

Trustee Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2008

The June meeting of the Leominster Public Library Board of Trustees was called to order at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 9, 2008.

In attendance were: Gilbert Tremblay, Chairman (until 5:35 p.m.); Kathleen Reynolds Daigneault; Nancy Hicks, Carol Millette; Robert Salvatore; Jeanne Zephir; Assistant Director Meredith Foley and Director Susan Theriault Shelton. Also in attendance for a portion of the meeting were Head of Adult Services Edward Bergman; Kenneth Jones, Chief of Staff to Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong; and Mr. Jones' wife Debbie.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved correcting typographical errors. (CM/RS)

Chairman Tremblay asked that the Library Closing/Decertification Policy be discussed first as Mr. Jones was in attendance. The Board agreed.

Mr. Jones noted that the City of Fitchburg is in critical times, and by law the mayor must submit a balanced budget. He indicated that the cuts were not without pain. He suggested that the Board of Trustees may not want to make a universal decision regarding their action if a library closes or loses its certification. This suggestion, he told the board, is based on the fact that Fitchburg may be looking at a Proposition 2½ override and that this would be a short-term rather than a long-term need. When asked what he saw as "short-term," Mr. Jones indicated that there was no specific time frame. He noted that override(s) would be specifically targeted, i.e. Library, Police, Fire, etc., and that signatures must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office by August 11th in order for an item to appear on the September 16th primary ballot. Mr. Jones asked that this be considered a "probationary" period.

Mr. Salvatore expressed concern that the Leominster Public Library would be strongly impacted by Fitchburg residents' library use of our library if the City of Fitchburg did not adequately support their library. Citing there had been some skepticism within the community and City Council regarding support of our building project, he felt it would not be fair to expend our resources to fulfill Fitchburg's obligation.

Mrs. Daigneault asked if there had been any discussions between the City of Fitchburg and Fitchburg State College. Mr. Jones indicated that there will be some partnering and some access, but didn't have any details.

Mrs. Millette noted that Leominster received a waiver from the MA Board of Library Commissioners in the late 1980's when times were tight throughout the state. She indicated that every year the library has to go before the City Council to defend a budget that meets our state aid requirements. She asked, "How can we justify loaning our material to Fitchburg residents if it negatively impacts Leominster residents access to this material?"

Mrs. Hicks posed the question of whether the override would be supported, knowing that Fitchburg residents could use other area libraries? Mr. Jones indicated that those who would support the override would hold fast.

Mrs. Daigneault stated that the obligation of the Board of Trustees and the City is to the residents of Leominster.

Mrs. Shelton spoke a bit about reciprocity, noting that libraries have been sharing resources since the 1960's, long before other departments. She stated that the Leominster library is already feeling the impact of the impending cuts in Fitchburg. Fitchburg has not purchased new material since March, which means that their residents seek new materials from other libraries. Additionally, the Fitchburg Library closed its book drop sometime ago.

This has resulted in a marked increase of Fitchburg materials being dropped off at the Leominster Library. This will further increase when the Fitchburg Library hours are dramatically reduced. This substantially increases the work of the Leominster Library staff, who must then discharge these materials, print routing slips, and package the material for van pick-up. Mrs. Shelton told the Board that 16-17% of Leominster's circulation is to non-residents. Of that, 7% is to Fitchburg residents. Conversely, 6.3 % of Fitchburg's circulation is to Leominster residents. However, Mrs. Shelton further noted that Leominster Library's circulation is almost two times that of the Fitchburg Library. The Leominster Library staff is struggling to keep up already with providing coverage for an additional service desk, and a nearly 50% increase in circulation. She stated that she is also concerned about the impact of the situation in Fitchburg on Leominster Library programs, and computer use. Leominster uses almost all of its state aid money, which includes non-resident reimbursement, to meet its materials expenditure requirement for the receipt of state aid the following fiscal year. It is the library's obligation to serve Leominster residents first. Mrs. Shelton noted that three other communities (Lunenburg, Gardner, and Groton) that she is aware of have already voted not to serve Fitchburg residents should the library lose its certification.

Mrs. Shelton shared some statistics for consideration:

Leominster's circulation in FY07 (closed 2 months for move) - 242,500

Fitchburg's circulation in FY07 - 176,000

Leominster's circulation for FY08 (to date) - 352,493

Fitchburg's circulation for FY08 (to date) - 157,300

Mr. Tremblay noted that network transfers, many of which are currently done for Fitchburg residents, have a big impact on the library. Network transfers include the process of borrowing materials from and returning materials to other libraries for library patrons, all of which require considerable staff time. He also indicated that he has been approached by four Leominster City Councilors who said they hope that Leominster does not loan to Fitchburg residents should their library become decertified.

Mr. Jones noted that one of the charges the Mayor will make to the Trustees is the fact that the library building does not meet the needs of the city and they must find a way to get a new library – to envision the future of the library. Mrs. Daigneault asked if there were any trust funds that could be used, and how much are they willing to sacrifice to get a new building? He indicated that the mayor would soon be making two new appointments to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Jones thanked the Board for their time before leaving the meeting.

There was some discussion regarding timing of the Trustees vote. The Trustees felt that there should be a strong statement. After much discussion the following draft statement was approved. (KRD/RS)

The Board of Trustees of the Leominster Public Library is in the process of gathering additional information regarding the decisions made by the City of Fitchburg and the impact of these decisions on our library. Further, the Board of Trustees has been made aware of options being considered by the City of Fitchburg. Therefore, the Board of Trustees will make a timely decision that will maintain the high quality of service provided by our staff and volunteers. All decisions made by the Board of Trustees will be in the best interest of the citizens of Leominster.

The Trustees asked that the statement be sent to Mayor Mazzarella, the Leominster City Council, Mayor Wong, the Library Staff, the Fitchburg Library Director and Board of Trustees, and also be made available to the public.

Old Business:

Library Expansion Project – Committee Reports

There is not much new to report since the last meeting. The only thing that has been done since that time is the initial installation of the handicap operator on the Children's Room doors. We are waiting for Fontaine and the electrical sub-contractor to finish this work. Susan Shelton and Alby Donaldson are scheduled to have additional HV/AC training on Wednesday, June 11th.

Mrs. Shelton informed the Board of the passing of Frank Adams who was one of our project architects. She also noted that Building Committee Chairman Mark Bodanza has been ill recently, and therefore unavailable to chair a meeting with Beacon, SAR, and the HV/AC sub-contractor to discuss outstanding issues. The next Building Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 10th.

FY'09 Budget

Mrs. Shelton reported that the Mayor has recommended the library's budget as submitted with the exception of the request for the new Electronic Services Coordinator's position. The Library's budget defense before the City Council is scheduled for Thursday, June 19th at 6:30 p.m.

New Business:

Promotional Banners and Signs

Mrs. Shelton informed the Board that she had been approached by a member of the Starburst Committee regarding the possibility of them placing a sandwich-board sign near the flagpole on West Street. This was very close to the date of the event, and they did not want to wait for a decision from the Trustees. The Board will discuss this and the precedent it would set when the next request is made.

Friends & Volunteer Recognition

Mrs. Shelton informed the Board that she would like to hold a Friends and Volunteer Recognition Program in October. This will be a nice way to recognize all of their hard work on behalf of the library. The Board thought this was a good idea, and will await plans from Mrs. Shelton.

Library Partnerships

The Library has partnered with Literacy Volunteers of the Montachusett Area. Due to the proposed cut-back in hours at the Fitchburg Public Library, Gloria Maybury of Literacy Volunteers (housed at the Fitchburg Library) met with Mrs. Shelton and Mrs. Foley recently regarding the possibility of Literacy Volunteers having a presence at the Leominster Library. It was agreed that Mrs. Maybury would be able to use an adult study room to hold office hours and meet clients by appointment on Mondays, and that she would hold a conversation group at the library on Wednesday evenings during July & August. It was noted that this partnership will be evaluated at the end of the summer.

Mrs. Shelton is waiting to be contacted by the director of the ALFA program at Fitchburg State College regarding the two classes to be held at the library in the fall. These classes are a partnership of the Friends of the Library and Fitchburg State College.

The library will be partnering with the Center for Italian Culture at Fitchburg State College to offer an Italian Conversation Circle on Thursday evenings in June and July.

The library is partnering with the *Worcester Review* and the Worcester County Poetry Association to present a series of programs on Robert Cormier. Tentatively these programs are scheduled as follows:

November 4th - Reading of poems from *Frenchtown Summer* (It was noted that this is Election Day)

November 10th – Students from the Center for Technical education will read from *the Chocolate War*

November 13th- there will be a program of local authors who have done research on Bob Cormier

The library is working on a program for the Johnny Appleseed Festival. Mrs. Shelton has contacted the *Toe Jam Puppet Band*, who will perform on September 13th rain or shine. It was noted that this would be paid for with a portion of a grant received from Wal-Mart.

Announcements:

We are approaching the first anniversary of the dedication of the Dr. Martin T. Feldman Children's Room. The Feldman family has contacted Mrs. Shelton and would like to fund an anniversary celebration. Mrs. Shelton is working with the family to coordinate possible performers.

There have been a number of problems recently with skateboarders. During the Memorial Day weekend a neighbor of the library called police to report skateboarding activity at the Pearl Street entrance. The neighbor told Mrs. Shelton that when the police arrived nearly an hour later the skateboarders had already left. The skateboarders had pulled up a number of the parking lot's wheel stops to create a ramp, and the following morning a patron punctured his tire driving over one of the exposed pins. Library maintenance/craftsman Alby Donaldson observed the skateboarders on the library's property once again the following Sunday, and called the police. They responded fairly quickly and did take the names of the individuals. Mrs. Shelton has been in contact with Chief Roddy about this matter. The skateboarders are damaging the building's steps, cast stone, railings, and shrubbery.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 14, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. in the library's conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith A. Foley
Recording Secretary