustees and Farrell calls the Select Board to order.

Discussion Topic:

Mass Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) Grant Review Team/Small Library Pilot Project: Lauren Stara/Library Building Specialist: this is the final interview for the Small Library Pilot Project; William Berry has visited the current library and the proposed site. Per Stara, Mary Anne Antonellis/Library Director received a list of questions and provide written; today, there will be follow-up questions about funding scenarios, plans and influencing factors; a collection development policy has been requested. Torres: funding options will depend on Finance Committee recommendations; the Town's reserves are high and we have the ability to borrow, funding for borrowing that could be utilized is in the budget; the overall final costs will play into the funding strategy; we are well positioned. Stara asks about competing projects. Torres: if funded, the library will have priority; the Town is well positioned to fund other projects; the balance of the cost for the Locks Pond culvert will be covered by a \$500,000 grant; we also have the ability to cover funding the asphalt section of school roof.

New Questions:

1. Lyndsay Forbes: What is the community's greatest strength? Kate Cell/Trustee: the community has come together in many ways to express their support and raise money; the work to alleviate tax implications is a tremendous strength; the library stepped up to deliver services through the various stages of the pandemic. Susie Mosher/Friends of the Spear Memorial Library (FSML): last year alone, the Friends raised \$75,000; we are growing community and Antonellis is working to provide services; we are doing grassroots work in

all sorts of ways. Dina Stander: the support for the library is most evident in the usage numbers; we will grow into a new library; the love that the community has for the library is strong; the library is there for us.

2. Andrea Bono-Bunker: What is the town's greatest barrier to success and how will it be overcome? Antonellis: the barriers are communication related, i.e., how do we address concerns about money; we do not yet know how the town will choose to fund a new library; how to communicate the cost and impact to individual households, i.e., calming people's fears about cost; the library does not drive people's tax bills; getting the word out to the community in respectful ways; this will be a challenge. Stander: the challenge is the unknown; communication needs to be done respectfully, fruitfully and with transparency about information; we are sensitive to those issues that will make us stronger going forward; we are getting there. Penny Jaques: the positive response to the funding obstacle is that FSML is committed to serious fundraising if we are the selected town; we will go all out.
3. William Berry: Shutesbury has had some experience in trying to overcome detractors; how are you seeking out detractors and bringing them into the fold? Cell: yes, there have been multiple attempts to ensure early inclusion, i.e., open forums for people to come with their concerns and questions, efforts to engage conversation with neighbors and on social media. Antonellis: the biggest concern is the potential tax impact; the Friends have been going all out with public grassroots fund raising and building support; the day we let go of building a new library in 2012, the FSML began to plan for the next opportunity; annual town meeting was asked and has agreed to a contribution of \$25,000 each year; we work to address everybody's needs by collecting as much money as we can. Mike Vinskey does not think there has been a lot of effort to get people on board; he found out about today's meeting by chance; regarding the "wish list" for a new library, he brings up that the new library will be too big and have unnecessary items; he has not seen the allowance of compromise; disappointed that those concerned about size and cost are not involved. Stara: how was today's meeting advertised? Antonellis: the Trustees and Select Board meetings were posted on the Town calendar more than 48 hours in advance of the meeting; the public forums were advertised to the public; this is a meeting with Town officials so it was posted on the Town website. Stocker: it is fair to say that there are a number of people in town who will not support the project though most want it to happen. Stander: my understanding about some of the issues Vinskey raised, and they are important, is that the conversations about what will go into the library will happen during the design process; this phase is about whether the town is ready to go forward; the concerns about cost will get worked out if we receive the grant. Stara: yes, there will be ability to tweak the design going into design phase; the town's appropriation will need to be approved before the design is done; the cost estimate is based on square feet. Rachel Schwab Rehorka cites the advantages the library offered her son and the in-person classes offered that are now on Zoom; the library is critical and it would be wonderful if there were a safe space for classes; the library is inclusive; the need for a new library can be worked out. Amanda Alix agrees with Vinskey though she is not commenting on the timeliness of posting however was surprised it was not posted on social media; the issue is cost; in general, most people are not against a library and are satisfied with the super services we receive from the library we have right now; no one can assume everyone in town is for the project; last time, that was a miss reading as well; the outreach is not a problem, the library has done a good job with outreach. Cell: a large part of our library is not in the library, it is in Antonellis' car and her basement, the Town Hall is used for classes; the

level of services offered is not sustainable unless we have a librarian making sacrifices. Rehorka: the Town has a bylaw that allows people to apply for a tax abatement; the Town is sensitive to people in need.

4. Beth Kramer: Once our town opened a new library, the staff got even busier and an increase in staffing was needed; this is likely to occur because when you can do more, more people will come; to handle increased attendance, we needed to increase hours and maintenance; it makes it possible to do what patrons would like to have; do you have the financial components for this? Antonellis: it is too soon to make a plan because we do not yet have the grant; the need for additional maintenance is being addressed; we looked at local libraries' staff and services; we already have a full-time director and half-time assistant director; pre-pandemic, we had many volunteers however, there is not enough space for staff and volunteers and the small size of the library cannot accommodate the noise. Antonellis continues: Cynthia Coffin/Assistant Librarian and herself spend a tremendous amount of time moving things, i.e., taking down boxes to get to supplies, items are stored in her garage and are carted around town; it takes time to use someone else's space; the library provides services it never used to supply as a result of her creativity and these are services people are entitled to despite the size of the building, i.e., story time, more books, using Town Hall, the elementary school, Shutesbury Athletic Club, the State beach, and other outdoor spaces for programs; finding alternative space requires a tremendous amount of time and energy. Per Antonellis: this is more job than is reasonable; the plan is to make it easier for herself or someone else to run a library; the current services are not sustainable in our building, i.e., during the pandemic ancestry.com allowed remote access, now, remote access is not allowed and it is "in library use only"; there is no place for someone to do research in a quiet space and, now, it is not safe; money for programming has never been an issue; FSML supports programs; we are ready to open a new library with the staff we have.
5. Rosemary Waltos: Regarding the cost factor, think about the space other organizations are bearing and that the Town is not. Waltos acknowledges that Antonellis is doing non-professional work that takes her away from grant and budget work; Antonellis is bearing this. Mosher: this is a really small town with no store; the library is a place all people can come to; there will be plenty of volunteers to be help with a new library; we have been waiting for ten years; the volunteers will make a difference with staffing. Torres: our library is open 7 days/week which is remarkable for a town our size; Antonellis is committed to providing the utmost services to the town and has been able to manage great circulation with a few volunteers. Mosher: there are many retirees who are able and willing to volunteer; the FSML will raise more money. Melanie DeSilva notes that not everyone has full access to the current library; there is an entrance ramp, however, there is not full wheelchair access and the ability to browse with dignity; access for all is a reason in and of itself for a new library. Antonellis: hours varied during the pandemic; usually, the library is open 29 hours/week over 7 days; almost all programming is held outside of the library; even when the library is closed, if her car is there, people just come in. Antonellis works 40 hours/week; the 18 hours covered by other staff allows Antonellis to do programming at other sites. Per Antonellis, there are up to 12 programs/week; with a new library, programs can happen while staff are at the circulation desk; currently, programs like story time, book clubs and knitting have to take place outside of library hours; you could not ask someone else to do the job of running this library; it will be easier in the new library. Stander appreciates DeSilva's comment about access and notes that when she uses a walker, she cannot maneuver in the space;

access and a safe space where those with disabilities can be welcomed and included needs to be considered. Vinsky is concerned about the information presented; had the impression that extensive HVAC work was done to improve the air quality in Town Hall and is disappointed that the Select Board is not responding to this issue. Torres: work has been done to greatly improve the air quality in Town Hall with a commercial dehumidifier; it can be a problem for some who are more sensitive; during the pandemic, there has been limited public access; the drainage around Town Hall is problematic because water collects which needs to be addressed. Rehorka: regarding accessibility, we cannot have a section for large print books; she thanks Antonellis for helping her with this issue.

6. Berry: The sense of what a library/programming needs to be will dictate the square footage; with this pilot, we are engaging a professional estimator; is there some sort of ceiling for the building required by programming, a boundary for cost? Antonellis: we are anxious to see the cost estimate; we cannot answer the question however, does not think the estimate will be so high it is not achievable for the Town; FSML has solid plans to increase the amount of funds raised; town meeting makes the decision and did decide to pursue the grant. Stara notes that an estimator has been hired and it will take time to get them on board.
7. Bono-Bunker: in the regular MBLC building program, towns spend \$150,000-\$200,000 on a design; for this pilot, we did not want towns to spend this in advance of receiving the grant; the estimator is for the pilot only. Alix asks about the not to exceed number. Cell: the Trustees are making an earnest effort to ensure that we have an estimate prior to annual town meeting and will have a not to exceed number in the warrant; it is much easier to raise money for a “thing”; this is when we will have a capital campaign and funds will come in.
8. Berry: Subject of number? Stara: the “not to exceed” is the limit of what will be provided by the town; in reality we do not have a number before the contractor’s bid. Berry: a “not to exceed” does not limit fundraising. Stara: MBLC is committed to paying 75% of the actual project cost. Bono-Bunker to Vinsky: we had to weigh how much cost is expended up front; we need to be sure the chosen town can fund the project going forward; having a town pay for the cost of design and not be chosen is not justifiable. Stara: this is a pilot and it may not work. Jim Walton/Finance Committee: for any project, there will be high limit; we went through the exercise of looking at the financial status of the Town and are sending the message that we could afford the project; there are variables that may affect the decision point. Torres: we have a community with a vivid and strong imagination; 78% of the town contributed to WiredWest in the hopes of a future broadband network; using the estimate, we will do our best to address cost increases; we should have a way to take the question back to the town. Antonellis: FSML raises money for a new library and more for programming; every one of their fundraisers beats the prior one; for this small town, \$36,000 was raised last December; people have been donating to a dream, something in the future; FSML has been building support. Waltos: what Antonellis is describing is an excellent grassroots campaign even before there is a capital campaign. Walton: every year annual town meeting sets aside funds for a new library.
9. Lauren Stara: How do you plan to promote the warrant article at annual town meeting; what is the plan for advocacy if debt exclusion is needed? Cell: a group is working on public communication plans; funds for a mailing will be provided by FSML; there will be neighborhood meetings and conversations with specific subcommunities in town; a lot of foresight has been given to the intent and content of information; Mosher is the FSML representative to this group. Walton: this has been a very transparent process with challenges

and opportunities. Antonellis: we have been through this before and last time I was naïve; it was such a great idea, I believed folks would support it. Antonellis continues: the library has no running water and, due to the pandemic, the composting toilet was closed to the public; there is a lot of support and there are those who will not support a new library; last time, we heard the concern about money so we have been saving up; we are communicating and are not apologetic about the need for a new library. Farrell: there are many complexities to Town financing; the challenge for those of us who understand it well is how to communicate to others and we are up to this challenge; how will this impact individual tax payers and the Town's finances needs to be communicated in a clear way. Cell: if you decide to award us, a much larger percentage of the cost will be paid for and we will appreciate the opportunity; we will have the grant, Town funds and donations making a new library much more manageable and affordable.

10. Bono-Bunker: If your town is not chosen and the first place town fails, would you consider having an article on the warrant or holding a special town meeting? Cell: our body would want to consider it; looking at others in the room, there seems to be a willingness to think seriously about this. Waltos: if the town is not funded, what would your plans be? Antonellis: keep fundraising, do the best we can with the resources we have; without a bathroom, we would need to look into a different kind of composting toilet; Shutesbury needs a new library; the current library is less than 1,000 sq feet with no running water for staff to wash their hands and no toilet; we will keep plugging away; we will still need a new library and cannot build one our own. Torres: \$25,000 for a new library will continue to be on the warrant. Antonellis: the Trustees' \$25,000 request goes through Capital Planning then to the Finance Committee. Bono-Bunker: Berry visited the proposed site; there is an abutter to east, are they aware and supportive? Torres: yes, she has spoken with the resident who has asked that a fence be built and is concerned about potential water runoff; we will work closely with her to during the design phase; she is open and wants to ensure she is heard. This is the end of the formal questions.

Brad Foster/Trustee: during the public forum, our job was to listen, we heard concerns about cost/size both smaller and larger; we responded to what we heard and incorporated it into the best project for a new library; in terms of a town vote, it is hard without having some number to talk about, a sense of where we are going; if the project costs increase, we will have talk about it again; we cannot give a blank check. Stara: that is why we decided to hire a professional estimator; they have a wealth of data. Antonellis: how often have the estimates been wildly wrong? Bono-Bunker: our most recent project, in August, came in at its 2016-17 estimate as did Greenfield; construction costs come in 2-2.5 years after the estimate; owners/project managers as well as estimators are seeing costs in real time; Medford, built in the Fall of 2019, came in significantly below bid; Hadley came in \$1 million over the bid; we have confidence in our estimators. Berry reinforces the importance of the initial bid and construction costs; we are not in a stable environment re: construction costs; it is important to look at end costs. Bono-Bunker: we are doing due diligence. Berry: it is important to have contingency plans; without a design, the program is interpreted into a building; the estimate will be very credible. Stara: the estimate is based on how the building will perform. Bono-Bunker: life cycle costs will also be considered.

Bono-Bunker thanks all present and notes the next few steps will move more quickly and will ensure town officials are aware; if chosen, Antonellis will not be able to do what she is doing now during the building process. Stara thanks all for their thoughtful comments; we will consider

everything that was said; Stara and Bono-Bunker can be contacted if there is more to say. Stara: we expect to have an estimate by the end of the month. Bono-Bunker: we will be choosing the town in March pending the estimating team.

At 1:04pm, the Select Board and Trustees meetings are adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary