

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
KENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY COMMISSION
APRIL 9, 2024
7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Meeting Room, 83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

Chairwoman Boutin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Corbin Adzigirey, Michael Alexopoulos, Klaire Bielonko, Denise Boutin, James Irwin, Claire Kawalec, Nina Kendrick, Michelle Kynard, Cameron Lisk, Christine Sinopoli and Despina Tartsinis

Also present via Zoom or in person: Selectman/Ex-officio member - Jerry Mahoney and Library Administrator - Beth Chafetz

Public Participation

Fred Sweitzer – Mr. Sweitzer asked for calm, reason and civility from residents as they exchange in dialogue about recent issues and events happening in town. He cautioned against dangerous speculation and blurred lines between assertions which do not appear to be backed up by evidence.

Eric Harrington – Mr. Harrington offered words of encouragement to the new library commission members, commented on the recent allegations made by Suzanne Irwin against Selectman Harrington, which were proven to be false, and cautioned the board not to put forward any candidate for Library Director unless they are very confident the individual is the right person for the job.

John Gracey – Mr. Gracey discussed the recent document created by Selectman Mahoney with regard to the library and walked the commission through areas where he felt some of the information was misleading.

Neil Hornish – Mr. Hornish discussed a recent opinion letter from Town Attorney Derek Donnelly with regard to ordinance 71-4, last revised in 1972, regarding the First Selectman’s authority to hire.

Tess McCool – Ms. McCool, speaking solely on her own behalf, stated that she has submitted a letter of interest to fill the vacant position on the Kent Memorial Library Commission. She also shared her thoughts and concerns on a variety of topics pertaining to the library and the commission.

Joan Neiweem - Ms. Neiweem urged residents and commission members to end what she views as despicable behavior, avoid reacting to negative thoughts and move forward with positive attitudes in order to make things better for the library and the town.

Kathy Bielonko – Ms. Bielonko urged the commission to avoid moving a candidate forward this evening if they do not feel one hundred percent positive about the person.

Scott Guilmartin – Mr. Guilmartin provided his thoughts on the process for selecting a new Library Director and gave suggestions to the commission on what he hopes they will consider and look for in a candidate.

Approval of the minutes from the March 12, 2024, Regular Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Commissioner Kendrick offered changes for consideration.

Commissioner Bielonko MOTIONED, and Commissioner Lisk seconded to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission with the following changes:

- 1) Page 2 - Communications Received section, the word “libel” should be spelled “liable.”
- 2) Page 3- Special Committee Reports section, the date of should be changed from March 20, 2024 to March 21, 2024.
- 3) Unfinished Business section, the word “correcte4d” should be spelled “corrected.”

Vote: 11-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the April 2, 2024, Special Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Selectman Mahoney MOTIONED and Commissioner Adzigirey seconded, to accept the April 2, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes as presented. Vote: 11-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Communications Received

Chairwoman Boutin shared the following:

- Letter of apology from resident Fred Sweitzer for contacting commission members directly.
 - Commissioner Sinopoli would like to see a policy put into place regarding communications received.
- Letter from First Selectman Moll regarding the approval of grant funds for additional security cameras in the Kent Memorial Library.
 - Commissioner Alexopoulos offered additional details on the cameras.
 - Commissioner Sinopoli does not agree with cameras in the library and questioned who has the authority to approve them.

Report of the Library Director

Library Administrator Beth Chafetz provided an update on the library which included statistics for the month of March.

Standing Committee Reports

Commissioner Tartsinis provided an update on the Policy Sub-Committee. Their last meeting was March 19, 2024, at which time the group was able to get through quite a few of the policies and bylaws. They were also able to identify items to address at a future meeting.

Commissioner Sinopoli reported that the Interim Search Committee had nothing new to report since the Library Commission held their Special Meeting on April 2nd. During that meeting, the commission had voted to table a decision, as members had expressed a desire for more time to carefully consider the candidate.

Commissioner Sinopoli MOTIONED and Commissioner Adzigirey seconded to move the candidate forward to meet with the First Selectman. Vote: 6 in favor (Tartsinis, Alexopoulos, Irwin, Kawalec, Kendrick and Adzigirey), 3 against (Bielonko, Kynard and Sinopoli) and 2 abstain (Boutin and Lisk.) Motion passed.

Unfinished Business

Selectman Mahoney provided an update on the FOIA Complaints filed by Mrs. Irwin. Two of the complaints have been sent to the town and will be moving forward. An additional complaint, filed approximately a month after the first two, has not been acted on yet, however, it is expected that there will be some action taken within the next few weeks. In total, Mrs. Irwin has filed four FOIA complaints against the Kent Memorial Library Commission, Chairwoman Boutin and the Town of Suffield.

New Business

None

Public Participation

Beth Chafetz – Ms. Chafetz thanked the commission for moving the candidate forward for consideration by the First Selectman.

Kathy Bielonko – Ms. Bielonko requested the removal of Commissioner Irwin due to recent actions taken by his spouse.

Fred Sweitzer – Mr. Sweitzer suggested a three minute limit for Public Comment and commented on recent chatter in the Board of Selectmen meeting and social media calling for Commissioner Irwin to resign. In his opinion, he has not seen a shred of evidence that Commissioner Irwin has done anything illegal or unethical.

John Murphy – Mr. Murphy disagreed with Mr. Sweitzer’s comments, explained why he felt that way and expressed his belief that Commissioner Irwin should step down and the DTC should issue an apology.

Karl Christian – Mr. Christian urged Commissioner Irwin to resign from the commission and cautioned that the Freedom of Information Act should not be weaponized.

John Gracey – Mr. Gracey noted that he does not agree with some of the intimidation tactics he feels are currently being used. He continued expressing his concerns regarding Selectman Mahoney’s report, providing examples to illustrate why he feels the way he does.

Kerry White – Ms. White expressed support for Commissioner Irwin and expressed her belief that he is not responsible for the recent actions by his wife and should not be held accountable for them.

Suzanne Richardson-White – Ms. Richardson-White shared a personal story that she felt illustrated how our town is filled with people who are willing to help one another and work together despite political affiliations. She urged all to work together to keep the library a wonderful and important part of our town.

Sam Coatti – Ms. Coatti, a resident and former member of the Kent Memorial Library Commission, discussed the professional and dedicated staff at the library and urged people to put their differences aside and come together to keep the library going.

Adjournment

Selectman/Ex-officio member Mahoney MOTIONED and Commissioner Lisk seconded to adjourn at 8:01 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary