

**GREAT NECK LIBRARY  
MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021, AT 6:00 P.M.**

A special meeting of the Great Neck Library Board of Trustees was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021, via Zoom [Agenda attached]

The following Trustees were present constituting a quorum:

Weihua Yan – President  
Liman Mimi Hu – Vice President  
Barry Smith – Secretary  
Chelsea Sassouni – Treasurer  
Scott Sontag – Assistant Treasurer  
Kathleen Gold – Assistant Treasurer  
Josephine Mairzadeh – Trustee

Also Present: George Trepp – Interim Director  
Steven Kashkin – Business Manager  
Charles Segal – Jaspan Schlesinger

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by President Yan at 6:04 p.m.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Upon motion by Trustee Sassouni, seconded by Trustee Gold and after discussion, it was,**

RESOLVED, that the Great Neck Library Board of Trustees enter into Executive Session for a discussion on Litigation Matters.

**VOTE:** Yes – 7 (Yan, Hu, Smith, Sassouni, Sontag, Gold, Mairzadeh)  
*MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

**Upon motion by Trustee Sassouni, seconded by Trustee Hu and after discussion, it was,**

RESOLVED, that the Great Neck Library Board of Trustees exit Executive Session.

**VOTE:** Yes – 7 (Yan, Hu, Smith, Sassouni, Sontag, Gold, Mairzadeh)  
*MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY*

No action was taken in executive session.

The board reconvened at 7:02 p.m.

President Yan announced that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to approve the plans for the interactive children's play area of the Main Library's landscaping project. He shared that trustees and community members alike have many questions with regard to the design and the ongoing maintenance costs involved with the project. President Yan said that the resolution on the table tonight will serve to put the project in motion and allow for the actual costs of the project to be determined. He invited the trustees to provide their input.

Trustee Smith thanked Interim Director Trepp and the administrative staff for their work in moving this project forward. Trustee Smith also extended appreciation to the public who have shared their input. He clarified that the landscape project has already been approved and that tonight's vote is to either approve or disprove the plan for the children's interactive area. President Yan acknowledged the previous board's approval but added that the current board should feel comfortable with all aspects of the project before voting to proceed.

Trustee Hu concurred with President Yan. She noted that a resolution was voted on to set aside money for the landscaping project but that it is the responsibility of the current board to look at previously approved projects with a fresh eye to ensure they are what the community wants. Trustee Hu said that in her tenure as a trustee no patron has expressed interest in updating the landscaping at the Main Library. Rather, they want better programming and an improved collection. The community feels very strongly about the amount of money set aside for landscaping. Trustee Hu shared that before the previous director's exit, she opined that when recruiting her replacement, an emphasis should be placed on their experience with capital projects. She is surprised with the amount of energy spent by the library director on these projects. Trustee Hu added that the library is located on wetlands and very little should be done to the environment. She concluded that the board should listen to the community and therefore reduce the amount of money spent on this project.

Trustee Sassouni feels that the project should move forward and that the tension seems to pertain to the children's interactive area. She stated that capital improvements are at the core of both the library mission and its long-term planning. One of the tenants of the mission is to maximize the physical space of the library to the benefit of the community. Trustee Sassouni said that although she understands concerns about the spending of tax payer dollars, a community petition exists that demands landscaping and outdoor work. She referenced the DEC's Letter of Non-Committal, which states that the landscaping work will not affect the environment. Trustee Sassouni concluded that the board should proceed with this plan and carve out the children's area for further discussion. She understands that the current board wants community input but stressed that this was already done by a previous board. If more input is accepted, it may result in a very long process that will, most likely, end with the same results.

Trustee Mairzadeh believes that there are cost effective ways of beautifying a space while working with the community. The Nassau County Museum of Art has a vast collection of art and statuaries that could possibly be loaned out to the library. This will serve an educational purpose for the community.

Interim Director George Trepp stated that, thus far, the amount of money that the project has cost the library is \$148,420.82 and that we are contracted for \$276,770.82. This leaves approximately \$128,350. The bulk of which is committed to the general contractor, Rockwell Developers. Mr. Trepp added that although a budget has been set, this does not mean that all that money will be spent. Actual costs will

be calculated when the RFPs are sent out and received. When the results come in, the board can decide what they want and eliminate or add things. He added that with respect to ongoing maintenance, we currently spend \$1041 over nine months. After the project is complete it is estimated that ongoing maintenance will be roughly \$11,500 a year. Mr. Trepp referred to the project timeline which includes all the approvals the board has gone through. He noted the hard work done by Dr. Smith on this project.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON PUBLISHED AGENDA**

**J. Pizer** – Ms. Pizer spoke in support of the landscaping project and hopes that her remarks will correct some of the inaccurate information that has become part of the public discussion and a portion of the library's Facebook page. Ms. Pizer stated that the children's garden is only a small portion of the landscaping project. The budget is not only for this portion rather for the entire library outdoor space, which includes the parking lot, Bayview Avenue (on two sides), the Levels pathway, outside of Levels, the front entry, the rear patio, as well as, the small portion that is the children's garden (located right outside the entrance to the children's room). The cost includes monies to be used for at least the next two years to replace/add/change the plantings and flowers. Ms. Pizer noted that each board will have an opinion on what they want to see. The plan is not only a cost savings but a protection for the association members. Ms. Pizer said that the money represents a large bequest which was accepted by the board, as well as, money specifically saved from construction and renovation costs which were put aside to make this project whole. She added that the money does not include anything that was requested in the last four budgets. Ms. Pizer stressed that the cost of the plan will increase the longer the board delays with the start and completion. She noted that the parking lot must remain the way it is due to statutes of the Town of N. Hempstead. There also cannot be any expansion of any of the areas beyond the constraints that have been placed on the library by the DEC. Therefore, the library must stay a minimum of 10 feet from the water's edge because it is marshland.

**H. Packer** – Ms. Packer said that landscaping is crucial for Great Neck. She feels that improving the landscaping at the library will serve a great educational purpose. Ms. Packer recalled previous projects which spent a lot of time on evaluations and studies, ultimately leading to nothing. She added that as a landscape architect herself, she values the work that Greg Marret from Bayview has done on the plan. Ms. Packer urged the board to move forward with the project.

**M. DiCamillo** – Ms. DiCamillo supports the approval of the resolution for the last piece of the building plan. The landscaping portion completes the building project and will enhance the library and its programs since it is designed to suit them. Ms. DiCamillo believes the board must do a better job in conveying information and responding to questions. She reviewed the comments on Facebook from interested residents seeking information. Ms. DiCamillo stated that the comments were not negative but simple requests and a desire to secure the best possible items for the space. She reminded everyone that this project is part of the original building program. Past boards fund raised and were able to amass savings along with a substantial contribution from the Ann Hyde estate. Ms. DiCamillo said these steps were taken so that tax payers will not be saddled with additional tax obligations, now or in the future. She noted that it even includes the money needed to continue the landscaping program for years into the future. Ms. DiCamillo fully endorses this project and all projects that raise the level of this most valuable resource the Great Neck Library. She urged the board to vote in favor of the project.

**M. Wohlgemuth** – Ms. Wohlgemuth stated that the children's garden was intended to be a teaching resource and an extension of the library. The original building committee agonized over the plan leading

to the one which exists now. She says that it is beautiful and that the community deserves a place where they can sit and relax in an outdoor space.

**K. Goldberg** – Ms. Goldberg announced that she started a petition in regards to the landscaping project with a goal of making the outdoor space engaging and environmentally friendly. She used the example of Port Washington which engages community members of all ages by educating them on all aspects of the environment. She said this project is something that can be an attraction for visitors from outside of Great Neck. It can also be a library that not only has beautiful landscaping but also one that has the potential to inspire the whole community to come together and improve the Great Neck peninsula.

**R. Schaufeld** – Mr. Schaufeld gave a historical perspective on the landscape project. He shared that many years ago he served as the chairman of the landscaping committee where they spent hundreds of hours in public meetings to develop a broad concept for the project. Mr. Schaufeld said that an RFP was developed to obtain the services of a landscape designer. They interviewed over half a dozen designers before ultimately going with Bayview Landscape Architects. The architects developed a plan that was approved by the board and displayed at the library when it reopened. Mr. Schaufeld said then they hit a stand still. He said that during his last year on the board, three years ago, he tasked former director, Denise Corcoran, with a list of things he wanted to accomplish. Amongst them was getting the landscape work completed. Mr. Schaufeld said he was able to get it moving again but now, two years later, they are in the same place as when he left. He shared his disappointment to see so little progress made and in having everything that they have done second guessed after the public devoted so much time coming to meetings and supporting their vision.

President Yan thanked the members of the landscaping committee for their work pushing this project through. He believes that everyone has the desire to see this project to fruition. President Yan said that although he is concerned that this plan focuses too much on aesthetics rather than the addition of educational value to the outdoor space, tonight's vote is not a one for all. He noted that changes can be made after the actual cost of the project is determined. Trustees Hu and Smith echoed President Yan's appreciation to the landscaping committee and the community.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **(a) Approve Details of the Interactive Children's Area for the Main Library Landscaping**

**Upon motion by Trustee Smith, seconded by Trustee Sassouni and after discussion, it was,**

**RESOLVED**, that the Great Neck Library Board of Trustees approve the detailed plan for the Interactive Children's Garden (Ann Hyde Memorial Children's Garden) at the Main Library submitted by Bayview Landscape Architecture.

**VOTE:** Yes – 4 (Smith, Sassouni, Gold, Mairzadeh)

No – 3 (Yan, Hu, Sontag)

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **OPEN TIME**

None

## **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

February 23, 2021- Regular Board Meeting

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 pm on a motion by Trustee Smith and seconded by Trustee Gold.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Barry Smith  
Secretary, Board of Trustees