

TOWN OF STONINGTON

152 Elm Street • Stonington, Connecticut 06378

BOARD OF FINANCE

LIBRARY SUBCOMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

TOWN HALL 1ST FLOOR MEETING ROOM

4:00 PM Thursday, November 29, 2018

Board of Finance Members in attendance: Danielle Chesebrough and June Strunk
Members of the Public: Stonington Free Library: Allegra Griffiths, Denise Easton, Belinda DeKay, and Micayla Hall. Mystic and Noank Library: Roberta Donahue, Karen Wall and Bill Turner.

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 pm.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Motion: Danielle Chesebrough

Second: June Strunk

Comments from the Public: Two of the three libraries had representatives at this meeting and shared their insights on the challenges libraries face in terms of sustainable funding models and brainstormed with the Board of Finance on potential opportunities to improve the communities understanding of the libraries operations.

The discussion among those in attendance focused on brainstorming ways the Town of Stonington, with support of the Board of Finance, could support the three libraries that serve the Town. Items of note during the discussion included:

- How can the community be better engaged on the topic of library sustainability? For example, how can we ensure people know the libraries are not municipal and receive low (relative to other town's municipal libraries) funding from taxes. Also how can more people know about the many programs offered by the various libraries?
- SFL shared that they continue to lose staff to higher paying libraries that also offer benefits.
- On the topic of donations, the libraries said they can ask, but need to ensure it is done in a way that makes all customers feel equal as a library's mission is to be a place of inclusiveness.
- The BoF noted that the next two years will be difficult to increase funding due to the school bonding hitting its peak and then caching up on other services put on hold while paying off this bond and trying to ensure taxes do not spike for residents.

- The topic of partnership was discussed at length and the SFL shared information about the benefits they have seen from the non-profit roundtable, as well as partnerships with the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, Masonicare and schools. SFL shared for example that schools bring third graders to get a library card and a dictionary, which is sponsored by the local Rotary.
- All the libraries noted that they utilize interns, some of whom come from the local high schools, particularly during the summer reading program.
- It was also noted that the unique partnership structure of the three libraries may serve as a strength for grants, looking to pilot how a regional approach to library services could work. Westerly noted they have a grant resources that they can help train the other libraries on how to use and will follow-up shortly.
- Two new ideas were shared:
 - **Including a donation card with taxes.** The card could serve as a tool to educate the community on the amount of tax dollars that goes to support the libraries and the important services they offer. It was noted that the ambulance core also serves a similar quasi-municipal function and outreach could be done to this group as well regarding donation cards.
 - **Creating a library week.** This could bring greater visibility to the libraries, as well as serving a fundraising effort.
- For both ideas referenced above it was noted that the BoF could help make connections and share their input following the outcomes of this sub-committee, but these ideas would need to go through the First Selectman.
- Additional fundraising ideas shared included having libraries commission 'gear' by local artists (or children), having more gatherings in the park for SFL, and asking business to sponsor fundraising efforts, such as dine for dollars. The SFS noted that their small business outreach for giving Tuesday was very successful both in terms of fundraising as well as broader community outreach targets.
- The libraries asked the BoF to share more insights on what they would like in terms of data from the libraries for their annual budget request submissions.
- The libraries thanked the BoF for the sub-committee and noted how important this work was, as the people who need libraries the most are often the least visible.

In outlining the next steps to prepare for next meeting, it was suggested attendees think about details surrounding suggested educational/fundraising campaigns, such as a Library Week. The Board of Finance will find more information in regards to adding a donation card to taxes, as well as providing more insights on data for budget submissions.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 5:16 pm

Respectfully submitted
 Danielle Chesebrough
 Acting Secretary