

James E. Nichols Memorial Library
Board of Trustees Meeting

-Approved 10/25/2021-

October 18, 2021
Minutes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:00pm. Present: Chairperson Annette Nichols, Bette Miller, Karen Ponton, Shannon Whalen, A. Xavier (Alternate, voting); Karin Karagozian, Trustee Emeritus; Lois Brady, Interim Director; Margaret Adams, Library Assistant; Absent: Treasurer Sarah Heath; Members of the Public: *Residents:* Bill Adams, Gayle E. Lacasse, JoAnn C. Wood, Harold Karagozian, George Gurney, Susan Guernsey; *Non-residents:* Jonathan R. Brady, Tim Mayne.

I. Welcome: Chairperson A. Nichols welcomed members of the public to the Board meeting.

II. Review/Approval of Minutes: Motion by K. Ponton, seconded by B. Miller: To approve the minutes of August 23, 2021 as amended. Passed unanimously. Motion by B. Miller, seconded by A. Xavier: To approve the minutes of August 30, 2021 as written. Passed unanimously. Motion by K. Ponton, seconded by B. Miller: To approve the minutes of September 27, 2021 as written. Passed unanimously. Motion by K. Ponton, seconded by B. Miller: To approve the minutes of October 8, 2021 with the word "love" (line 14) replaced with "liked" and the word "continue" (line 34) replaced with "be director". Discussion followed. Some members of the public wanted to know why the minutes were not more detailed. A. Nichols explained several times that it was a difficult meeting and the Board wanted "to turn the page and move on." Many people present were not satisfied with that response, insisting the public should know all the details, and one member of the public cited *Right to Know* law and threatened to file legal action against the Board if the draft minutes were approved. A. Nichols asked for a roll call vote on the motion: S. Whalen-no, A. Xavier-no, A. Nichols- no, B. Miller-abstain, K. Ponton-abstain. The motion failed. Motion by A. Xavier, seconded by K. Ponton: To submit the draft minutes of October 8, 2021 to a lawyer for review. A legal opinion would clarify whether or not the draft complies with *Right to Know*. A. Nichols asked for a roll call vote: B. Miller-yes, K. Ponton-yes, S. Whalen-yes, A. Xavier-yes, A. Nichols-no. The motion passed.

III. Ongoing Business

A. Librarian/Library Director Search Update: K. Ponton gave the report for the Search Committee. There were 10 applicants; the Committee rejected five (5). Thus far, the Committee held in-person interviews with two (2) candidates. The Committee would like to recommend the full Board meet with one of these candidates, based upon her resume, letters of reference and initial interview. In response to questions from the public, A. Nichols explained why a search for a Library Director was undertaken, and that the Interim Director position is effective March through December. She said and that some of the conditions that L. Brady told A. Nichols she wanted if named Director might not be acceptable, for example, \$30.00/hour and full-time with benefits. A. Nichols also said that L. Brady had resigned in May but was "coaxed back" at a higher pay rate and increased vacation. L. Brady then read aloud and submitted her resignation, effective immediately. Many members of the public voiced their anger at the Trustees for how they have treated both former and present staff. Several spoke words of praise and support for L. Brady, and blamed the Board as the problem. (A. Nichols directed the discussion to that under "New Business" below.)

B. Assistant Librarian Recommendation: Postponed.

C. Preliminary Budget Discussion: Postponed.

IV. New Business: A. Nichols brought to the Trustees' attention that the Library Board may not be a valid Board right now, as two (2) members (S. Heath and B. Miller) are not Center Harbor residents as State law requires. She stressed that she only learned of this in the past 48 hours. This news upset everyone in attendance. Some argued that the Board should not be voting on anything at all this evening, if it is not valid. A. Nichols reported that she has already spoken with the Select Board and an attorney from the NH Municipal Association, and will send that email to the Board later this evening. She is also on the agenda for Wednesday's meeting of the Selectmen to discuss this matter with them. Many in attendance expressed very serious concern about the future of the Library and asked if it will close. A. Nichols said she will be getting more information about how to proceed. She read the resignation letter that she submitted and rescinded at the October 8, 2021 meeting of the Board of Trustees. A. Nichols

then asked K. Ponton to resign from the Board of Trustees. K. Ponton declined. From 7:20pm on, for nearly an hour, Trustees A. Nichols and S. Whalen, Trustee Emeritus K. Karagozian, and members of the public pressured K. Ponton to resign. B. Miller said the public is not aware of so much that is going on; the Board is not getting a lot of its work done and it is getting worse; K. Ponton is not to blame. A. Nichols reread her resignation letter, and asked K. Ponton to step down, and again K. Ponton declined. K. Karagozian said the Board should develop a policy for the removal of a Trustee. A. Nichols asked each of the Trustees what they would do if K. Ponton stays on the Board. S. Whalen said she would stay on the Board but "I can't guarantee for the long term and I'm not sure I would stay until March." A. Nichols said "I'm stepping down if she's not resigning." K. Karagozian, emeritus, said "I am not willing to be on the Board in this situation. You can't do anything unless you get her off the Board." A. Xavier, alternate, said she would be willing to be nominated to be appointed as Trustee and would serve. B. Miller said she would serve but is in "legal limbo" and not sure if she could even serve. L. Brady said she would reconsider her resignation if K. Ponton was off the Board. One member of the public urged A. Nichols to rescind her resignation and have a process to remove a Trustee. A. Xavier said tonight's meeting was "to turn the page and plan for new beginnings. It was misrepresented. You don't know what's been done." A. Nichols asked L. Brady to reconsider her resignation, but she said "I'm not working here any more." A. Nichols asked the public to "bear with us" and said "there will be a path forward next Monday." M. Adams said she would open the Library Wednesday and Friday, but "it is difficult to work for people like this."

V. **Non-public Session - Staff 6-month Review:** Postponed.

VI. **Other Business**

A. **Next Monthly Meeting:** Monday, October 25, 10:00am, Place TBA.

B. **Interim Meeting(s) for Budget Review/Policy Updates:** Dates TBA.

Adjournment: Motion by A. Xavier, seconded by B. Miller to adjourn at 8:25pm. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Ponton, Secretary