

Board Meeting Minutes

Croton Free Library

March 10, 2025

Minutes of the March 2025 Board Meeting of the Croton Free Library, held on Monday, March 10, 2025 at The Croton Free Library, Ottinger Room, 171 Cleveland Drive, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

PRESENT

Library Board of Trustees:

Susan Ranis, *President* (29)
Justin Johnson, *Vice-President* (28)
Barry Feinberg, *Treasurer* (28)
Bethany Basile (27)
Adam Decker (28)
Leslie Ellis (29)
Kate Fabian (28)
Laura Jaeger (26)
Margaret Mahoney (26)

Library Director: Jesse Bourdon

Guests:

ABSENT

Mayla Hsu (26)
Marianne Merola (27)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:32pm.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2025 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the [minutes of the February 2025 Board Meeting](#) held on February 10, 2025 having been distributed in advance of the meeting and their reading having been dispensed with, were unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Collection Statistics and Patron Services

There has been a surge of attendance in participation of events in February compared to last year.

Less weeding of materials has happened this past month; a lot of the tech department is currently focused on the project of "library of things" which should come on board this coming April 2025. Lockers for the purpose of this "library of things" were purchased using our grant from Dana Levenberg.

BRMA (Update from meeting with Paul)

Susan and Jesse met with Paul Mays this past month; project decisions will be based on results from our fundraising study. We will be back in touch with Paul if/when we are ready for next steps.

Required BOI (Beneficial Ownership Information) reporting under the CTA (Corporate Transparency Act) paused indefinitely

As per our accountant, this paperwork will not be required.

Annual Report (Approval)

Jesse will need to make two updates to the annual report to adjust the trustee commitment end dates of Kate Fabian and Bethany Basile, whose terms are continuations of past trustees.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL REPORT

A motion was made by Leslie Ellis to approve the Annual Report once an adjustment has been made to the end year of the board terms for Kate Fabian and Bethany Basile, who are taking over terms of previous board members (not starting new 5-year terms). Kate Fabian seconded the motion.

Approved (8): Adam Decker, Leslie Ellis, Kate Fabian, Barry Feinberg, Laura Jaeger, Justin Johnson, Margaret Mahoney, Susan Ranis

Abstained (1): Bethany Basile.

(Absent (2): Mayla Hsu and Marianne Merola)

The motion passed.

Proposed Tax Levy increase (2.4%)

Jesse has calculated the allowable adjustment for our tax levy, which will be included in the next budget to be placed through. We will be seeking a 2.4% increase in the tax levy.

Village continuing work on Storm Water Basins

We have several basins deep underground in the parking area. They were installed in the 1990s to prevent water overflow into the Bari Manor property. Current library staff was unaware of these basins until recently.

We will be required to maintain these units; the village has been assisting the library to uncover and clean these basins, and adjust them for maintenance in the future. This process will be an unexpected added cost for the library (estimated at \$2-5k) this year.

TREASURER'S AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Check Register Approval

The monthly check register for February was presented at the Finance Committee meeting. The first two items did not carry a payment; these are direct deposit payments, and a hand correction was made to modify this issue.

Last month a check was missing; this payment appears in this month's register.

We made an adjustment to the listing for payroll, to add the word "payroll" for clarity's sake on the check register.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MONTHLY CHECK REGISTER

A motion was made by Barry Feinberg to approve the February 2025 Monthly Check Register given the hand correction mentioned above. Bethany Basile seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Performance and other updates

We received the second tax levy income for the year (\$481k). We also received our circulation system bill, which has now been fully paid (\$35k).

Overall the expenditures looked a little high; these fees are due to utilities, facilities, maintenance, and employee benefits (retirement and insurance). When reporting benefits for the purpose of our expenses, we should be splitting out full-time employee benefits vs. the expense line for part-time employees.

Bethany made a suggestion to adjust the budget reporting - she is recommending adding a column showing the previous year's year-to-date actuals. This can help in understanding the financial activity during the current point in time last year alongside the current column that shows the percentage of the budget spent to-date.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Renovation Committee

Fundraising Consultant Interviews Results

Jesse Bourdon and Susan Ranis met with the two final candidates: [Changing Our World](#) and [ADH&A](#). We have decided to move forward with Changing Our World. Reference calls on behalf of Changing Our World also came back with positive reinforcement for this decision.

Changing Our World proposed a change to the original proposal. They would like to adopt two 3-month phases. The first 3-month phase would be Feasibility, the second 3-month phase would be Leadership/Flagship gifts, followed by major gifts and a public phase. The first 3-month phase is estimated at \$54k, and the second 3-month phase is estimated at \$61k. The first phase would include exploratory interviews.

We would first like to have the opportunity to review the first 3-month period before committing to the second 3-month phase. We can contract the 6-months without committing to the full process (15+ months) after the initial two phases.

We do not yet know the expected budget for the final long-term project.

Changing Our World is proposing a start date of March 17; they would begin by reviewing any donors we have information on and preparing a feasibility study. They would meet with Jesse on a weekly basis to provide updates, followed by meetings with the board. They are willing to join a future board meeting to update our full board.

A contract will be drawn up for our review; Adam Decker and his wife will be reviewing the contract for us, as well as a possible contact of Justin Johnson.

For funding this project, we have \$78,000 in a capital fund (which is liquid/cash) which can only be spent for capital. These funds should be spent first, after which we can move to using our investment capital to continue working on fundraising if we proceed in the process. The total expected expense we would need for Changing Our World for the first 6 months is \$115k.

MOTION TO APPROVE ALLOCATING MONEY FROM OUR CAPITAL FUND AND INVESTMENTS FOR A POSSIBLE INITIAL 6-MONTH CONTRACT WITH CHANGING OUR WORLD

A motion was made by Bethany Basile to approve allocating money from our capital fund and investments (up to a total of \$115k) for the purpose of funding our first 6-month contract (once approved) with Changing Our World. Leslie Ellis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approved (8): Bethany Basile, Adam Decker, Leslie Ellis, Kate Fabian, Barry Feinberg, Laura Jaeger, Justin Johnson, Margaret Mahoney, Susan Ranis

(Absent (2): Mayla Hsu and Marianne Merola)

The motion passed.

Moving Forward

Justin Johnson has proposed that the original ad-hoc Renovation Advisory committee (focused more on construction timelines) be reshaped as we morph into a team focused on Fundraising. Justin Johnson has requested that he and Mayla Hsu (chair and co-chair of the Renovation Advisory committee) continue as board members assigned to the committee.

Adam Decker suggested that we ask the current non-board members of this ad-hoc committee if they would like to stay on the committee as it focuses on Fundraising. **Justin Johnson will ask the current ad-hoc committee members if they would like to stay on the committee with a Fundraising focus.**

Fundraising Committee

Annual Appeal

A few donations have trickled in this past month, bringing our current total from the annual appeal to just shy of \$27,800.

Long-Range Planning Committee

Finance Policy

Long Range Planning met this past month to discuss the Finance Policy. Adam Decker will continue to review the materials and send updates to the Board when ready.

Arts Committee

Barns, paintings by James Maciel, came down on March 1st. Mr. Maciel was happy to report that he sold two of his paintings and donated 20% of his sales to the Library. A thank you note will be written.

The new exhibit, *Before After Between* collage portraits by Kendra Shedenhelm, was hung March 1st. There are no plans for a reception.

There will be a few weeks in May between this exhibit and the next exhibit during which we will not have art hung in the Ottinger Room. **The board discussed the option of showing art from past annual appeals, particularly given this is the timing when we have the Spring Book and Bake Sale.**

Buildings and Grounds Committee

Ottinger Room Update

Jesse Bourdon received a quote mid-January for new lighting in the Ottinger room. After receiving that quote, Jesse met with lighting professional Jayne Whitman regarding suggestions for versions of the art LED lights, and also the mounting options for these lights. Jayne Whitman has been volunteering her time to help the Croton Free Library with these lighting suggestions. **Jesse Bourdon will provide an update to the board once we have a proposal.**

Jesse brought up the possibility of updating this lighting (pending the cost) and/or painting the Ottinger room in the month of May when we have no art display up.

Lawyer for the Library

Leslie Ellis spoke with Casey Wayman from [Whiteman Osterman & Hanna](#), a representative who matches lawyers and clients. Casey will do some research regarding our library's current affiliations, and can suggest possible pairings for us based on our needs.

If Casey has further questions for us, **Leslie will advise Casey to call Jesse Bourdon. We would like to have an hourly-rate estimate from the firm.**

Safety Committee

The committee did not meet this month.

OLD BUSINESS

Review of action items from last meeting

The board reviewed the full list of action items from February's board meeting. Remaining Comments on action items include:

1. Jesse aims to include the 2025-26 Budget Draft discussion at the April board meeting.
2. Jesse will reach out to some local library directors to ask if they have a lawyer on retainer, and if so, what their fees have been.
3. Committee leaders should review the [Master Calendar for Library Board](#) document and add any additional committee-related items as they see fit.

NEW BUSINESS

Google Drive Changes

Margaret Mahoney, Marianne Merola, and Kate Fabian met this past month to discuss cleaning up the Google drive and making adjustments to better serve the board. We would also like to build-out the new trustee onboarding map.

We also have a goal of collecting historical data (stored on computers) for our future reference.

Some topics to be cleaned up:

- Renovation advisory vs. Library Renovation
- Insurance coverage should be moved to Board Administration
- Reconciling Policy and Training materials around New Trustee Selection and Training
- (4th topic?)

Two new folders have been created to collect historical materials, which will be sorted at a later date. Some items will come from the Historical Society, and others will be uploaded by Jesse Bourdon. **We are also asking all board members that have historical documents on their personal computers to upload these into our google drive (and then removed from personal computers). Kate will send out the link to this folder: "Individual Trustee Materials".** Each Board member has their own folder. **Please upload these documents, renaming them for clarity purposes. Kate Fabian will help board members with this process, which we know will be a lengthy endeavor.**

Library History Archive

Margaret Mahoney and Marianne Merola have started meeting with the purpose of locating and archiving the Croton Free Library's historical documents.

A main purpose of this process is to help onboard library trustees. We also believe that the historical information of the library can be compiled which will help create a narrative for our fundraising efforts going forward.

***PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Members of the public may address the Board of Trustees only during the Public Comment portion of the board meeting and must identify themselves by name when they begin to speak. Comments are limited to no more than three minutes per person. The number of public comments per board meeting may be limited due to time constraints.*

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Laura Jaeger and seconded by Leslie Ellis to adjourn the meeting. This motion being unanimously approved, the Meeting was adjourned at **9:10pm**

Respectfully submitted by Laura Jaeger, secretary