

Fairfax Community Library Joint Board Meeting  
April 16, 2015  
BFA-Fairfax Conference Room, 6:30

The meeting was called to order by Toni Jiwatram at 6:30. In attendance were library directors Joy Mercer, Debbie Landauer, library trustees Patty Reaves, Janel Gamm, Liz Griffin; school board directors Scott Mitchell and Paula Dearborn, with Jason Boyd, Elaine Carpenter, Rachelle LeVau, as guests. Also guests were Randy Divine, Peter King, of the selectboard, and two members of the general public..

Participants were introduced.

The first order of business was to vote on chair and secretary. Scott nominated Toni Jiwatram to be chair, Liz seconded it and she was elected. Paula nominated Liz to be secretary, Scott seconded it and she was elected.

Rachelle spoke as a member of the Long Range Planning Committee. She said that an architect would be willing to look at the library space. The trustees and librarians should look at the space and determine how they might want to better use the space. She would arrange for said architect to contact Debbie and Joy.

The minutes of the previous meeting, January 8 2015, were reviewed. Scott moved to approve them and Paula seconded. They were approved.

Joy Mercer is pleased that the number of walk in students is higher than it was for the same period last year. She observed that the library has been a busy place.

Debbie Landauer noted that there has been an increase in adult fiction use in the form of audio books and e-books. The new program planner, Nicole Vance is busy with many good programs. There will be a three month review of her work and her adjustment to the position.

There are many post school activities and many new patrons. The library is a busy place for the community.

In regard to the Fairfax Community Library policy which has been reviewed in the past, the latest draft was distributed to the group. It was noted that appendices will be attached to the policy, but not included within its body, and they will be referenced in the text when relevant.

A question about the definition of 'school hours' will be addressed by changing it to 'school library hours' for clarity.

A complex discussion ensued about youth having access to books that parents perhaps feel are inappropriate for them. During the school day youth can only use their school account. The library's automated system is set up to signal if a book is not allowable for that youth, based on criteria established by the school librarian. After school, and during times when

school is not in session, youth can use either school account (following the rules set therein) or family account (If they have permission). If using the family account, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to oversee what is allowed or not. During the summer, school accounts are closed.

There was another concern about youth using the public computer. A sign indicates that it is a public computer and it is arranged so the monitor is visible only to the user.

Elaine Carpenter asked if library volunteers have had a background check, and yes, they are required to do so.

Jason Boyd expressed his opinion that the Joint Board members should see the library as a school space, and he believes that the public library patrons should follow all school policies. It was further brought up that the VT legislature is moving in such a direction that at some point it may not be possible for a public library to be part of a school facility. There was no specific detail about this.

Another concern is over the enforcement of school policy in the library which is a public library as well.

The School Board believes that the first step in this process of policy revision and public vs school library is to decide what the space actually is. The school board sees it as primarily a school library. Toni, the chair of the library trustees pointed out that it is a Community Library and that fact cannot be changed by the Joint Board or the School Board. Debbie further pointed out that the space was created many years ago in part with grant funds from the VT Dept. of Libraries expressly for a combined library.

A concern over petitions was brought up; some felt it would be a distraction to the learning process. There is currently no specific policy banning petitions in the library's policies. The school has a policy against "solicitation".

Elaine Carpenter mentioned that the School Board members' first concern is the safety of the student, and the library space is seen as a safety risk.

Debbie acknowledges these concerns, but notes they have been addressed with locked doors, change of entrance, and other measures. A priority of a public library is to be open and accessible to the public. She indicated that much of the community supports the shared library concept and the benefits it provides, both economic and social.

Paula Dearborn believes that the public library should follow all school policies.

It was brought up that a previous member of the Joint Board, School Director Jesse Cronin, brought the Patron Code of Conduct from S. Burlington to this Board several months ago, and

at a previous meeting this Board indicated that the Code of Conduct, which was adapted to suit the Community Library, addressed these policy and safety concerns. It was adopted by the Joint Board in January 2015.

Debbie asked Paula if she would compare the Patron Code of Conduct with the BFA-Fairfax school policies, and bring a list of any additional policies she believes the Joint Board should consider.

The Joint Board has certain authority over how the library operates. FCL, as a public library follows the laws of the Vermont Law of Public Libraries.

Liz Griffin asked what the Joint Board should do next as it has been discussing the FCL Policy for many months, and at the last meeting (January 2015) seemed to have reached a resolution with the acceptance of the Patron Code of Conduct.

Scott Mitchell wonders how we can address school policy in the library during the day when/if issues arrive.

The School Board wants to insert into the Library policy, a statement that all public patrons would follow all school policies during school library hours. This would include any new policies passed by the school board at any time in the future.

This School Board proposal creates a line of authority from the School Board to the public library staff, when the public library staff is under the aegis of the Library Board of Trustees, and the VT Law of Public Libraries. Debbie suggested that the School Board should instead bring each school policy that they want the library to enforce for public patrons to the Joint Board for consideration, and voting. The FCL has a Patron Code of Conduct that speaks to safety issues that are of concern to the School Board.

The general feeling was that the Joint Board has reached no resolution around the issue of school policy in a public library.

Peter King, former police officer, visiting from the Select Board, believes security is a significant concern for the library.

Peter King suggested a mediator, as it seems an impasse has been reached concerning one sentence in the policy revision dealing with school policy being followed by public patrons. All other issues have been resolved.

It was agreed that the next step would be for one school director and Toni try to have a meeting with Lauri Fisher to see if her legal expertise could help shed light on the main issue which is school policy being followed by public patrons during school hours. If she wishes, she could also recommend someone who might be able to clarify the issue. No date has been set for this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40.

Respectfully submitted

Elizabeth Griffin