

Montague Public Libraries Trustees Budget Subcommittee

December Minutes

Date: Monday, December 7, 2020

Time: 6:30pm

Place: Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/98475211930?pwd=U3hEZmxkRGxXQnlvR2UzbkRBV01QQT09>

Attendees: David Harmon, Karen Latka, Margot Malachowski, Tricia Perham, Gretchen Wetherby

Library Director: Linda Hickman

6:34 Call to order.

6:58 Review the 2021 Budget—Linda was asked to provide a level services budget to the town by Tuesday, December 15, 2020. The increases in the proposed budget are mandated. There are STEP increases for wages. These are offset to some degree by recent retirements. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners requires the Library to spend a specific percentage of the budget on books, subscriptions, and media. Linda shared budget corrections that she submitted to the town. Dave reminded the Trustees that we are looking at a budget for July 2021, and that the town anticipates a leaner 2022 budget due to projected decreases in State revenues. Tricia asked about the 3-6% cuts that Town Administrator Steve Ellis asked the Library to consider. We will need to discuss what items would be cut or reduced.

Dave pointed out that we have two requirements to retain State Aid from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. (See <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/index.php>) A municipality must appropriate the average budget of the last three years with an increase of 2.5% and the percentage for library materials is based upon population. Karen stated that historically the Library and the Trustees have been frugal. Dave said that, according to the MBLC website, the materials budget should be 19% at minimum. Linda will check on this figure. The current materials budget proposal is for 20%.

If the Library is faced with reducing the budget by 3-6%, State Aid can be used for utilities and supplies. State Aid cannot be used for library materials or wages. Trustees talked about the possibility of difficult budgets in 2022, and the differences between level services and level funding. At this point, we are asked to approve a budget that provides level services. Karen reminded us that the budget needs to be submitted by next Tuesday, so there is not much time to consider options. The Budget Subcommittee agreed to meet for 30 minutes prior to the monthly Trustees meeting on Monday.

7:32 Tricia motioned for the Budget Subcommittee to review three budgets on Monday, December 14, 2020:

1. Current proposed budget with materials budget at 20% total budget
2. Proposed budget with materials budget at 19% total budget
3. Proposed budget with materials budget at level funding

Motion passed.

- 7:33 Items not anticipated—Dave brought up that there is community discussion on social media about the possible closure of the Montague Center Library Branch. Margot shared that on Wed, December 2nd there was a sign written on a chalk board prompted against the book drop urging patrons to tell their friends to use the library that said “use it or lose it”. Linda said she would find more information about that. Trustees talked about the need to reassure the community that closure is not being discussed but that the structural needs of the libraries is a constant concern. Trustees should be prepared to have conversations with the community.
- 7:42 Next Meetings: Mon, Dec 14, 2020 at 6:00pm
- 7:44 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Margot Malachowski
Corresponding Secretary
Montague Public Libraries Trustees