

# TOWN OF STONINGTON

152 Elm Street • Stonington, Connecticut 06378

**BOARD OF FINANCE**

**LIBRARY SUBCOMMITTEE**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**TOWN HALL 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR MEETING ROOM**

**4:00 PM Tuesday, August 13, 2019**

Board of Finance Members in attendance: Danielle Chesebrough and June Strunk  
Members of the Public: Stonington Free Library: Allegra Griffiths, Denise Easton, and Micayla Hall; Westerly Public Library: Brigitte Hopkins, Bill Lancellotta and Rob Holland.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

The meeting opened with Danielle Chesebrough noting that the Mystic and Noank Library representatives were unable to attend and Danielle had met with them the previous day. She also noted they had all agreed one, if not more, meetings would likely be needed before a final recommendation was put forward to the full Board of Finance.

The meeting then moved into Board of Finance members giving a brief overview of what they viewed as the timeline for decisions and the objectives for this meeting. In summary it was shared that come November there would be at least two new BoF members as both June Strunk and Danielle Chesebrough were not running again for their BoF seats, but instead running for the Board of Selectman. Given this, they wanted to try and share a potential way forward for the future BoF members to approach funding for the three libraries. The objective shared was to find a formula that can be easily applied by future BoF members, which should be based on quantitative factors that could provide a more consistent approach to funding going forward.

SFL representatives shared views on why the relative financial need of a given library should be looked at as a factor. As SFL is not able to be open as many hours, which limits the communities' ability to use the library. It also noted that fundraising efforts can be curtailed by not having staff to dedicate to that purpose. SFL also noted that additional hours were the number one ask of community members when they performed their survey.

Westerly representatives shared their view that the formula should take into account a number of factors, but particularly use by the community. There was consensus by the libraries that they did not want to feel like they were being forced to compete with each other and that they have had and want to continue to have a positive working relationship. Westerly also noted that the community of Stonington was very lucky to have three libraries that could serve all members of the community and this was part of what

contributes to Stonington's unique offerings to residents. Westerly also noted that they did not think need should be looked at too heavily. They emphasized reasons why endowment should not be considered, which Danielle noted was also discussed at the previous day's meeting with Mystic Noank as this library also did not feel endowment should be part of the consideration. All the libraries were also in agreement that any cut would create a hardship on the library and its ability to serve residents.

This led to a discussion, where all in attendance were in agreement, that part of the recommendation from this sub-committee to the full Board of Finance should request that any funding consideration start with where current funding is and no cuts should be made. The community clearly spoke out at as part of the last budget cycle as to the important role libraries play in their community. The group also discussed what would get SFL up to a 'level playing field', or essentially where they could be open the same amount of hours. This would require over \$300,000 in additional funding for SFL. It was noted that this information should also be shared with the rest of the board, but it was also emphasized that this amount of increase would likely be difficult to achieve this upcoming year.

For the sake of having a new formula to run numbers on, a version of what Westerly Library shared was used to calculate out a possible formula. This formula would be based on proximity to population, shareholders, and door counting numbers (aggregated with an additional factor regarding hours open). If this formula was used, it would look like: SFL: 50%; Westerly: 30%; Mystic-Noank: 20%. Both Board of Finance members in attendance stipulated that they would only support and recommend this type of formula with an additional appropriate to the libraries so no libraries funding would decrease. In the future any funding allocated would be divided up according to this breakdown. So if the BoF approved 10,000 increase in future years it would look like: SFL: \$5,000; Westerly: 3,000 and Mystic-Noank: 2,000.

The Board of Finance members asked the group to all spend a few more weeks thinking about what they think could be a formula that could be equitable and based on consistent data to avoid fluctuations in funding going forward. The group agreed to set a meeting for mid-to late September in advance of the October BoF meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm

Respectfully submitted



Acting Secretary