

THE NEW CANAAN LIBRARY, INC
MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023
Held in the Bartlett Auditorium

The Annual Meeting of The New Canaan Library, Inc was called to order at 6:30pm on September 12, 2023, by Robert Butman, President. The meeting was held in person in the Bartlett Auditorium.

Present: Rachel D. Baker, Robert E. Butman, Sarah O'Herron Casey, Maya Frey, William J. Fox, Deborah S. Gordon, Crawford Hamilton, Ian Hobbs, Robert F. Lowe, Thomas Joyce, Victoria Merwin, Fatou Niang, David Rucci, Christine Seaver, Thomas D. Teles, Eileen S. Thomas, Anne W. Tseng, Alicia Wyckoff, Peter Ziesing

Absent: Jonathan Barry, Gary D. Engle, Christopher O'Connor

Staff: Lisa Oldham, Ellen Crovatto, Stacey Smith

Member Action Summary

The following items of business were unanimously approved by the Members:

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Members held on September 28, 2022 as presented

Election of Trustees

Ratification of the Amended and Restated Bylaws

Welcome and Call to Order

Robert E. Butman, President of the Board of Trustees, welcomed those present to the Library's 145th Annual Meeting of Members, calling the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 pm.

Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting

As the first order of Business, Mr. Butman requested the Secretary, Deborah Gordon, to address the approval of the minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting of Members. Deborah Gordon presented the minutes of the September 28, 2022 Annual Meeting of Members, noting that they had been posted to the Library's website and made available to attendees for review. In the interest of time, Ms. Gordon made an initial motion to waive the reading of the minutes. The motion was seconded, and following a vote, the motion was declared unanimously passed. Ms. Gordon followed with a motion for the approval of the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Members held on September 28, 2022 in the form presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Butman then stated that the Annual Meeting gives the Library's Board and staff the opportunity to update members on the state of the Library and called on the Treasurer, Robert Lowe, to provide the Financial Report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. Mr. Lowe reported that the library is doing well and is in excellent financial standing. He then proceeded to summarize the Library's preliminary unaudited financial results for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, highlighting the following:

- Based on preliminary unaudited financials for fiscal year 2023, total support and income was \$3.4 million. Fundraising events and Annual Fund giving generated \$775,000, which is in-line with targets while balancing very active Capital Campaign efforts for the New Library and Green.
- Total expenses amounted to \$3.2 million. This was a unique year as the library started the year in the old building, was closed for a period during the winter and then moved to the new facility before reopening on Feb 14.
- During fiscal 2023 the Library also put in place a new credit facility with the Town of New Canaan for up to \$10 million for the New Library and Green. All funds to be borrowed must be drawn by December 31, 2023. During fiscal 2023 the Library borrowed \$2 million. That figure is now \$4 million and we expect it will grow as work is largely expected to be completed by the end of the year.
- The Capital Account has been used effectively to fund payables for the Legacy Building. Through June 30, 2023, the library paid Legacy Building expenses of approximately \$600k. These expenses have accelerated in the first few months of fiscal 2024 as the Legacy Building's move was completed.
- The Endowment Fund balances are healthy. The Endowment Fund has a balance of \$1.67 million which is up over \$100k since last year due to market performance.

Robert Lowe wrapped up his statement by thanking our contract accountant, Caroline Giannitti and the library's financial and administration manager, Reed Collyer, for their invaluable support and hard work over the past year. Caroline's accounting expertise, timely preparation of monthly financials and oversight of the annual audit process, has facilitated the carrying out of the responsibilities of Treasurer and I am grateful for her assistance.

President's Remarks

Robert Butman noted that Fiscal 2023 was a memorable year in many respects but certainly highlighted by the completion and opening of the new New Canaan Library. The beautiful, state of the art, 42,000 square foot building opened to the public on February 14th to rave reviews and substantial fanfare. During the first two months more than 25,000 people visited the new facility, including 3000 people on opening day. Everyone was delighted to see the building come to life and rushed in to see all the new, inviting spaces that a world-class library has to offer. To quote Centerbrook Architects, the new library serves as “a dynamic community learning platform that incorporates a wide variety of interests with places for reading, socializing, tutoring, working, teaching, studying, cooking and quiet contemplation.” Certainly, there is something for everyone. As members of the New Canaan community and stewards of the library, we couldn't be prouder. The completion of the new building represents a milestone for our institution after 15 years of careful planning and provides a new sense of optimism and excitement for library patrons.

FY23 was a year in transition. It started in July with construction of the new library well underway along with preparations being made to close the old library to make room for the new Library Green that is currently being built on the same footprint. Nevertheless, the library had to maintain normal operating conditions during construction with access to the existing building restricted at times.

Bob shared a few highlights:

- More than 200,000 visitors came through our doors last fiscal year, 70% of which occurred since our opening of the new building. From the opening until the end of June, over 12,000 library members and non-library community groups made use of our study, meeting, event and conference room spaces.
- 27,000 adults, teens and children attended 850 programs including author talks, lectures, storytimes, writing and art workshops, STEM learning and more. Again, most of this activity occurred during the last four and a half months of the fiscal year.
- Over 190,000 physical and 60,000 digital items were checked out last year. In addition, building on the momentum of visitation, 2641 new library members joined which was double the amount from the prior year.

How did we accomplish these and many other routine tasks during this period of transition? First and foremost, we have a remarkable and dedicated library staff, who, despite the demands made upon them every day, perform at the highest levels. To give you an example, in the middle of last winter, the staff bundled up and moved over 90,000 books and DVDs across the property from the old to the new library and stacked the new shelves. I can't say enough about their hard work, innovation, intellect and good cheer. Secondly, we have a tremendous group of board members and volunteers, who along with our generous donors from the community and the Town of New Canaan support the Library whole-heartedly.

Our Board of Trustees are truly a working board and they are extremely engaged. Last year we added 4 new members and expanded the size of the Board to 23 members. We also instituted another matching grant program for the Annual Fund which raised more than \$100,000 in outside contributions during the last quarter of the FY23. This initiative was extremely successful and brought the total fundraising for the Annual Fund to over \$520,000 for the complete fiscal year.

Bob discussed the important accomplishment at the Library in generations – the completion of construction of a new library. This project is really the culmination of more than a decade of leadership, planning and hard work by the Library Board. It is a thoughtful, well-conceived design that integrates a modern, energy efficient Library with an open green space. It is a library designed for the 21st century and beyond, not the past. It is a building designed to achieve the library's programmatic goals for the future. Most importantly, it is a building designed not only for the way we learn today but also one that is flexible and continues to meet New Canaan's needs for generations to come.

The construction firm, Turner Construction, completed Phase 1 of the project (the actual library building) in 14 months or 4 months ahead of schedule. Phase 2, which constitutes completing the Library Green and associated landscaping along with moving the 1913 Legacy building to a new location of the property is currently underway and on schedule for completion by year-end. So far, all remaining work is tracking on time and on budget with the most challenging aspect of Phase 2, the physical relocation of the 1913 building, now completed. There were numerous other milestones in this project that were achieved last year, including important ones in fundraising and financing. - Under the guidance and leadership of Ellen Crovatto, Lisa Oldham and Alicia Wyckoff, the Capital Campaign raised another \$5 million in pledges during FY23 including an extraordinary leadership gift of \$3 million from Michael and Allison Rees to name

the Children's Room.

This past spring, the fundraising efforts pivoted towards the Campaign for the Green which will provide a beautiful, new community greenspace on our property designed by Stimson Associates. This is the final phase of the Library project and will make possible a whole new venue for outdoor learning opportunities. - The library negotiated with the Town to receive a Construction Loan of up to \$10 million to finish the project on a timely basis.

This loan will be paid off as donations are received over the next 5 years. As Rob Lowe mentioned, only \$2 million of the loan was drawn down during the 2023 fiscal year.

In summary, Fiscal Year 2023 was a special year in the 146-year history of the Library. It was a challenging period that required balancing many separate activities that were taking place on our campus. Trying to manage normal library operations while simultaneously demolishing our old building then undertaking a move to our new library, all while dealing with ongoing construction, was a herculean task. The library staff and board deserve credit for making it happen. But I would be remiss without mentioning the hard work of many donors and volunteers who were unrelenting in their support. For all this I am extremely grateful.

Finally, we often think of the Library as a place of innovation, learning, gathering, and teaching – in essence, the educational and cultural center of our community. In today's world, the role of the Library is ever changing and our goal is to always be there to meet the needs of the community no matter what the circumstances. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the Town, we have been able to deliver on our mission to be the community's platform for lifelong learning throughout good times and bad times. No one can predict the future, but one thing is for sure, the New Canaan Library is now in a good place.

Executive Director's Remarks

After introducing herself and welcoming the attendees, Lisa Oldham stated the following:

This week marks 7 months in this fabulous new facility. We are now 2 months into the new fiscal year. Happily, and as expected- we are operating within our planned budget. The entire library project is almost finished with planting on the green starting next week. We've been ahead of schedule and within budget all the way along.

It is very clear that our community is thrilled with our new building and all the wonderful activity within. Daily we receive letters of gratitude from community members who share their delight with this wonderful new asset and the services we are providing.

Our daily visitor numbers tell the story -- with often twice as many visitors daily as we'd had in the old building. Attendance at programs is robust and we have a fabulous lineup for fall which you can learn about by signing up for our weekly newsletter.

Since we opened, we've seen an increase in all the things we measure including:

- Library visits are up over 60% compared to 2019 – our previous busiest year
- Both the number of adult programs and level of attendance at adult programs is up
- Children's program participation is up 61% from our previous high in 2019
- As people make ever more use of the library, we've seen that Virtual visits and use of our Wi-Fi has increased as well

Our community has shown us in so many ways how much they value our library – 800,000 ways last financial year – That is the number of dollars our Annual Campaign raised to fund our services and programs. And that is of course in addition to the \$30Million dollars that this incredibly generous community invested in our new building – along with the generous grant of \$10MM from the municipality.

Lisa shared the teams service highlights from the first 7 months in the building.

These include:

- Open Maker Lab run every Wednesday 4-6 PM
- Monthly Parents Meet-up for Families with special needs.
- Women of Afghanistan Panel
- Marie Yovanovitch as our Attwood lecturer
- Misty Copeland
- Matthew Desmond's Talk was another top program. It was highly interactive, as he engaged in a meaningful discussion and challenged the audience to think critically about some of the present socio-economic problems in our society. This event also enabled us to partner with the non-profit agency Person to Person, whose mission is to assist individuals and families on their path to economic stability.
- Our reinvigorated Instruction team has developed and delivered a broad range of tailored learning experiences for our community.
- Our new ESL classes are one of our top programs as they unite people from various cultural backgrounds and empower individuals to learn English and become a part of the community. It was a joyous experience to see Ukrainian immigrants in the class, meet each other, and find people from their own country they did not know were in Connecticut.
- From a technology instruction standpoint, our current A.I. curriculum has proven to be popular and vital. Technology is rapidly evolving in the digital age, and it profoundly impacts our lives. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) is one of the most transformative technologies of our lifetime. Understanding A.I. is a critical component of digital literacy in the 21st century. Our workshops and A.I. lectures help our patrons become digitally literate, encouraging them to consider A.I.'s ethical consequences while promoting critical thinking and embracing A.I.'s potential innovation.

Our services to families have been unstoppable!

Summer Reading 2023 has set new records!

- 1125 children and teens took part in our summer reading program and the vast majority completed the whole summer! This is our highest ever number of participants. And is 4 times higher than the engagement we had prior to 2018 when our own team began to develop and deliver a custom program for our community.

Our services for teens have really ramped up in our new space with great programming for our teens.

Highlights include:

- Father's Day Wargame – We partnered with the Historical Miniatures Society who brought an actual castle and hundreds of miniature soldiers and set up the huge battlefield. Dads and kids were on opposite sides, and it was really rewarding watching as the teens developed strategy skills and ultimately beat their dads and took the castle. This is part of a monthly series recreating historical battles, including WW1 dogfights, pirates vs. the British armada, the English vs. Vikings.
- This summer The hugely successful Harry Potter Birthday event for children was entirely planned by the teens of the Teen Advisory Board who also came out to help set up and run the event. They had a great time thinking of games that younger kids could enjoy and hunting down trivia for multiple age levels.
- Dungeons and Dragons library groups have been very successful. The teens have built their characters and learned how to roleplay and keep track of complicated rules and storylines while exploring a rich fantasy world. This one is so popular that we have kids on the waitlist for 2 of the groups.

Meanwhile -

Our new building has been recognized in the design issue of American libraries magazine and I expect that our building will garner more accolades in the next 18 months.

We've had visits from Librarians from around Connecticut and will host all the library directors of Fairfield county next week.

We are creating a new standard for community libraries! All of this is made possible through the hard work of our exceptional team supported by our board of trustees and with substantial funding from our Town.

Election of Trustees

Robert Butman then indicated that the meeting would proceed to the business agenda and called upon Eileen Thomas, the Chair of the Governance Committee, to address the election of the Trustees.

Mrs. Thomas stated that she had been asked to present this year's nominees for election to the Library's Board of Trustees, both those whose initial terms have expired (either this year or last) and who have been nominated for election to a second three year term, and those who had been recently elected to the Board to fill vacancies.

Trustees renewing three-year term (2023/24 to 2026/27):

Robert Lowe
Eileen Thomas
Anne Tseng

Trustees renewing for a one-year term extension (until June 2024):

Bob Butman
Christine Seaver
Ian Hobbs

Newly Elected Trustees (2023/24 to 2026/27):

Allison Rees
Michelle Riley
Patricia Schubert

Board members completing board terms as of June 2023:

Bill Fox (served 6 years, 2 terms)
Maya Rao (served 9 years, 2 terms and 3 extensions)

Proposed Slate of Officers for FY 2023/24:

President: Bob Butman
Vice-President: Christine Seaver
Vice-President: Eileen Thomas
Treasurer: Robert Lowe
Secretary: Deborah Gordon

Deborah Gordon made a motion that those named above whose terms have expired be elected to the Board of Trustees to serve for a second three-year term. The motion was duly seconded and unanimously approved.

Christine Seaver made a motion that the members present ratify the election of those recently elected to the Board to fill vacancies. The motion was duly seconded and unanimously approved.

Eileen Thomas declared the election of such Trustees duly ratified.

Adjournment

Robert Butman then moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion having been seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Gordon
Secretary