

**Great Neck Library**  
**Policy and Bylaws Committee**  
Wednesday, June 16, 2021  
Via Zoom

**Board Members:**

Liman Mimi Hu, Chair (MH)  
Weihua Yan (WY) absent with notice  
Barry Smith (BS)  
Josephine Mairzadeh (JM)

**Library Professionals:**

George Trepp (GT)

**Members of the Public:**

Marietta DiCamillo (MD)  
Marianna Wohlgemuth (MW)

**Call to Order**

MH called the meeting of the Great Neck Library's Policy and Bylaws Committee to order at 7:01 PM.

**POLICY DISCUSSION**

Section 400-80 (Policy: Continuing Education Support)

MH requested that GT provide an update on the status of this policy revision. GT shared that this section was revised for clarity. He said a few questions arose that were responded to in discussion. MH asked what specific issues needed to be resolved. GT answered that there were some questions pertaining to the reimbursement, which he believes is clearly stated in the policy. It states that staff has to complete an approved course satisfactorily and if the staff member leaves the library's employ the money will be reimbursed. GT added that this money can be secured at termination through accumulated and accrued leave allowances, such as vacation time, etc. BS asked if this should be presented to the union at negotiations. MH noted that the union contracts have been signed and, although going forward it may be something they can put on the table, it does not apply retroactively. She suggested adding text "... *and provide a copy of their transcript to the Business Manager.*" since the concerns are primarily related to how a staff member gets reimbursed. BS wondered if there are criteria for eligibility for this benefit. GT said that staff do not need to be with the library for a predetermined amount of time to apply but, after completion of the class, which must be beneficial to the library, they need to continue with the library for at least one year. MH acknowledged BS's comments but does not want to create additional hurdles for eligibility. She reminded everyone that ultimately the reimbursement is at the director's discretion and prefers to leave the policy as flexible as possible. MH added that if issues arise, a conversation can be held at that point. BS concurred.

MD believes this policy was brought back to the committee because it is a benefit that the library is voluntarily providing its employees without any negotiation. Since the staff is not made up of at-will employees but contractual ones, she questions why the committee does not wait until the next union negotiations, since it is a very big benefit that most employers do not offer. GT contended that the more attractive you make your library the better quality of candidates you will get and retain. MH believes that the policy needs to move forward and that contract negotiations will take this into consideration. In the past, the library contract has been delayed for years while still in negotiations, which is not good practice. MH said that everyone benefits from a good policy. BS stated that both MH and MD make good points and

recommends seeking guidance of library counsel on this. The committee agreed to move this forward to the board for a first read.

## **BYLAW CHANGES**

### Removal of Nominating Committee

MH announced that this item has been in discussion for over a year and that last year's policy committee agreed not to give the Nominating Committee the power to endorse candidates. She added that community feedback was also in favor of eliminating this committee. MH said that to mirror the school district's bylaws and as a follow up to all the previous committee conversations, she has included new bylaw language in the meeting packet for discussion.

With the removal of the Nominating Committee, the bylaw change proposes the following:

1. *A candidate for a position on the Board must be nominated by petition addressed to the Library Clerk. Copies of a nominating petition may be obtained from the Library Clerk. The petition must be signed by at least 2 percent of the number of people who voted in the previous annual election of Board members or 25 qualified voters, whichever number is greater.*
2. *The petition shall state, among other things, the length of term of the position for which the candidate is being nominated.*
3. *The petition will be filed with the Library Clerk not later than 30 days prior to the scheduled election date.*
4. *In the event of a vacancy, the Board may appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy only until the next regular library district election, leave it vacant, or call a special election. This vacancy rule applies when the Library Clerk receives no qualified petition for an election cycle.*

BS asked for a historical perspective as to the origin of the Nominating Committee. MW said that the purpose of the committee is to seek out and prescreen candidates to ensure that they are qualified to serve. For example, someone who has experience working with a not-for-profit, knowledge on budgeting and how to behave as a public officer. MD added that the Nominating Committee has been in existence since the library's inception. She noted that this year the committee has conducted a number of interviews which shows a level of interest in the process. MD concluded that she feels this is an important ingredient in getting good candidates for the board. She supports reducing the number of candidates for the independent process but feels not having the endorsement that goes along with the selection is a mistake.

MH feels that having a gatekeeper function unnecessarily excludes newcomers by creating a difficult barrier for them to overcome. The process of petitioning to be on the ballot and campaigning in the community is the democratic way. MH questions why Great Neck needs a different vetting process for potential candidates when so many other districts function so well with the independent process. MW would like to understand what is driving such a drastic change in policy and how this will improve the workings of the library. Her belief is that this change is punitive. MW noted that this year the committee brought forth seven potential candidates because the committee did their job and that last year was an anomaly due to COVID. She asked what happens in the event no petitions are submitted and concluded that eliminating the committee will be a mistake. MH responded that the policy overhaul began with a letter from an industry professional who conducted a review of our bylaws and policies. In that letter, the professional pointed out that the Nominating Committee was an anomaly in the bylaws. Since the initial focus of the Policy Committee was to reform the board due to the high turnover of library directors, the discussion on the elimination of the Nominating Committee was delayed. MH acknowledged that this is a significant change but that the goal is to make Great Neck consistent with the practices of other communities.

GT stated that the existence of the committee makes one wonder who is screening the screeners and if the library is really being democratic about the entire process. Why not open it up to anyone who wants to run?

He believes there are valid arguments to be made on both sides. MD does not see a reason to change the bylaws since the revision does not currently solve the issue of what should happen in the event that there are no candidates running for vacant positions. MH responded that there is a clause provided in the bylaws which is, if there is a vacancy it will be selected by the board. In the school district, current board members can elect a candidate to fill a seat until the next election. The Nominating Committee, per the current bylaws, must provide candidates to fill vacancies but last year they failed to do that, leaving two spots empty for write-ins. MH said a procedure must be in place to prevent this from happening again. MD feels that COVID should not be used as a basis to judge very significant items such as this one. She does not see anything improving from making this change. MH clarified that this recommended change is not coming about as a result of COVID. It is not a knee jerk reaction rather the result of a review process by an industry professional and lengthy discussions by previous and current policy committees.

MH thanked MD and MW for their input but noted that the fact they are both current members of the Nominating Committee must be taken into account. With the consensus of the majority of the committee this item will be moved to the board for further discussion and consideration. MH said it will include a provision that any vacancy not filled by a nominee will be filled by the board. She clarified that if the majority of the board supports this bylaw change, it will be put on the ballot and voted on by the members of the library association at October's election. If accepted, it will go to library counsel to implement the language into the bylaws.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Submitted by Gina Chase

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**Action Items**

**George Trepp**

1. Place revision to Section 400-80 on the next BoT agenda for a first read.
2. Send revisions to Section 400-80 and Bylaws to Library Counsel for review and guidance.