

Approved Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting
Board Room and Zoom - 7:00 pm
October 15, 2025

Trustees Present: Bob Boroujerdi (presiding), Anna Alemani, Scott Bennewitz, David Briggs, Christy Charise, Bruce Gaylord, Sheri Gordon, Krishna Patel, Mark Silverstein, Martina Sze, Darcy Travlos and Pat Wieser.

Trustees Present via Zoom: James Corgel (note Zoom link was unstable so J. Corgel's votes were not recorded), Kathleen Guion, Liza Van Gundy and Peter Zakowich.

Also Present: Randy Herbertson, member of the Development Committee.

Trustees Absent: Ben Chan, Jeremy Price, and Ashley Zwick.

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m.

President's Report: B. Boroujerdi

Motion to approve minutes of September 17th meeting approved unanimously.

B. Boroujerdi discussed: (1) Board survey results; (2) CFO search; (3) Verso Studios tour October 24 at 12:30 for new board members (all trustees are, however, welcome); (4) 10 year anniversary party for ED in February; (5) The UN Event on October 23 was a program presented in partnership with the UNA SWCT. The Library provided staff support and logistical assistance but not curation. The Library did not issue a press release for this event; however, UNA SWCT released its own press statement on October 5. On October 7, *The Westport Journal* made an independent editorial decision to publish a story about the event, which prompted significant concern and objections from some members of the Westport community (noting the significance of that day for many individuals).

Executive Director's Report: B. Hammer

The Library hosts more than 250 partnership events each year, reflecting its commitment to providing diverse programs and perspectives for the community. The UN Event was one such partnership program. While the ensuing public discussion highlighted the sensitivity of some topics, the Library stands by its mission to support intellectual freedom, the open exchange of ideas and civil dialogue.

As part of the ongoing strategic plan, the Library is reviewing internal processes to strengthen coordination and communication around partnership programs, particularly those that may attract heightened community attention. A broader discussion of programming, identified as a Board goal in the Executive Director's annual evaluation, is being developed by B. Harmer and R. Boroujerdi for future Board discussion, review and consideration.

It was noted that such discussions should follow completion of the Library's attestation and policy review required under Connecticut Public Act 25-168, Sections 322 and 323 (formerly Connecticut Senate Bill 1271: *An Act Concerning School and Public Libraries*). These set of policies cover collections, display and programming policies.

Proposal made by C. Charise to: (i) clarify what the Library is and is not; (ii) ensure clarity to the public on what Library's part is in any program; and (iii) offer an invitation to the public to come to the Library with a program proposal if they want to introduce an opposing viewpoint. No vote taken.

StoryFest Update: A. Giannini

StoryFest is underway. It is the largest literary festival in Connecticut and is in its eighth year. Authors from StoryFest go to schools in Norwalk, Westport, and Bridgeport. StoryFest is self-funded and has a proposed balanced budget which was shared with the Board.

Development Committee: R. Herbertson / M. Silverman

R. Herbertson provided FY26 Annual Giving Analysis to date. Off to a strong start with the annual campaign with great momentum coming after Booked. Impact report (formerly known as the Annual Report) coming out at the end of November. Donor appreciation event planned for January. Reminder that the committee seeks 100% Board participation with no expectation of dollar amount.

Finance Committee: S. Bennewitz

S. Bennewitz reported that CLA presented the audited financial statements and planned to provide an unmodified opinion. Form 990 preparation has begun to take advantage of Meryl's institutional knowledge before her retirement. S. Bennewitz noted that next steps included a formal review by the Governance & Nominations committee of the documents prepared by CLA. Budget process is starting with early, as yet unbalanced budgets under various scenarios being prepared.

Treasurer: S. Bennewitz on behalf of B. Chan

S. Bennewitz reported that through the first quarter everything overall appears to be in line with budget. The only outliers are recruiting expenses for the CFO search and workers comp insurance (premium cost came in after the year started). YTD vs. budget report is in the SharePoint portal.

Governance & Nominations Committee: M. Sze

GovNom undertaking ongoing review of all Library policies. Conflict of interest revised version circulated. Motion to approve by M. Sze, R. Boroujerdi seconded. Unanimous vote in favor. Trustee recruitment continues. SB 1271 policies nearing completion; final vote for the board scheduled November 19. Trustees were directed by K. Patel to the board portal to review all draft documents ahead of final state review.

Executive Director on Operations: B. Harmer

B. Harmer reported that there are currently 5 candidates shortlisted for CFO role. Library staff are interviewing the 5 candidates to narrow the pool. High level budget document going into the Portal; reflects a strategic approach. Strategic plan handed off from Board to staff in July and Library team is working to turn goals into objectives.

Other Business

None

S. Bennewitz made the motion to adjourn and P. Wieser seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously. Meeting ended at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Sally Presutto, on behalf of Sheri Gordon