

Great Neck Library
Policy and Bylaws Committee
Monday, September 21, 2020
Via Webex

Board Members:

Liman Mimi Hu, Chair (MH)
Weihua Yan (WY)
Josie Pizer (JP)
Barry Smith (BS)

Library Professionals:

Tracy Van Dyne (TV) absent with notice
Nicholas Camastro (NC)

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Great Neck Library's Policy and Bylaws Committee was called to order by MH at 6:22 PM.

General Outline of Future Policy Meetings

MH announced that this meeting will be used to summarize the proposed changes of the policies on today's agenda. She stated that previous directors were frustrated with the number of committee meetings the Library Director is required to attend and over the micromanagement of the board. To address this, the previous board president, Rebecca Miller engaged Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, an industry professional to review the library's policy manual. MH said that many of the changes made to the policies were based on Ms. Aldrich's recommendation as well as the input from other library professionals. She added that a pressing need exists to revise some of the current policies in order to attract quality candidates to fill the vacant director position and, once hired, to retain them.

Current Policy Discussion

200-10/Conduct of Meetings

Revise: Bullet b, Sub-Bullet i. to read "*Members of the public may comment on the published agenda for three minutes at the beginning of the meeting. In addition, Members of the public may comment on any new topic for three minutes at the end of the meeting during Open Time. There shall be no public comments during the board discussions or votes.*"

Revise: Bullet b, Sub-Bullet ii. to read "*All Library board meetings are open to the public, and the board may adjourn to executive session for subjects such as litigation, contract negotiation, and the topics enumerated in the Section 105 of the New York State Open Meetings Law.*"

Revise: Bullet iii., Sub-Bullet b. to read "*Public Comment Period: comments on the published agenda.*"

Revise: Bullet c to read "*New or revised policies that involve substantive changes shall be discussed at three separate board meetings before a formal vote by the board.*"

MH announced that these proposed changes were already brought before the board. JP questioned when and how the public will have the opportunity to comment at meetings. WY responded that at the beginning of the meeting the public will be able to speak on the published agenda. They will also have time to speak

during open time at the end of the meeting. After discussion, the committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

200-20/Responsibilities of Trustees

Remove: *“Trustees shall also be expected to appoint all professional and technical consultants to the Library.”* and Replace it with *“Trustees shall be active and informed about library matters in general and those affecting Great Neck Library.”*

Remove: *“...be prompt and regular in attendance at all.”* and Replace it with *“Attend all board meetings and be prepared to participate knowledgeably.”*

Add: *“Not act or react directly with staff members in their trustee’s capacity except when staff members file a grievance against the Library Director or provide a whistleblower complaint pursuant to the Library Employee’s Handbook.”*

Remove: *“If a Trustee feels that an aspect of an employee’s behavior or job description should be modified then the trustee must express the concern to the Library Board President. The Library Board President can then decide, in consultation with the Personnel Committee, if necessary, whether to convey the concern to the Library Director. The Library Director will determine whether such change would be beneficial or necessary and how such changes would be implemented.”* and Replace it with *“The board interacts with the Library director through its president. With the president’s permission, a trustee may communicate with the director. Committee chairs are presumed to have the president’s permission to discuss committee related topics with the director, unless otherwise arranged.”*

MH announced that per Acting Director Tracy Van Dyne there is no Library Employee Handbook. She stated that all organizations must have one so that it needs to be created. After discussion, the committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

200-30/Board Officers, Election and Responsibilities

Add: *“Vice President – shall assist the President in all their duties.”*

Remove: Following Treasurer(s) *“...confer with the Director in preparation of monthly financial reports, budget reporting and investments.”* and Replace it with *“... provide independent oversight of the Library’s financial operations and perform duties pursuant to Section 400 (FINANCIAL OPERATIONS).”*

Add: *“Assistant Treasurer(s) – shall assist the Treasurer in all their duties.”*

Add: Following Secretary *“shall assist in arranging board meetings.”*

Remove: Bullet 2. *“Should this be the case, the Board may re-elect a trustee or trustees to the same office. The foregoing Board Policy to allow a fourth term will expire by January 2017.”*

The committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

200-40/Board Committees

Remove: *“Standing Board Committees are formed following the Annual Re-organization Meeting in January, by appointment by the President from volunteer Trustees. Nominating Committee is not a Board Committee.”*

Remove: *"The President is a member of all committees. In selecting the Trustees to serve on each of the library committees, other than the Nominating Committee, the President shall appoint as one of the four members a member of the Finance Committee."*

Remove: *"All standing committees will meet a minimum of four (4) times a year except for the Nominating Committee which will meet as needed. In addition to the following standing committees,"*

Remove: *"The Library Director is a member of all committees except the Personnel Committee."*

Remove: *"All standing committees shall convene at the Board Meeting, unless otherwise required or arranged."*

Remove: *"& Salary Negotiations – This Committee shall negotiate with the Staff Association and Department Heads Association for an employment contract, and review other Staff Association and Department Heads Association requests during the year. The Committee is empowered to proceed with negotiations within parameters established by the Board as a whole. If negotiations go beyond a year, the Committee remains the same unless a vacancy occurs."*

Remove: *"Each of the following standing committees shall be composed of the president and up to three additional trustees."*

Remove: *"Personnel Committee – This committee negotiates the Library director's contract and organizes the annual evaluation of the director. The committee also handles whistleblower complaints and grievances filed against the director."*

Remove: *"Audit Committee – This committee is composed of the board president, the treasurer, and two assistant treasurers."*

Remove: *"Branch Committee – This committee reviews issues regarding the Branches and makes recommendations to the Board as a whole."*

Remove: *"Main Building Committee – This committee reviews issues regarding the Main Branch and make recommendations to the Board as a whole."*

Add: *"Long Range Planning – This committee is responsible for developing long range plans for the Library according to state law regulations. The committee shall gather input from the community, assess and identify current usage trends, establish priorities for locations of resources, prepare and develop a broad vision for the future of the Library."*

MH announced that the significant change here is the elimination of the Main Building and Branch committees. BS and JP agreed that an ad hoc committee needs to exist to support ongoing capital projects and expenditures. The director can make recommendations but financial decisions can only be made by the trustees. After discussion, the committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

200-50/Committee Meetings of the Board

Revise: to read as follows *"All committee meetings shall be open to public attendance, with the exception of the Personnel Committee and any other exceptional circumstances."*

Revise: to read as follows *"Notifications: committee meeting notices and agendas will be posted on the Library's website as far in advance as possible."*

Add: *“Committees may not hold public hearings. At regular or special board meetings the public has the opportunity to be heard and to address any issue that is being acted on.”*

Revise: to read as follows *“Only the trustees appointed to a committee may officially participate at that committee’s meetings. Other trustees may attend and observe the committee meetings as members of the public.”*

Revise: to read as follows *“The board president may appoint a member or members of the public to a special committee.”*

Remove: *“A quorum consisting of three Trustees from the Committee is required to meet.”*

Remove: *“Only the four appointed to a committee may officially participate at that committee’s meetings. Other trustees may attend committee meetings, as members of the Public.”*

Remove: *“Committee meetings cannot be ‘mini Board meetings’. At regular Board meetings the public has the opportunity to be heard and to address any issue that is being acted on – after the full Board has discussed the issues and before a vote is taken.”*

Add: *“Committee meeting agendas are developed by the committee chair. In consultation with the board president and/or the Library director.”*

After discussion with a few recommended edits, the committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

200-60/Trustee Continuing Education and Community Meetings

Revise: to read as follows *“... if trustees seek financial reimbursement from the Library for their attendance at community events... they are subject to formal approval by the board in advance. Trustees can be reimbursed for these expenses.”*

900-60/Standing Committees

Delete: Entire section 900-60/Standing Committees

900-70/Standing Committees

Delete: Entire section 900-70/Temporary Committees

900-75/Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to Acquire Materials (Books)

Delete: Entire section 900-75/Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to Acquire Materials (Books)

JP stated that the only committee that is not functioning is the art committee. She said that the music committee is very active and hosts a lot of programs. JP added that the book acquisition committee was established at the request of Rebecca Gilliar. MH stated that she is not saying that the committees should not exist rather that they do not need to be included in the policy manual. JP said that it is in policy because of the way they are formed. MH responded that the board is responsible for overseeing management and the language in these three policies empower the board to interfere with library operations. After discussion, the committee agreed to defer policies 900/60, 900/70 and 900/75 to the next meeting for further conversation.

Open Discussion

NC stated that things tend to get locked up in committee. He shared that he and TV sat down and reviewed the circulation's department manual two years ago and there are still things in there that have not even made it to the policy committee. NC continued that the library has a whole staff of department heads and managers whose job is to make recommendations to improve library operations but they are frustrated that things get tied up in policy. MH said that much of the revised language in the policies promise to alleviate the delays experienced with moving things forward in the past.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Submitted by Gina Chase

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Action Items

Tracy Van Dyne

1. Place revision of Section #200-10: Operations of the Board of Trustees on the next BoT agenda for first read.
2. Place revision of Section #200-20: Responsibilities of Trustees on the next BoT agenda for first read.
3. Place revision of Section #200-30: Board Officers, Election and Responsibilities on the next BoT agenda for first read.
4. Place revision of Section #200-40: Board Committees on the next BoT agenda for first read.
5. Place revision of Section #200-50: Committee Meetings of the Board on the next BoT agenda for first read.
6. Place revision of Section #200-60: Trustee Continuing Education and Community Meetings on the next BoT agenda for first read.