

Croton Free Library
2022 Annual Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2022

PRESENT:

Trustees: Leslie Ellis (24), Lynn Kauderer (23), Susan Ranis (24), Barry Feinberg (23), Jane Beller (27), Marianne Merola (27), Laura Stelman Jaeger (26), Adora Lam (26), Mayla Hsu (26), Margaret Mahoney (26), Mary McFerran (26)

Library Director: Jesse Bourdon

Treasurer: Sid Franks

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was held in the Ottinger Room and was called to order at 6:08 pm.

APPROVAL OF ANNUAL 2021 MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual 2021 meeting were voted on and approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

I was thinking about this report and how to give my summary of achievements. This board is very special. We care about our community – the one we live in and the library community and that shows in all our work and actions. We are volunteers who are giving and kind to each other. We put in long hours and we do it because we are committed to our library. We are a cohesive group, we like to figure things out and we are not afraid to speak our minds. The board is a group but it is only that way because it is made up of individuals, each of who brings something very special to the group. All board members work on and/or chair several committees and these contributions are so meaningful to our community. I have highlighted some achievements below – we would be here much longer than an hour if I mentioned everything that each one of you does for the library.

We added three new members this year – Mayla, Margaret and Laura, and it feels (in a very good way), that they have been part of this group forever. It can be difficult to add new members to an established group but this has certainly not been the case!

Laura has taken on the work of the new fundraising committee with both amazing energy and results. She has taken this new committee and with her members made it very special. She ran our first face to face Book and Bake Sale since the pandemic. Her organizational skills are par excellence!

Mayla has guided us, based on the science, as we work through what seems like endless revisions to the safety plan. She has been a force on the new fund raising committee and shepherded the 2021 annual appeal.

Margaret has been focusing on the art committee and works with Mary to organize the shows and openings. The board rarely sees all the behind the scenes work of this committee and having Margaret as a part of this work adds strength to it.

Marianne, our board vice president, chair of the Long Range Planning Committee and our editor exemplar has moved us forward with her long range planning and policy work (which will never ever end).

Lynn, our secretary, is also our historian. Her amazing minutes capture not only our work but also our dedication to the library.

Barry, our finance committee chair, keeps a steady hand on the committee while shaking it up with new ideas and plans for us. He brought in Sid to help us interpret various reports.

Mary, our Art committee chair has made wonderful art in diverse mediums available to the library community both online and in the Ottinger Room. Having art once again hanging in the library is joyous!

Susan, our publicity committee chair, works with her committee and with other committees to spread the message of the library far and wide, not an easy feat at all! Susan is also an amazing editor!

Jane, our Croton Reads chair, pulled together a splendid week long in person and online Croton Reads event with Helen Simonson, talking about Major Pettigrew's Last Stand and Cris Groenendaal and Sue Anderson performing love songs. Both events were major hits!!!

Adora, chair of our Building and Grounds committee is helping us move the library forward by focusing on our space. This is an incredibly difficult and large task but Adora is making herding library board members look easy with her ability to clearly focus us on our task and lead this huge effort.

Jesse, our director, how truly lucky we are to have Jesse leading our library – you are generous with your time and advice, work with all of us through policy documents, financial issues, safety protocols, book and bake sale – just to mention a few things!~ Jesse sets the tone of community and caring for the library.

Finally, Sid, our former board member and current Treasurer, thank you for your care. You have taught me a great deal about finances and you have kept the library's finances on a forward path and even keel. We appreciate what you have given to us and we are so glad that you will

continue on the finance committee. We will present you with a book of your choosing with your name in it and we will have a gift to present you (but it was delayed in shipping) Lynn and Barry helped pick it out! We will miss you.

I am in awe of all of you – what a wonderful team we are!

TREASURER’S REPORT:

Our 2021-2022 fiscal year ends June 30, 2022, and we are in fine shape financially. It is anticipated that we will end the year with a profit in our operating budget account.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Committee met several times during the year to consider the following major items:

- Review the options associated with transferring a portion of the investments and reserve funds to Socially Responsible Funds – ESG. These are funds that support Environmental, Social and Governance goals. The committee made a recommendation to the Board that we should do so, and the Board approved the transfer.
- Reviewed and recommended to the Board the approval of the Annual Audit.
- Reviewed with the Director and proposed to the Board that the Library budget for the upcoming fiscal year be approved.
- Working with Director recommended that the monthly financial reports be delivered to the Finance Committee during the week preceding each Board meeting to facilitate their timely review.
- Established that the monthly Finance Committee meetings be held on the Thursday preceding the monthly Board meeting.
- Begun this year and continuing into next, a review of the financial reports and activities and implications for the planning and financial health of the Library going forward.
 - Monthly P&L Budget Performance statement
 - Check details
 - Trial Balance
 - Statement of Cash Flows
 - Balance Sheet
 - Profit and Loss Statement
 - Annual Audit and Tax Form
 - Investments and Reserve Funds
 - Fundraising
 - Implications of the Long-Term Plan on the budget
 - Changing community needs’ impact of the budget
 - Changing staff needs’ impact on the budget
 - Infrastructure needs’ impact on the budget

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Building and Grounds Committee has continued to evaluate how the Library's physical space can better accommodate needs of patrons and the community, and include a focus on health and safety considerations gleaned from the pandemic. In 2021 we created a list of our most significant library space challenges, and identified areas that need improvement. We are now seeking professional advice from library design specialists, so we can know the best way to prioritize the space and design problems and to resolve them.

The library Director, on behalf of the committee, surveyed other Westchester libraries to learn who they have hired to do their redesign or expansion work, and who they would recommend to us. The committee and board members have formally met with three firms, via Zoom, and some members of the committee have met with a fourth group.

Aaron Cohen Assoc: Dec, 16,2020
Acari and Iovino (Anthony Iovino): Aug 5, 2021
Lothrop Assoc. (Bob Gabalski): Sept, 29, 2021
Butler Rowan Mays Arch (Paul Mays): Dec 16,2021

Based on information from the survey and these meetings, the Board voted to contract with the firm of Butler Rowland Mays Architects, a group that specializes in library design, to make a site visit to evaluate the building and current processes, and provide the board with recommendations. Paul Mays, a principal of this firm, visited the library and met with the library director in April, and will present his recommendations to the Board in May, via Zoom. He will also give the Board a formal written report of his findings and recommendations. The Board intends to use this information to determine what next steps provide the most benefit to the Library.

ART COMMITTEE REPORT:

With the slight improvement in the COVID epidemic, we were able to return to displaying art works in the Ottinger Room. We have already booked artists through the end of 2022 and have only a few openings for 2023.

CROTON READS COMMITTEE REPORT:

Croton Reads held two events this year. To kick it off we started with our satellite event with singer Cris Groenendaal accompanied by his wife Sue Anderson on the piano, performing "Songs of Love". Some sweet, some moving, some very funny, and all together a wonderful journey brought to us by impressive talent. I personally was very pleased that some in our audience had not previously seen them perform, and were as impressed as I was, and as I always have been. Broadway veterans in our midst. We are quite lucky, indeed.

The main event was a visit by the author of our chosen book “Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand”, Helen Simonson. Ms. Simonson was a joy, and so easy, to interview. A few words and a brief question on my part, and she was off and running, entertaining us all. She was smart, kind, witty, and as Leslie Ellis said “a delight”. A true escape from all our worries these days, yet grounded in a keen intelligence. We all wanted to share a cuppa’ tea with her and have her regale us with her stories.

We were only able to manage all this during a pandemic because of the hard work and devotion of Jesse Bourdon and Gwen Glazer and their ever-increasing technical prowess. Thank you. Also because of the safety committee’s hard work to keep us all, as its name clearly states, safe. Thank you. And of course, all the members of the Croton Reads Committee, and all who volunteered on the day or days of the event. And our everlasting thanks to Mary Bernal, always at hand. On a side note: a shout out to Marianne Merola who held my hand whilst I manned this ship for the first time.

In closing, I’d like to quote our secretary, Lynn Kauderer, who stated that this year’s Croton Reads was “a resounding success”. Thank you. And again, in her words “Ideas for next year are already percolating!”. So, stay tuned!

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE REPORT:

Thanks to the Board for jumping in to take an active role in our fundraising efforts, as a new addition to our roster of activities. A hearty thanks also to the many past Association members (and new volunteers) who actively take part in our fundraising as part of our extended Fundraising committee.

July 17, 2021 - Summer book sweep. Sale of \$5 canvas bags folks filled with books (included in the \$5 price of the bags). We also had food trucks onsite. This was a community event that was VERY well received - first one after the start of the pandemic.

November, 2021 - Book and Bake Sale raised \$8,500. We were able to have a fully masked event, keeping our patrons safe by limiting numbers in the room as needed. For the first time we added an hour to our early bird timing (2hrs, 8-10a), which helped alleviate the crowding substantially. Early birds and non-early birds were both happy with the change. The bake sale table was (again) hugely successful and we were able to maintain a high number of baked good donations, despite the requirement for individual wrapping of items.

November 2021 to Jan 2022 - Annual Appeal - raised over \$18k in funds. This was less than in some of the previous years, but I believe there was a lot of competition with other mailed donation requests this year (after 1.5 years of a pandemic). Our appeal usually arrives before the majority of end-of-year donation requests from other nonprofits. We continued the appeal pairing with a local artists’ work, and hope to do so going forward. Sharon Kuhlberg was the artist for this recent appeal.

May 2022 – Book and Bake Sale – We are currently planning for another successful book and

bake sale, the weekend of May 21-22. Volunteer hours also include time Thursday evening May 19th and the full day of May 20th for set-up. During the event on both Saturday and Sunday we will have Pizzeria Baci selling woodfired pizzas on the lawn (weather permitting).

LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT:

It was at last year's Annual Meeting that the clarification of the Library's structure and the revision of the Library's bylaws were presented, discussed and agreed upon. The bylaws sub-committee worked throughout the rest of 2021 to hone the language of the revisions to the bylaws and the bylaws were approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2021. The Strategic and Long-Range Plan for 2021-2022 began with ideas generated at the Blue Sky meeting in June and were discussed and amplified through the following months and approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2021. The process will begin again soon for next year's Plan. This committee has begun the ongoing process of reviewing and revising and updating where necessary the Library's policies and putting in place a system for regular review. The Collection Development Policy has been revised and updated and was approved by the Board in April 2022. Thank you to all the committee members for their valuable contributions to our work.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT:

This year we worked on safety protocols, reopening the library and updating our safety plan. We continue to scan the environment so we can address COVID-related issues and we work to ensure the health of the library staff and the community as we navigate these unusual times.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE REPORT:

As a result of the easing of the pandemic, the Library was able to conduct a few in-person events this year, requiring the help of our committee. Using various social media platforms as well as local print media, we provided publicity for the Summer Book Sweep, and the Fall and Spring Book & Bake sales. We look forward to the improvements which will be provided by our new Website next year.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

It's nice to see you all in person this evening.

Some of you probably heard this already but when working on the annual report this year, I compared how many library card holders we have with how many residents are in the village of Croton and saw we have a 75% cardholder rate, which is impressive compared to the national average of 60%. It's just one of the many ways we can see how important our Library is to this community.

Since our 2020 annual report reflected a time when our services were mostly limited (and for three months' no one even in the building) it's not easy to compare and see the changes but given the limited services in 2021 there were some interesting things to note.

We saw a 71% increase in physical book circulation from 2020 to 2021; Children's material alone saw a 93% increase in circulation which shows just how important those displays the children's department curates are... among other things.

We doubled our visitors from last year and registered over 250 new Croton Free Library users. We (as a library consortium) added over 18,000 eBook and eAudiobook titles in 2021, but we actually saw a 1% decrease in the circulation of eContent compared to 2020. I find this fascinating as I'm not concerned about a tiny drop in use but more how relevant physical material still is to our patrons.

It's really important that we keep things like this in mind as we look to expand and/or enhance the building in the future, because while we want to have areas for sitting and programs and new technology, we have to remember how essential books still are to a Library. I'm constantly preaching to the staff how the Library and our services are so much more than just books but I myself need to remember that books themselves are still an integral part of our Library.

Last year we lamented over the difficulties of 2020 and had hopes of a brighter, healthier 2021. Well, it didn't really go that way, but I can say that we hit the ground running and didn't let operating another year through a pandemic slow us down. We increased the amount of trustees and really focused our efforts on changes through our committees. While Zoom meetings have grown tiresome, they allowed us to get several years of progress done through such a short period of time, and we have all of you to thank for that.

So a big thanks to all of you for making this all possible and for bringing us together in person again... even if it's just for tonight.

NEW BUSINESS:

Per the Library's bylaws, by a majority vote of the Board prior to this Annual Meeting, Jane Beller and Marianne Merola were each elected to continue on the Board for a 5-year term. They were officially presented at the Annual Meeting as newly re-elected trustees.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Kauderer
Secretary