

Hall Memorial Library
Board of Trustees Special Meeting
93 Main Street
Ellington, Connecticut
Minutes
April 21, 2020
7:00 p.m.

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TOWN CLERK

I. Call to Order of ZOOM conference call

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m. by Chair Mary Blanchette. In attendance via Zoom remote access program: Janet Wieliczka, John Halloran, Mary Cone, Peg Busse, Melinda Ferry, Director Susan Phillips and Recording Secretary/Bookkeeper Rhonda Villanova.

II. Modify Budget for 2020-21

Chair Mary Blanchette explained that there have been two adjustments to the Library's original FY20-21 budget request. The first, as directed by the Acting Finance Officer, was to "maintain current services". To that end, the budget was reduced to \$677,371.00, eliminating the proposed new Teen Librarian position and the funds for Teen programs, and also some other minor adjustments. Additional cuts were made to all department budgets by the First Selectman before the adjusted budgets were presented to the Board of Finance. The Library budget was reduced to \$664,856.00 or \$1,439 (.2%) above FY19-20. This amount does not allow for maintenance of current services. If current programs are kept, there would be no funds for salary increases. General Government budget numbers allow for 2.75% increases for other Town personnel.

Janet Wieliczka questioned how the budget approval process would work. Mary Blanchette explained that due to Governor Lamont giving towns permission to pass budgets without going to voters, the Town wanted to maintain the current mill rate. John Halloran questioned the process of the additional cuts and why it was done by the First Selectman vs. the Board of Finance, and with no input from or communication with the departments.

Mary Blanchette stated that next Tuesday, April 28 there would be a Zoom meeting of the Board of Finance for budget presentations. She and Sue Phillips will make a presentation about how this will affect Library services. Peg Busse stated people on the Board of Finance were in touch with the First Selectman regarding the numbers and what would work.

John Halloran made a motion to present the proposed \$664,856.00 as the FY20-21 budget request to the Board of Finance; Mary Cone seconded.
All in favor, motion approved.

III. Current Library Operations re: COVID-19

Mary Blanchette began discussion about the change in operations with a staffing update and Sue Phillips added details. Currently, some staff members have chosen not to come to work, and therefore are not being paid. With the introduction of a partial work-from-home model, several others chose to do that. The remainder of the staff are safely working in the Library

9am-4pm, Monday – Friday. They are busily serving the public with curbside pickup of library materials, supporting teachers and students with digital access, acquiring additional digital materials, answering questions and assisting patrons via phone and email, working on collection management activities, cleaning and organizing projects, training and planning. Planning for the Summer Reading Program has begun with the current situation in mind. The staff met earlier in the day to brainstorm. They came up with many great ideas.

The library is assisting the schools with online distance learning. Sue was in contact with the media specialists before the schools closed to get an idea of what was needed. Creating new and updating expired library cards, as well as identifying and obtaining multi-use ebooks has been a big job. HooplaDigital, one of the library's online resources is serving well for this purpose. Sometimes titles aren't available through the usual channels. Sue has been identifying other sources, and spoke of some challenging but successful instances to fulfill student needs. The teachers are pleased and the kids are participating. Use of the library's digital resources has greatly increased.

Curbside pickup service involves patrons requesting materials via the regular request system, phone or email. Materials are gathered, packaged and put outside on the planter when patrons arrive for pickup. No person-to-person contact. The Health Department was consulted and approve of this procedure. So far the library has served 334 people with over 1400 items.

For returns, items are returned in the book drop only. They are wiped with disinfectant and quarantined for 9 days per CDC guidelines before being checked back in. Due dates for all items checked out were updated until May 1; no fines will be charged. A further extension will be considered later this month.

Sue Phillips mentioned that communicating with the patrons about all this is the biggest challenge. Suggestions of signs, newspaper articles, and mailing a flyer or postcard were mentioned. Melinda Ferry asked whether the Senior Center and the schools have the information. Sue said they did, and have been sharing it.

IV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:37 p.m.: John Halloran 1st/Janet Wieliczka 2nd. All in favor, motion approved.

Mary Blanchette reminded attendees the Board of Finance meeting on Tuesday, April 28th, would be held via ZOOM and to check the town website for details.

Submitted by
Rhonda Villanova
Recording Secretary