

Great Neck Library
Policy and Bylaws Committee
Tuesday, November 9, 2021
Via Zoom

Board Members:

Mimi Hu, Chair (MH)
Weihua Yan (WY)
Barry Smith (BS) absent w/o notice
Scott Sontag (SS)
Josephine Mairzadeh (JM)

Library Professionals:

Denise Corcoran (DC)

Member of the Public:

Adrian Peralta (AP)

Call to Order

MH called the meeting of the Great Neck Library's Policy and Bylaws Committee to order at 6:05 p.m.

Overview of what has been done the past few years

MH provided an update on what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. She stated that the committee's goal is to follow the advice provided by Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, the industry professional who reviewed the library's policy manual. MH said that the current manual includes forms and outdated regulations that should not be in there. She noted the structure of the US Constitution which provides the framework for the rules that should be adhered to without tying hands up in minute details. For the library policy manual, there should be useful rules that staff can follow when they interact with patrons but at the same time not be so stringent that it hinders their creativity. Therefore, the committee is working on streamlining the policies by eliminating redundant and outdated ones and bringing forward new ideas which will allow the director and staff to come up with new concepts for the library. MH continued to list the various sections, including job descriptions, that have been removed from the manual to eliminate the past micromanagement.

WY said that when he originally reviewed the manual, he noticed many procedural items that have nothing to do with policy included. These items are important and should be implemented into an employee manual but do not have a place in the library's policy manual.

Plans Ahead

Late Fee Amnesty: MH announced that NY Public Library, Queens Library, Roslyn Library and most other libraries have eliminated late fees. She said that the previous interim director was researching this but it was never finalized. MH asked DC to continue with this research and bring it for discussion at the next committee meeting.

Library Card Age Groups: MH reported that previous discussions were had into the addition of more age groups for library card groups to limit materials lent out to patrons of certain ages. She said that this is in the research stage.

Library of Things Circulation: MH questioned if, in terms of new media, the policy is up to date. She wondered if specific policies are needed on digital subscriptions or streaming services such as Hoopla and Kanopy. SS stated that several libraries are now lending out all different types of equipment, including cricket craft machines and jumbo game boards and that it would be a good thing for Great Neck to do. He noted that some of these libraries accept donations of such items. MH agreed and added the possibility of lending out iPads and mobile hotspots. She said this is definitely something worth looking into. Regarding

the acceptance of donations, she feels that a clear donation policy is worth including in the policy manual. MH feels that if, for whatever reason, the library cannot accept the donation, avenues should exist redirecting patrons to places that may take their gifts.

DC shared that she has already begun research on the “library of things”. If the committee decides to move forward with this, a general policy, which does not detail the items to be loaned out, would need to be created along with a board resolution to start collecting these items. DC said that it’s an exciting thing and something that libraries have actually been doing for several decades. Libraries loan out anything from art work to bicycle chains and we will determine what Great Neck patrons want and work from there. She said that she has already spoken to Steven Kashkin, Business Manager, regarding funding. DC thinks this is an excellent way to add services and enhance what the library does.

JM joined the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

JM wondered if the library has storage space to initiate a “library of things” and if anyone on staff would be able to repair the items, if necessary. DC stated that the library does have limited space available for storage which may come into play when deciding what items to lend out. SS said that he is certain that local organizations, such as the Parks Department, who would be willing to lend out storage space if the library needs it. He continued that the focus, at this time, should be on initiating this and creating a policy, rather than on the details of it. SS stated that once that is in place then those things can be looked into and decided on. MH agreed and suggested that the next time the committee meets they get started on a policy to move this forward.

MH asked DC to take a look at the policy manual to determine policies that may be out of date and should be removed. DC recommended the removal of the policy on how the library handles bomb threats. She said the place for this is in the library’s emergency manual and added that putting internal procedures in the general policy manual puts employees at risk. MH concurred and asked DC to bring a list of policies that she feels should be removed from the manual to the next meeting for discussion.

Trustee Training and Staff Continuing Education: MH reported that the staff continuing education reimbursement plan was passed by the board and asked if there were any interested applicants. DC stated that she has received one application for review. MH reported that per NYS, trustee training is mandatory. She said that since new trustees are starting in January, onboard training is very important. WY announced that currently there is a trustee training that is conducted by library counsel on the legal obligations of trustees and a second training done on the appropriate ways for trustees to communicate. He feels both are very important and necessary. MH concurred and suggested an “onboard” training where you learn what it means to be a trustee. She stated this can be combined with legal counsel’s training. MH recommended that this be done prior to the reorganization meeting in January. JM added that oftentimes new trustees walk in not really having a proper idea of what their responsibilities are.

The committee asked DC to begin the process of scheduling the trustee training for December to include the newly elected trustees. They asked her recommendations on who should conduct the training. DC said that Gerry Nichols and Rebekkah Aldrich Smith are best to lead the training since they are the authors of the NYS Trustee Manual.

SS questioned if there is an existing policy on appropriate behavior for patrons and trustees. If one doesn’t exist, he thinks that it is very important to create one. MH pointed out that a section on trustee conduct does exist and is in the current policy manual. SS noted that there have been several instances in which people have behaved in ways which would merit termination from jobs. He wondered if penalties exist for such occurrences.

Trustee Emails and Communications: MH said that, along with trustee training, a library email address should be set up for all trustees for the upcoming year. WY is in support of this and added that trustee emails should also be posted on the library website. JM recommended library counsel's input. WY agreed and said this discussion should be part of trustee training. SS believes trustee emails should be made public and people should understand how to behave appropriately when communicating with trustees and that intimidation and tactics to get what they want should not be used. SS added that, unfortunately, he has received emails that clearly violate ethical standards of civilized behaviors and feels there needs to be some repercussions for this. When the trustee emails are published people need to realize they need to have a general level of decorum when sending correspondence.

Transparency: MH believes in transparency and would like for all past board and committee minutes made available online. In addition, records of past election results and Board of Trustees should also be uploaded. WY agrees that records should go beyond one year. He added that the retention policies for such records should be reviewed and re-evaluated to determine if they are being kept long enough.

Miscellaneous

SS would like to add an item to the next policy or board meeting regarding appropriate patron behavior and the ramifications of not adhering to it. MH thinks this should be brought into a board executive session for a full discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

Submitted by Gina Chase

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Action Items

Denise Corcoran

1. Research options for late fee amnesty and bring back recommendations to a future policy meeting.
2. Research options for library age groups and bring back recommendations to a future policy meeting.
3. Research option for “Library of Things” and bring back recommendations to a future policy meeting.
4. Research need for, and possibility of, lending out of hotspots and/or iPads to discuss at a future policy meeting.
5. Revisit donation policy to discuss at a future policy meeting.
6. Bring list of policies that should be removed to a future policy meeting for discussion.
7. Make past board minutes, election information and library history available on our website.