

VERMONT BOARD OF LIBRARIES

MINUTES OF MEETING

Approved July 12, 2022

April 12, 2022

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting Conducted Virtually via Microsoft Teams

Board Members in Attendance: Tom Frank (Chair), Maxie Ewins (Vice Chair), Adriene Katz, Linda Saarnijoki, Deb Granquist, Bruce Post, James Saunders, Catherine Delneo (Secretary)

Others Present: Janette Shaffer (VTLIB), Tom McMurdo (VTLIB), Janette Shaffer (VTLIB), April Shaw (VTLIB), Joshua Muse (VTLIB), Lauren Kelley (VTLIB)

Call to Order: Chair Tom Frank called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

Roll Call and Introductions: Chair Tom Frank asked members of the Board to introduce themselves, then asked other individuals present to introduce themselves.

Public to Be Heard: No members of the public spoke.

Review of Minutes of Board Meeting on January 12, 2022: Bruce Post suggested minor corrections to the minutes. Maxie moved to approve the minutes, and Deb seconded that. However, after some discussion it became clear that many of the members hadn't received the minutes and that they were aware that the minutes had been posted online.

Maxie amended her motion, recommending that consideration of the January 2022 minutes take place at the July 12th meeting of the Board. Deb seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Given the concerns about minutes distribution logistics raised by members of the Board, Tom Frank asked Catherine to speak on her plan to update and better organize the Board's website, which would address concerns raised by board members and make the board's web page easier to navigate for the public.

Catherine shared her commitment to post draft minutes within 5 days of each board meeting, per Open Meeting Law requirements, and to list all meeting dates for the year on the Board's webpage to help Board members and members of the public plan attendance and participation.

Catherine shared her plan to add supporting documents for agenda items (including geographic naming consideration) in advance of meetings and leave them posted following the agenda item as this would facilitate public participation in naming discussions. Catherine also shared that to increase transparency about the geographic naming policy process, direct links would be provided to the following items currently posted in one PDF:

- Updated State Librarian letter regarding Geographic Naming;

- VT State Statutes relevant to Geographic Naming;
- Geographic Naming Petition form; and
- Geographic Naming Signature form

Catherine also shared that the document related to the naming of Bridges and Roads from the page as the naming of bridges and roads is no longer within the Board of Library's purview.

Bruce expressed support for the improvements and the suggestion of providing a contact email and phone number in the Department of Libraries listed on the Board's website. Linda supported the ideas as well, separating out the Geographic naming forms, and listing the full year of meeting dates.

Catherine let the Board know that the Vermont Department of Libraries team (VTLIB) would move forward with the changes.

Geographic Naming: Page Brook, School Brook, and Heron Brook in Bakersfield: Catherine suggested moving this hearing to July 12 or later in the year. The Bakersfield select board was scheduled to discuss the renaming April 11. Additionally, the VTLIB team would then be able to ensure that the geographic naming packets were available to the Board and public in advance of the hearing.

Maxie reminded the group that there had previously been a suggestion of holding special meetings for geographic naming hearings as those hearings can easily fill a regular meeting and asked if that should be done in this case.

Tom shared that the Board had initially thought that the topics of the Bakersfield brooks would be relatively straightforward, before finding out that the petitioners didn't have approval from the Bakersfield from the selectboard yet, and had not initially consulted with representatives of Abenaki Vermonters.

Bruce reminded the Board that Paige Brook topic had been first raised in December of 2019. He asked whether we need to schedule a specific date today, or if the Board could instead move that the Bakersfield Books naming requests be postponed and the set a future meeting when the petitioners had all of their materials ready.

Tom responded that the Board could have a special meeting if that meeting is publicly noticed at least 30 days in advance per Open Meeting law. He shared that if the petitioners have all the materials and local approvals in place, the topic might be relatively quick to consider and resolve during a regular meeting of the Board of Libraries. Tom also asked how long these can be tabled, given that this was first raised in 2019.

Bruce shared that if the petitioners wish to consider a different name than on their original petition, that would they submit an entirely new petition specific to that name.

Catherine shared that all three brooks come from the same source, which is why they were bundled. She added that VTLIB records reflect that the petitioners have initiated the various postponements. She also shared that the VTLIB team had heard that the petitioners might be considering changes to the Heron Brook petition.

Tom pointed out that the Board would need to act on the initial petitions, before acting on any new petitions.

Bruce moved to postpone Paige/Heron/School brook to a date to be determined. Deb seconded that motion.

Deb asked: If the applicant wants to withdraw a petition, would the Board have to hear that petition first? She suggests that some of level of communication with the applicant to verify what they are planning to do and recommended that the State Librarian connect with counsel for clarification and guidance on this matter.

Bruce shared that in the past the State Librarian had received counsel that emphasized that the Board does actually have to act and vote on a proposal even if it is withdrawn, because it's the effort of numerous signers (not just the

petitioner).

Tom noted that as the naming documentation related to the three Bakersfield brooks are separate proposals, they could be individually dealt with.

Linda asked that if a petition is submitted, that it can't really be withdrawn from consideration. Bruce said that that was the case – petitioners can submit a new petition. Linda suggested that updates to the Board's website related to naming include this instruction to petitioners, so that petitioners would be clear on that piece of the process.

Deb suggested that there should be clarification on the website regarding petitions that have been submitted but not yet heard. Since there is explicitly one petitioner, she shared her opinion that it seems needlessly bureaucratic to not allow them to officially withdraw.

Tom agreed that that would be very helpful to clarify and include on the website. He also points out that the Paige Brook proposal has been discussed at several meetings at this point.

Catherine asked Board members to email their questions on Geographic Naming to her directly. She indicated that she would compile them and seek counsel on these topics.

The motion to close the hearing on Paige, School, and Heron Brook by Bruce, seconded by Maxie was unanimously approved.

State Librarian's Report:

Catherine presented on each topic covered in the **State Librarian's Report to the State of Vermont Board of Libraries** for Board of Libraries meeting on April 12, 2022.

Maxie congratulated Catherine on a wonderful report, and for getting up to speed so quickly. She expressed how glad the Board is that Catherine is here. Catherine expressed her appreciation for everyone in the Department of Libraries who has helped her to learn about the work of the Department. She expressed particular gratitude to Tom McMurdo, who served as Interim State Librarian while the State Librarian position was vacant. She expressed appreciation for the strong and steady leadership of Assistant State Librarians Tom McMurdo and Janette Shaffer and for their help in orienting her to the work of the Department. She shared gratitude for the good work of all members of the VTLIB team.

With regards to the second round of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Grants to Vermont libraries through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Maxie asked how the Department "encourages" libraries to request funds to support diverse collections rather than request grant funds for other purposes.

Janette Shaffer explained that when working with libraries throughout the state, who VTLIB does not directly supervise, it is truly an encouragement and not a requirement. VTLIB has used language recommending that the applicants for the second round of on the website prioritize these collections and will also share that same strong encouragement in the webinars for grant applicants. When libraries request funds for needed equipment, VTLIB staff will also recommend setting some of the requested grant funds aside for diversity. However, VTLIB strives to be a support of the local needs of VT libraries and in keeping with IMLS instruction of how these grant funds can be used wants to provide local libraries with the resources they need most.

Catherine shared that the initial messages all strongly highlighted the diverse collection options and the layout of the text in the emails and webpage also visually prioritize the use of these funds to support these important collections.

Linda also welcomed Catherine and shared that she was encouraged by the potential funds that Vermont libraries may receive including the Capital Bill in the Governor's budget (\$15.9M) and the Congressionally Directed

Spending (CDS) VTLIB requested (\$10M) through Senator Leahy's Office. Linda asked if the department was coordinating with the various statewide efforts to improve broadband access throughout the state. Catherine clarified that both of the potential funds would be for improvements to library facilities, in order to improve or maintain people's abilities to get in the building and access computers and wireless. She clarified that upgrades to state broadband network and local equipment and lines would not be within the scope of this funding. Catherine asked Tom McMurdo to share information on how VTLIB is involved in the statewide conversation about broadband access.

Tom McMurdo explained that VTLIB participates in Broadband Board meetings and is advocating for libraries to either get inexpensive access or to potentially serve as the hubs for some of these programs. Tom reiterated that the potential \$15.9 million for libraries is coming out of the Capital fund, while the money from the Communication Union District's is focused on improvements to the broadband networks themselves.

Bruce asked if Vermont had seen any pushback or challenges around library collections and diversity. Catherine shared that the department has been preparing for potential challenges for some time by providing supports to Vermont Libraries on developing local collection development guidelines and local processes for responding to book challenges. VTLIB staff also encourage local librarians to attend national trainings and programs on this topic. She explained that according to the American Library Association's (ALA) State of America's Libraries 2022 Report, ALA fielded more than 700 book challenges nationwide in 2021 and that many of the challenges were related to materials featuring and/or written by black or LGBTQI characters or authors.

Bruce asked Janette Shaffer about the Golden Dome book award and how the name change of that award has gone. Janette explained that the book award has moved along as usual and the name.

Deb thanked Catherine for the detailed report, and for jumping and coming up-to-speed so quickly. She shared that the Wilder Memorial Library is going through its first Strategic Planning process ever and held a community feedback meeting. At that meeting there was a suggestion that there could be more collaboration between local small libraries since it's hard for everyone to do everything with limited staff. Catherine shared that during field visits last week, she learned that the Mad River Libraries, while not a formal system, have been creating programming and putting out a shared events calendar together. They also coordinate their libraries' open days and hours, so that at least one of the three libraries is open each day of the week. Collaboration between individual Vermont libraries faces challenges with funding as each library has different funding streams so resources brought to each collaboration might be different – particularly due to whether individual libraries charge fees for non-residents. That said, programs tend to be free and open to all community members, so collaborating on programming might be somewhat easier for libraries throughout the state. Catherine shared existing statewide programs (like summer reading) provides opportunities for statewide collaboration, and provide opportunities to expand collaboration between local libraries.

Maxie shared that she has long been a proponent of collaboration and sharing of resources between libraries, and would like to encourage anything that could be done to make that happen.

Bruce asked if collaboration is a topic in the working group. Catherine responded that this topic would likely be raised by libraries in the discussion of staffing, which is the meeting after next. There have also been discussions about a desire to collaborate or share services (like accounting and book preparation) in the Large Libraries Meeting and similar meetings. Janette Shaffer affirmed that a desire for a collective bookkeeping resource is often mentioned by directors, though that can be challenge given the separate funding streams and different models (incorporated/municipal) of libraries throughout the state.

Tom McMurdo added that collaboration has been a discussion at VTLIB for a long time, with some success so far. He pointed out that the state's InterLibrary Loan (ILL) system is a shared resource and that it might be possible to facilitate more collaborative collection development in the future.

Bruce e shared that in his opinion Vermont does not have a "system" of libraries because each local library

operates independently. He pointed out that a big audience of the working group's report may be legislators. Though they tend to support their local libraries, they don't necessarily have a sense of libraries operate. H

Tom Frank asked Catherine if she could provide the Board with an update on the Vermont Public Library Foundation (VPLF). Catherine shared that she has begun learning about the history of VPLF and how that independent foundation relates to the Vermont Department of Libraries and to the Vermont Board of Libraries. Though established by statute by the State Librarian, it is otherwise entirely independent from the Department of Libraries and the Board of Libraries. Per the bylaws of VPLF, the foundation is intended to meet at least annually, though it appears it has not met since 2017. Catherine shared that as the foundation is distinct from the Department of Libraries, it must have independent counsel. She shared that she has reached out to counsel in order to continue to learn how the foundation should operate and about its current status.

Tom brought up that in the past there has been a concern that the State of Vermont might take the Foundation's funds. Tom reminded Board of Libraries members that the state doesn't have any more control over it than the Board of Libraries does. Catherine shared that there is a reference in the bylaws to how the money would be disbursed if the foundation ceased to exist, and that her understanding is the same as Tom's - that there is not a mechanism for the State to gain control of banked VPLF funds.

Board Emails: Catherine shared that she has been learning about the practice of state boards in Vermont and has noticed that members of some other boards (such as the VT Board of Education) have "@Vermont.gov" email addresses. She shared that establishing emails for members of state boards seems to be a best practice as it helps address matters of records retention and public information requests. Issuing each member of the Vermont Board of Libraries an "@Vermont.gov" email address might help with these compliance matters and have an additional benefit of keeping Board members' private email accounts private. Catherine will continue to do research on this option and seek counsel prior to implementing any changes.

Bruce added that there was a request for public information under a naming petition, and he had to search for and respond with everything on the topic he could find in his personal email. Tom said that he was in support of this move.

Before closing, Deb asked about the topic of library standards, and their current state. Cathy stated that it is certainly something that the Department is keeping in mind, and that it may related to the Library Working Group's efforts. They both agreed that it is a big project.

Closing: Tom confirmed that the next meeting of the Board of Libraries will be held on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, from 10 am-12 pm.

Maxie mentioned that there had been informal discussions about having a board retreat at some point, and she wanted to keep it in discussion. She also reminded everyone that new board members are needed to relieve Bruce and Deb, whose terms have ended. She asked if members should start recruiting, and whether we want to think about geographic diversity in finding folks. Catherine requested that if people have suggestions for people or priorities, please send those names to her, and she'll forward them to Tom, the Board Chair.

Catherine asked board members to consider when the board would go back to in-person meetings. She shared that VTLIB will resume hosting members of the Board and public to attend meetings at 60 Washington Street in Barre, VT. If a future meeting is held virtually, then Board members and members of the public who wished to attend but didn't have robust broadband connections or equipment will be welcome to attend the virtual meeting from VTLIB's physical location in Barre.

Bruce moved to adjourn the meeting, which Deb seconded that motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.