

Meeting of the Westhampton Public Library Board of Trustees
April 8, 2021 at 7 pm

In attendance: Meaghan Schwelm, Carol McMurrich (taking minutes), Mikki Nevins, Brian Mulvehil, Celeste Whiting, Anne Marie O'Reilly, Lynn Cooper, also in attendance for new business were Robby Armenti, Jessica Lerman, Jessie Williamson

Call to order 7:11 pm

New Business: *Westhampton Connect*: Jessie introduces. It is a small group who are searching out different niches where there might be some need, areas that are not covered by other groups in town. Had just started meeting when Covid hit, then bigger concern of isolation came up. Have come up with some projects that would be really helpful to our town and community. The idea is that there are so many reasons to be here in Westhampton—all different but joined by the love of this town. Woven art piece that stands where people can, at their own intervals, weave in materials that represent who they are. It's individual/together art creation. Second piece is an art walk—this would be in that same fashion but placed apart where people can have their art pieces represented, it'll be a walk through the community by viewing other people's representations of themselves and their connection to Westhampton. Westhampton connect hopes to use the back lawn (and maybe the front for that quilt piece) for these art projects.

Nevins: the more we can connect the better we will all be. It's safe during covid.

McMurrich: very supportive of anything that supports community, likes the creativity.

Whiting: likes the timing as well.

Mulvehill: what is the time frame of these projects? Answer: not sure. Art walk might be a 3 day weekend to give people time to view. Quilting piece they had hoped to have out for a little bit longer. It is also weather dependant, things might need to be moveable. The wording "predetermined" in the proposal means that we should figure this out together to decide what is realistic.

Nevins: should it be indoors?

Robby Armenti: Jim is going to build the frame and he said the best thing for it would be for it to be hung, it would be very difficult to make a stand. So it would be best to hang it somewhere. We would have to look at the landscape and see where we could do that. Thinking end of May/beginning of June.

Mulvehill: Westhampton Connect would be responsible for all maintenance? Jessie says yes, they do not want to put a burden on anyone.

Jessie will keep us updated on the progress and get back to us.

Suggests that the Westhampton connect would submit a more detailed plan with the proposal with dates and exact descriptions of how they will take responsibility for all the parts.

Mulvehill suggests that this is like an art display/exhibit- that it gets put in and the library staff has nothing to do with it.

Trustees would like a firm date for art to be taken down. If its meaningful and beautiful it could be photographed for posterity.

Trustees will meet again before the next meeting

McMurrich will reach out to them and ask for them to submit more detailed plans and have a more specific sense of what the time frame is about.

Meaghan's preference would be that the things be kept outside and they could have access to the basement storage space.

In general a little bit more information about Westhampton connect.

Cc the chair and Meaghan

Suggests it should be outside- will include that in the initial correspondence.

Whiting suggests we should consider whether a shelter would be permissible.

Final approval will come at the next meeting. They can count on our support but will need to hammer out specifics. Reserve the right to suggest alternatives if we have concerns.

Two main goals are aesthetics in terms of time limit of installation and that it does not fall onto the responsibility of our personnel.

Minutes from the last meeting: at the bottom of the 3rd page remove comment about potential trustee being overwhelmed. Also, page 4 it is not a complete sentence. McMurrich will amend and send to Schwelm. Accepted by roll call unanimously with one abstention (Mulvehill was not present at the last meeting)

Treasurer's Report: Building \$3594.48; State aid \$2041.17; Deferred Town Monies \$25,477.26, Gift Account \$21,735.75.

As an aside, Whiting suggests that the gift account could be used to set up an endowment, and with the library at the center of the community we could build capacity for the future. There is the library building but then there is building the library. This could be the seed for an endowment. Makes this suggestion because she plans to step off the board.

Director's report: as written. Point out: 3 adult programs had 149 attend! Very exciting.

Reopening scheduled for April 20th. Very similar to fall/summer but we're not requiring appointments. Will have a sign-in. Conversation around whether it will be hard to limit to 10- Schwelm says no, but if there are problems they can go back to appointments.

Pollinator garden: Moving forward with the resiliency project and getting plants in—will make sure any plants put next to the Judd house will be put a few feet out. Shares beautiful drawing of the garden. May put in blueberries and possibly some small trees – thinking of Steve. Small fruit trees to expand the season for pollinators. Conversation about planting trees and past concern about planting trees; memories are unspecific. Mulvehill suggests that Schwelm just casually reach out to Maureen Dempsey and mention that we plan to do some trees and does she anticipate any issue.

Decorating of the teen room: question to us is could we get \$150 from gifts account—all trustees say yes. Mulvehill makes motion to spend up to \$200 on the teen room, seconded by Nevins, accepted unanimously.

On the issue of the Dr Seuss books: Offers two examples: first is from little house books.

Suggestion for insert saying "This book was written by a white American woman in 1935. It may show harmful depictions... experts encouraged you to think about how people are portrayed

(or not portrayed at all)” Second suggestion is “please note at the time this book was written non-white people were treated ways that are no longer culturally appropriate... it contains language that was acceptable at this time but is no longer appropriate.” Trustees prefer the second one.

Question of whether to alert public? Should board have a policy on controversial literature? Intellectual freedom is important; but there is guidance from national library associations. Celeste says this is an unprecedented moment, it may change in ways that we don’t agree with. Be prepared to respond with our values. Also asks, are you here to provide access or access and interpretation?

Carol asks, do we have any responsibility to try to push the needle in the direction away from white-centrism?

Collection development policy does not have anything in it.

At last meeting we all liked the idea of an insert. Tonight it seems like a bigger conversation. Schwelm’s feeling is that she wants people to know that the library supports all people. What if going down the road we thought about some kind of programming—consciousness-raising and “artifacts”. These books are intellectual artifacts. We can learn from them, and can raise the sensitivity and awareness by examining them as artifacts. We are not endorsing content by having them on our shelves, but we are preserving artifacts.

Kind of this is a moment to examine our shadow. We do not want to deny and turn away.

Bigger conversations need to be had about bigger issues.

Tonight we were talking about inserts in Dr Seuss books- and approve second wording. We don’t need to necessarily decide a bigger decision about other books, where we’re going, etc. he says let’s approve Seuss tonight and see where it goes.

Friends’ Report: coming up next Tuesday.

Old business:

Prospective board members: Caralyn Whipple is interested, would like to run. Meaghan thought Angela was going to run, so that is a possibility. Caucus is Monday night. Issue of diversity came up at the meeting that Anne Marie went to—word of mouth makes it less diverse. We should put it in the newsletter starting in January inviting people to meetings and encouraging people to apply.

Current board members should not nominate a new person – because it looks like an inside thing. Encourage Carolyn to either nominate herself or ask someone to nominate her. 630 pm April 12 at highway garage. Mikki will call Caralyn to talk to her.

Outreach to capital planning committee can wait until next month- Schwelm will reach out next week to check in about back porch. He’s willing to do that free of charge.

Any other business

Cooper would like to bring up outdoor lighting behind the library. 2015 we looked into using Jim Malo to give us prices on outdoor lighting. Issue with concerts later in the summer. Lights

would come in handy for fall festival etc. and could come from the gift account. Suggests trustees might look into this in the future.

Next meeting: Thursday May 13th , 2021

Motion to adjourn moved, seconded, unanimously accepted at 8:56pm