

PEMBROKE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting Minutes for March 1, 2023

ATTENDING: Kathy Benvie (Interim Director), Bill Chenard (Town Manager), Stephanie Ciciotti, Janet Coleman (Librarian), Judy McConarty (Search Committee), Larissa Curley, Sean Fitzpatrick (Chair), Mary Beth Courtright, Donna Frano (Friends), Stephanie McBain (Reference Librarian), Melissa McCleary (Youth Services Librarian), Jill Taylor, and Carol Watches.

Sean Fitzpatrick, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

INTERVIEW OF CANDIDATE FOR LIBRARY DIRECTOR, DEBRA CLIFTON:

Mr. Fitzpatrick introduced candidate for Library Director, Ms. Debra Clifton: she that the Trustees, and noted preliminary observations including strong communication amongst the staff, and the building is beautiful and well-maintained. M. Taylor asked what drove her to pursue library sciences, and M. Clifton advised that she was initially exposed to work study in library science in college after having been active-duty military and pursued her Master's degree thereafter. Ms. Courtright noted her lack of longevity at various positions on her resume, and M. Clifton expounded on personal challenges faced in the past that no longer have affect. Additionally, her family is local, and this role has come along at the right time. Ms. Curley inquired about fluctuations in roles of varying trajectory between posts and Ms. Clifton explained that some changes were financially motivated and in another she was recruited by a former colleague to an available position and rose quickly to another leadership role. Ms. Ciciotti asked about her familiarity with various technology platforms and products, and Ms. Clifton shared hardware, software and web-based experiences. Ms. Taylor asked about municipal and town meeting experience, particularly as relates to articles and capital initiatives, with Ms. Clifton sharing experience of working closely with Holbrook's finance committee to present budgets and procure requested funding. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked follow up questions about budgeting process and long range planning as well as state certification requirements. Discussion ensued on budgeting skills, Microsoft product utilization, programming and labor management. Ms. Courtright explored staffing experiences, and discussion ensued on scheduling opportunities and strategies. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about Ms. Clifton's facilities management experiences in her prior roles and advised that the Library is over twenty years old and requires attention. Ms. Clifton cited specific examples of work in Hingham and Seekonk. Ms. Curley asked about employee review experience and best practices processes; Ms. Clifton stated that she informally meets with employees every six months. Ms. Ciciotti inquired into past experiences with various Trustees and asked for the candidates input on strengths and weaknesses among them. Ms. Clifton stated that an effective Board would be one with a willingness to remain open minded and review various options and possibilities depending upon the subject matter. Ms. Courtright referenced the nationwide discussion about a possible imbalance of materials at schools and libraries in regards to liberal/conservative values and asked how Ms. Clifton would ensure an equal balance of information. Ms. Clifton advised that libraries must do their due diligence in collection development and thoroughly vet material to achieve a balanced collection. Discussion ensued on Ms. Clifton's leadership style, with her identifying a collaborative and supportive environment to promote everyone's success. Ms. Courtright asked for a specific collaborative

experience that the candidate has had with one or more managers or departments in a library setting. Ms. Clifton detailed her experiences collaborating with four libraries who joined together for a Grant (Greenbush line), pulling together a team of four while overseeing the Hingham portion of the collaboration for over a year. Ms. Taylor asked her opinion on vital services that the town could provide to youth populations. Ms. Clifton stressed that a welcoming space with hands on things to do is important. Additionally, dedicated computer space where they know they won't be disconnected if they need to do homework that will take longer than an hour.

Mr. Fitzpatrick opened the floor to the candidates questions. Ms. Clifton asked what the Trustees priorities are for the upcoming fiscal year. Ms. Taylor responded that aligning staff job descriptions and pay scales are a priority; Ms. Courtright advised that laying out priorities in the Action Plan and ensuring that the action plan is followed are a priority as well. Ms. Curley stated that outreach to the community is important to promote library offerings is vital. Ms. Benvie stated that the library's long range plan is due shortly and requires completion. Ms. Clifton asked that the Trustees expectations are in year one and forward. Mr. Chenard stated that the Library Director needs to represent the Trustees and share their concerns and initiatives, as well as attend Department Head meetings. Ms. Frano stated that the Friends of the Pembroke Public Library would like a Director who is active with them and acknowledges the hard work the Friends are doing for the library. Mr. Chenard advised that the library is currently Pembroke's newest building and there are infrastructure needs throughout the town, so the Director must be patient in our capital planning over the next ten years as there is a lot of work that needs to be done and then we need to maintain everything appropriately."

Ms. Clifton and Ms. Frano exited the meeting at 8:06 P.M.

Mr. Fitzpatrick requested feedback from the Trustees and staff regarding the candidate and responses provided to the interview questions and follow up. Consensus was provided on the candidates personable demeanor; discussion ensued on concerns regarding time in service as a Director. A caution was raised that responses provided to statistics and budget questions were general in nature and could indicate lack of experience. Ms. Benvie asked the Trustees what their action plan would be for a candidate without a high level of experience. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that the references provided were favorable, with respondents stating that they would work for her or hire her again without reservation, and the Hingham Library Director stated that said she recruited Ms. Clifton specifically because she wanted Ms. Clifton on her team as they had worked together previously. Mr. Chenard questioned Ms. Clifton's responses of 'having answered questions in previous interviews' but not repeating the responses when asked. Ms. Ciciotti remarked favorably on the research Ms. Clifton did on Pembroke prior to the interview. Ms. McConarty stated that the interview Ms. Clifton had with the Search Committee was better, and it is the Committee's belief that she is a strong applicant that Pembroke would be lucky to have. Ms. McConarty concluded by stating that Ms. Clifton possesses the attitude, intelligence, and experience to succeed, and she will establish relationships with town departments. Mr. Chenard stated that the new hire contract has been amended to incorporate an appropriate probationary period and advised that there was a salary survey done just over a year ago that show Pembroke in the upper two thirds for salary for comparable libraries. Mr. Fitzpatrick posited that Ms. Clifton seemed more collected in previous interviews do perhaps this format was more daunting with a larger group of people in the interview tonight. Ms. McConarty stated that the Director's role is a "big picture" position that needs to be able to set goals and follow

through with them. She also referenced Ms. Clifton's experience with ARIS, and stated that she has confidence that she has enough experience to perform the job. She's in the SAILS network, she knows workflows and OCLN. Ms. McConarty stated that she has a lot of contacts throughout the library field and can rely on collaboration in a network with a lot of networks here.

Ms. Taylor stated that she will forward the minutes to Ms. Watches by tomorrow so she can review them before the Trustees meet again. She concluded by stating that she believes Ms. Clifton capable of performing the role. Mr. Chenard asked if there were one-to-one interviews performed; Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that Zoom interviews with remaining members will be set up prior to the next meeting. Mr. Fitzpatrick announced that the next Trustee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 7:00 P.M. At 8:53 pm, Ms. Taylor moved to adjourn; Ms. Ciciotti seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor.