

LONDONDERRY LEACH LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES Minutes of December 11, 2023

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Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Betsy McKinney. The following board members were in attendance: Kim Bears, Christine Fitzgerald, and Carol Introne. Also in attendance: Erin Matlin, Library Director; Donna Plante, Assistant Director and Head of Technical Services.

Old Business:

- Budget FY25
Erin Matlin presented two options for revising the FY25 budget. Erin Matlin and Donna Plante recommended the budget option to lower library employees' maximum merit increase to 3.5% and cut from additional budget lines to remove a total of \$30,671.54 from the library budget for FY25. The Board could then collect data to make an informed, long-term decision about the library employees' maximum merit increase for FY26.

Betsy McKinney suggested cutting the water budget line instead of books and periodicals and cited a long history of attempting to restore funds in that budget line.

Christine Fitzgerald expressed concern over removing all funds from the legal line because it needed to be used in FY24.

Christine Fitzgerald asked where the request to cut \$30,000 came from. Betsy McKinney responded that she had been in touch with Town Council Chairman John Farrell. Donna Plante responded that she and Erin looked at how much would have been removed from the budget if the Board agreed to match the Town's 2.5% maximum merit increase in FY25 then added a little bit more to show good faith.

Erin Matlin stated that she understands the current maximum merit needs to be lowered but agrees the Board needs time to survey other libraries before making a long-term decision in FY26. She recommended making the initial adjustment in FY25 with a maximum of 3.5% with the understanding that there is more to come.

Betsy McKinney asked for clarification on what merit is budgeted for library staff. Erin Matlin responded that the budget accounts for the maximum increase even though that may not be what is spent if all staff do not earn the maximum.

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Christine Fitzgerald stated that delaying the adjustment to 2.5% means that increases will be higher when it is reviewed again in FY26. She noted that the Budget Committee asked the Board to match the 2.5% increase for a specific reason. She added that she understands wanting to compare with other libraries, but the library should match what other Town employees earn.

Erin Matlin responded that the challenge is the library's job descriptions and requirements are different from the Town's, which makes it important to compare to other libraries while also keeping in mind what Town employees earn. She added that doing the research will help support the Board's decision even if they decide to match the 2.5%. She noted that the library's personnel policy needs a lot of other updates which could be done at the same time.

Christine Fitzgerald shared her preference to match the Town's 2.5% maximum merit increase in FY25 then take the following year to look at other libraries and potentially increase it.

Erin Matlin responded that she feared if the Board adjusts to the 2.5% now and then discovers that is not competitive with what other libraries offer next year, there is a chance the funding will not be restored.

Kim Bears agreed that the library and Town jobs are too different to compare.

Erin Matlin stated that she knows the maximum merit will likely decrease in FY26 and it will give them time to prepare as well as update the personnel policy. She added that she is suggesting to make cuts in other areas to make up the difference in FY25.

Betsy McKinney stated she resents putting the 2.5% maximum merit on the current employees but would understand making that change for new employees. She added that she wants to look at what all Town employees earn before deciding.

Christine Fitzgerald shared she personally has been in the position of receiving little to no increase because of the economy, adding that employees sometimes have to get what they get or find another job. Betsy McKinney stated she disagreed.

Donna Plante stated that the Board will need to decide for FY25 if they want to continue with different merit levels for employees at the top of their salary range.

A **motion** was made by Kim Bears to accept the revised FY25 budget with a decrease of \$30,671.54, reflecting a maximum library staff merit increase of 3.5%. The **motion was seconded** by Carol Introne. Three voted in favor of the motion; one voted against the motion, **motion carried**.

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Christine Fitzgerald stated that she appreciated the work that went into finding other options, but she is in favor of fulfilling the Town Council's request to match the Town's 2.5% maximum merit increase and proceeding from there.

Erin Matlin stated her understanding that it is an unusual situation and other places of employment may be a lot different, but she is concerned about her staff. She believes they deserve more than the 3.5%, not less, especially when the library does not currently have enough staff.

Christine Fitzgerald stated that it is not that she thinks they are not deserving. It is about the economy, the budget, and people's taxes.

Erin Matlin responded that she is going to advocate for the library staff and building just as other departments advocate for their staff and needs. She felt the presented revision is the best she can do under current circumstances. She noted that the library is a small percentage of the tax impact.

New Business:

- **Other Business**

Betsy McKinney asked Erin Matlin for an answer to Christine Fitzgerald's question about where Board meeting agendas are posted online. Erin Matlin responded that the current meeting agenda is posted on the library's website on the righthand side of the homepage, which is similar to where other boards post their agendas. Erin stated that Kirsten Hildonen added a link to the agenda on the Library Trustees' page.

Donna Plante stated that she can also add where agendas are posted in the description when she adds meetings to the Town's online calendar so it matches the description on the library's online calendar.

Christine Fitzgerald asked if Trustees could have contact forms on the website again. Erin Matlin checked with Kirsten Hildonen, and she is aware of the problem. The contact forms will be restored once the Board has Town email addresses.

Christine Fitzgerald asked if the Board should consider bringing back overdue fines to help support the budget. Erin Matlin responded she is not in favor of bringing back overdue fines and added that staff will be the ones facing the repercussions, not the Trustees. She noted that a lot of people were very grateful for the change to the overdue fines, and she worries about the message it would send to move backwards. If the Board approved bringing back fines, she recommended aligning the timing with the transition to GMILCS to make the communication easier on the staff.

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Betsy McKinney asked if other GMILCS libraries charge fines. Erin Matlin responded that some do and some have decided to remove all fines such as the Derry Public Library. Library Technician Kat Smith added that the Merrimack Public Library no longer charges fines either.

Carol Introne asked if overdue book discussion interlibrary loans still accrue fines. Donna Plante responded that they no longer accrue fines.

Erin responded that she could look into other GMILCS fine policies and bring that information to a future meeting for the Board to consider.

Erin Matlin encouraged the Trustees to attend the next budget meeting on Monday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall where she will present the revised budget to the Budget Committee and Town Council.

Adjourn:

A **motion** was made at 7:31 p.m. by Carol Introne to adjourn the meeting. The **motion was seconded** by Kim Bears. All in attendance accepted the motion, **motion carried**.

Notes by: Donna Plante

Minutes Typed by: Donna Plante

Date: December 11, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Plante
Assistant Director and Head of Technical Services