

Cambridge Public Library
Board of Library Trustees
October 5, 2021
Minutes

The Board of Library Trustees met virtually via Zoom on October 5th at 5:00pm. The following members of the Board of Library Trustees were present:

- Janet Axelrod, Kaija Langley, James Roosevelt, Nancy Woods. *Also present:* Maria McCauley, Director of Libraries
- *Absent:* Karen Kosko
- *Additional Guests:* Julie Roach, Manager of Youth Services; Emily St. Germain, Manager of STEAM Programs

Public Comment & Minutes

- There was no public comment.
- Minutes from the June 1st and September 14th meetings were approved.

New Business

- **Summer Reading Update:** Ms. Roach provided an update on this year's Summer Reading program. Due to the pandemic, we decided on some shifts, including spending less funding on events/performers and changing Summer Reading to not be solely focused on youth.

This year's theme was *Summer Reading is for Everyone!* The program kickoff- at the end of June- coincided with the Library reopening after 15 months of pandemic closure. We wanted this year to be a "welcome back" for patrons and we mailed out postcards to 20,000 Cambridge households. The kick-off event included 3 professional librarians providing adult, teen, and kids' book recommendations.

Throughout the summer, we offered "book adventures" or themed booklists and activities for adults and youth every few weeks. We also spent funding on **1800** giveaway books for kids, offered every other week, with subjects tied to book adventure themes. We continued to offer one virtual special program per week, as well as many outdoor programs led by YS librarians at Main and the branches.

We had **594** adult registrations, **564** child registrations, and **150** teen registrations (the most teen interest we've seen!). We have sent out a follow-up survey for which we have already received 180 responses. Although we are still compiling the feedback, it appears that most felt they did more reading this summer than in the past.

Ms. Axelrod asked how this year's program will affect planning for next year. Ms. Roach shared that staff loved creating book adventures to guide reading and thought it might be used again in the future. She also stated that this year we offered less "prizes" for participating and, with all the book giveaways, we were able to shift to reading itself being the prize. Ms. Roach has always wanted Summer Reading to be about celebrating reading for pleasure and feels we've made excellent progress toward that this year.

Action Item: Ms. Roach to see if Summer Reading adventures are still available for patrons on our website.

- **The Hive/STEAM Update:** Ms. St. Germain noted that The Hive has now been open to the public for 3 months. Almost 400 patrons have completed the initial safety training that is required to begin using Hive functionality. We also offer 12 other workshops on a rotational basis and we have 40+ programs planned for this month! The Hive has seen great use by the teen community so far, including 50+ MSYEP teens. With the addition of two new 30-hour positions, last month we increased a total of 40 staff hours in the space.

A lot of our focus has been on partnership and outreach. The Hive is a new City space, a new type of space, and filled with new tools- this makes it an intimidating place for many. Our partnerships and collaborations help us engage specific groups. We are working closely with CPS schools and administrators to develop ideas for collaboration. We are working with the Graphics Arts teacher at CRLS to develop a program for freshmen that will split their time in the classroom and in The Hive and will be a pilot for other classes. We plan to work with the CPS EdTech team as well.

We hosted visits for the Community Engagement Team, and plan to host Pathways to Family Success and a Cambridge-based home school network over the next few weeks. We are also planning for DHSP youth workers to come in and learn more about the space and identify possible areas of collaboration with their Youth Centers and Community Schools.

We are also working hard to get out into the community. We attended Port Pride, bringing a mobile Fab Lab to Cambridgeport and were received very enthusiastically. We are also tabling at community resource fairs, to be held all fall, and will attend Danehy Park Day.

We helped the City record more than a dozen departmental promotional videos that will soon be available on the City's website. We have also experienced success stories with our patrons, including creating artwork, music and appliance replacement parts, and exploring virtual reality. We are focusing next on offering Safety training virtually, increasing programs for teens, and starting STEAM programs led by community experts.

Ms. Woods asked if youth transportation to The Hive is an issue. Ms. St. Germain explained that the Youth Centers have buses that transport their youth, but it can be a barrier for some community members. This is why the focus of the next era of The Hive will be to see what is possible at the branches.

Ms. Axelrod asked if we are tracking data of who is using the space to see if we are reaching the desired audiences. Ms. St. Germain replied that we do not have the ability to track users that closely, but we are continually working on getting Hive patrons to be a robust reflection of the people in the Cambridge community.

- **Library Update:**
 - Ms. McCauley started her update by reflecting on how fortunate the Library is to have such talented, dedicated managers!

- Reinhard Engels, Manager of Innovation & Technology, will be leaving the Library after 5 years. Reinhard has been instrumental in planning and rolling out the Tech Bar and Learning Lab and was a key contributor in building the STEAM program.
- Staff vacancy is still very high. We are piloting a new approach to recruitment while trying to maintain operations. This is very challenging and requires a great deal of scheduling acrobatics! Additionally, there are 17 new positions that we will need to hire for branch expansion.
- We are experiencing an uptick in incidents. Much of this seems to be related to the widely acknowledged decline in mental health related to the pandemic. We have had a handful of patrons not following the mask mandate and it has sometimes led to verbally abusive behavior towards staff. Leadership is doing their best to try to help staff and be supportive.
- Ms. McCauley provided an update on the Library's ongoing anti-racism work. Our efforts in the past year have centered on 4 components: administrative leadership and planning with consultants, a staff-led Anti-Racism task force that includes a public programming work group, learning sessions for a cross-section of managers and staff, and learning cohorts and self-directed learning through curriculum, learning partners, and suggested readings/discussions.
- We will be hosting some programming celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day this month. We also have some exciting upcoming programs with diverse speakers including memoirists, novelists and poets.
- **Action Item:** Maria to share promotional poster with Trustees.
- The CPL will soon be going fine free!
 - Although we have not been assessing fines on Cambridge materials since the beginning of the pandemic, on October 19, we will waive any existing fines for overdue materials owned by the CPL. We will also waive any replacement fees for lost children's or young adult materials.
 - Most CPL materials will be exempt from fines going forward. Youth and teen materials will also be exempt from replacement fees in the future.
 - This means a fresh start for patrons who might have had significant overdue fees or who may have been afraid to visit us because of lost or damaged youth items.
 - We also hope to reduce barriers to access for community members scared to get a library card for themselves, their kids or family because they were worried about losing our materials or accruing fines.
- We have assigned a house architect for CSQ to help with the structural assessment and building program study.

Library Upcoming Events

Ms. McCauley informed Trustees about upcoming CPL programs including:

- **Oct 7:** The Unique Considerations of Solo Agers (Virtual), 10:30 a.m.
- **Oct 13:** Disrupting Colonial Narratives in Public Spaces with Erin Genia (Virtual), 6 p.m.
- **Oct 20:** *Variations on the Body*: Maria Ospina in Conversation with Heather Cleary (Virtual), 6 p.m.
- **Oct 25:** *Crying in H Mart*: Michelle Zauner in Conversation with Eric Kim (Virtual), 6 p.m.

- **Oct 26:** Larry Blum Presents: Integrations: The Struggle for Racial Equality and Civic Renewal in Public Education (Main), 6:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Woods, Secretary