

SOMERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING, February 12, 2025

Minutes

ATTENDING

TRUSTEES: Kate Van Sleet, Janaki Perera, Anandavalli Thiagarajan, Ami Feldman, Sarah Pascarella, Mike Smith, Carla Lillvik

ABSENT: Mark Sternman, April Kuehnhoff

GUEST: Jake Savage

DIRECTOR: Cathy Piantigini

CALL TO ORDER

President Van Sleet called the meeting of the Library Board of Trustees to order at 6:04 pm.

MINUTES

Ami Feldman motioned to approve the minutes from January and Anandavalli Thiagarajan seconded. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

GUEST SPEAKER: JAKE SAVAGE (Library Social Worker)

Jake gave his background as a social worker and detailed some of the activities that he has been engaged in since taking the position in October 2024.

1. Jake spent the fall designing the library social work program, researching best practices and relationship building in Somerville (including collaborating with other social workers across the city).
2. Beginning in January, he began tabling at all three branches and had dedicated time for follow-up appointments. In that time, he interfaced with 89 people.
3. In February he started drop-in hours across all 3 library branches, coordinating with on-site classes and programs.
4. He noted that the most common topics he hears about are need for housing, employment (underemployed or unemployed), food resources, need for educational supports for kids, behavioral issues with family members, and financial instability.
5. Jake has offered Social Work 101 workshops to current library staff (35 attendees over 3 sessions) to talk about best practices and resources for the community.
6. Jake is currently working on teen outreach.
7. Jake asked that the Trustees to help get the word out about his services and to let him know about any events or community groups that might be helpful for his work.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Main library has two full time openings and both East and West Branches have a full-time position open.
2. The elevator has not been working properly at the Main Library. DPW is aware of it and have sent technicians out and ordered parts.
3. There has been an uptick of rodents at Main Branch and East Branch. Pest control is addressing the issues.

4. The Director reported an uptick of unpleasant behavior from teens and two incident reports have been filed. Both incidents happened outside the building. Principals and Next Wave/Full Circle staff were notified and the Security Guard presence has been helpful overall.
5. East Branch was open on Martin Luther King Day as a warming center. 148 people used the library that day. Two full-time and one part-time staff were there 9-5. Salvation Army staff also was on site on the holiday with food donations. The East Branch will also be open on Presidents' Day with three full-time staff there 9-5.
6. Kids' behavior at the East Branch is improving and the branch is getting a lot of community engagement, especially with programming and regular patrons.
7. Jake Savage and Brigid Pigott are working on an ESL program and a Citizenship class. The ESL Program is currently paused because it is funded by a grant.
8. Know Your Rights classes (multiple languages) are in progress. So far there have been 20 attendees with 6 languages. The Library is looking into how to work with translators.
9. The collective bargaining agreement between city and union employees is in the process of getting approved by the City Council. Approval is expected by late February or mid-March.
10. For non-union city employees, a wage study is complete and a presentation about how it will work has been scheduled.
11. Drag Queen Story Time Committee's first meeting is scheduled for March 12 at 2 pm.
12. The Library Safety Committee had its first meeting this week with its new members. They identified three areas to focus on: environmental safety, psychological safety, and emergency safety.
13. The strategic planning consultant has moved to California and is no longer continuing in the role. Director contacted staff at Minuteman Library Network and has two leads to replace the consultant.
14. FY26 budget process is just beginning and the Library is likely to be level funded. There may be a new approach to Program Improvement Requests this year.
15. Messaging was sent to staff about what to do if government agents come into the library.
16. The Director and Carla attended the Legislative Breakfast at Cambridge Public Library. The Director and President will have some follow up meetings with connections made at the breakfast. The Trustees discussed hosting a breakfast at one of the Somerville Libraries.
17. The Director has been asked to run the Black History Month program at the Somerville Museum scheduled for February 26th.
18. Health & Human Services has three initiatives that the library is interested in participating in: free diaper pilot, vending machines offering in-need items, kiosk for sharps disposals.
19. Civic Day has been scheduled for April 5th and the Trustees are encouraged to go.

20. Library Social Worker group (4 members) is scheduling a meeting to discuss best practices.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. The President solicited ideas for budget priorities for the FY26 Library budget.
2. The Friends of the Library will hold a pop-up book sale at West Branch this weekend.
3. The Foundation is working on new fundraising campaigns for Library Month.
4. The President will be coordinating a tour of the West Branch Library for the Trustees for Great Barrington Library who are renovating their Library through a MBLC grant and wish to learn about our experience. Their library was built by the same architect as the West Branch.

COMMITTEES

1. Communications Committee –
The Trustees discussed topics for the Spring Trustee Newsletter.
2. Trustees Archives Committee
The Archive Committee proposed disbanding now that the archiving work has been completed on the Trustee GDrive.
3. Nominating Committee –
The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of officers to be voted on at the March meeting:
Kate Van Sleet, President
Janaki Perera, Vice President
April Kuehnhoff, Secretary

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and no objection, the President declared the meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

NEXT MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Trustees will be held on March 12, 2025, at 6:00 pm. The open meeting will take place in the Director's Office at the Central Branch Library.

Sarah Pascarella, Secretary pro tempore