

**Croton Free Library**  
Annual Board Meeting Minutes  
April 27, 2023

**PRESENT:**

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

Library Director: Jesse Bourdon

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

**APPROVAL OF 2022 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES**

2022 Annual Meeting of the Board minutes were voted on and approved.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The mission of the Croton Free Library is to encourage the joy of reading, the exploration of ideas and the pursuit of lifelong learning for the children, teens, and adults of our entire community. The library is about community, and we are all here to support our community.

Here are some of the highlights from our last year.

After several years of needs analysis, interviewing architects, visiting other library and hours of discussion we have finally reached the decision to hire the firm Butler Roland Mays as our architect. We are all excited about this and will start our journey by getting feedback from the community.

We had two wonderful book and bake sales – the Ottinger room was packed. It brings me great joy to see the floor filled with children reading.

We have continued to update our policies. Among others, this year we worked on our Room Use Policy and the Collection Development Policy.

Croton Reads featuring our author Jeannie Zusy and with music by Bianca Mancinelli was a wonderful event!

I want to thank each member of the Board – each of you have worked tirelessly and all of you are on more than one committee.

Marianne Merola is our vice president, and her counsel is invaluable to me. She has spearheaded the Long-Range Plan and writing and revising policies.

Barry Feinberg is our Treasurer and chair of the Finance committee. He has helped us all this year by making the budget make sense to us and working with Jesse to make sure our finances are in order.

Lynn Kauderer is our secretary. Her minutes are incredible, as are her insights. She records our history.

Adora Lam is chair of Building and Grounds and has spent tireless hours and run many meetings as we searched for the perfect architect. She has always given wise counsel on human resource issues and she has worked on the employee handbook.

Laura Stelman Jaeger chairs the Fund-Raising Committee and has successfully run two book and bake sales and the Annual Appeal this year.

Jane Beller chairs the Croton Reads committee and put together a rocking event last month.

Mary McFerrin has kept the Ottinger room filled with beautiful art this year. The shows she has brought to us have filled that room with light. Every time I come to the library someone is looking at the art.

Malya Shu, spearheaded a successful Annual Appeal campaign this year.

Susan Ranis is one of our editors extraordinaire and her work on policy and bylaws moves us forward.

Margaret Mahoney plays a key role on the Arts committee,

Susan and Margaret took road trips over the summer to gather information on our top architects. The information they brought to us helped in our decision making.

The committees are all populated by Board members who put in countless hours to make sure each committee is successful.

I want to give a heartfelt thank you to three people who have given so much to the library. Gwen Glazer, who supports us tremendously, Sid Franks who continues to teach us about finance and

provides support to the finance committee and Art Almeieda who through his work for the Book and Bake sales has enabled us to fund raise for our the library

I cannot thank Jesse enough for all his help and support. We are lucky to have him. I have learned so much working in partnership with him.

As I depart as Board president, I want to tell you a bit of what I have learned over the last five years.

First of all – what is a president? At the last Trustee Book Club meeting Jerry Nichols and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich said the role of Board president was like being an air traffic controller ( a perfect analogy!). The president runs the Board meetings, carries out the wishes of the Director and Board and signs documents produced by the Board. The president also serves as a non-voting, ex officio, member of all committees so that they know what committees are up to. We have no special powers. There are many balls to juggle.

I have learned that being a member of the Board is all about stewardship – the job of taking care, and in the case of the library, taking care as one voice. We are all equals on this Board and each voice matters.

The success of the Board is built on trust and collaboration and gratitude – and a strong partnership with our Director. We have to be partners in our work and maintain a positive business relationship.

I have learned about the uniqueness of each one of you, the talents, the skills and the leadership that make this Board great. We listen, we think, we act, we care, we work together, not apart.

I have learned that Jesse, our Director is our most valuable asset (I dislike using HR terms) but I cannot wax lyrical enough about Jesse's professionalism and depth of knowledge. To say that we are lucky would be an understatement.

I have learned a great deal but we still have work to do.

As Board members we must remember that there is a certain decorum that we must maintain. The Board is a place where we make friends, but friendships cannot govern the Board. We must treat each other and our Director professionally during meetings and in public. We should not politic individually for something we want, we should work as a group to get it.

We must remember that Jesse manages the library. In the Board-Director partnership and collaboration we must recognize that Jesse does not have limitless time and we need to be respectful of this. We should make appointments if we need to meet him, when emailing him, copy the Board president, and as trustees we should not directly approach staff with Board business, we should work through Jesse.

I believe in life-long learning and supporting my community. The Board will always be a work in progress, and this is a good thing. We can continue to learn much as we work with Jesse to move the library forward. I want to thank you all for your incredible support. I am very grateful.

Respectfully submitted

Leslie Ellis  
President, Croton Free Library Board of Trustees.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

- Happy to report as we approach the end of the fiscal year, our income and expenditures are in line with our budget estimates. We will finish the fiscal year in good financial shape.
- It's been a busy year. We reinstated the monthly financial committee meetings which now take place preceding our monthly Board meetings. The committee meetings are set up to review and vet the monthly check register and income/expenditure report and discuss financial issues that arise.
- A new income/expenditures reporting form was introduced which makes it easier to identify line items that are above or below budget estimates and seek reasons and remedies.
- We expanded the direct online payments for recurring bills that the Library pays each month.
- Monitored the transition of bank accounts from Wells Fargo to Chase.
- Approved the Annual Audit and Tax Form submissions.
- I'd like to acknowledge the contribution of Sid Franks, our previous Treasurer, and now consultant on the Finance Committee for his contributions over the year.
- Finally, next year we plan to keep the library finances in top shape as we face whatever challenges come up.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Thank you all for coming out tonight. Every year, I am tasked with numerous required reports and each of these reports have me reflecting on the many things the library has done and the many ways the library has served our patrons over the past year or so. One of the most detailed, informational reports is the infamous Annual Report. When compiling the data for this year, I was once again reminded (as I am every year) of not only the amount of services we offer but how far we have come in just a year. 2022 was our first full calendar year of operating without any pandemic closure restrictions, other than a few months of Masked Mondays, which was probably the most well received pandemic related safety measure of the past four years.

Some things to note from 2021 to 2022: our program offerings and attendance increased by over 15%, our patron base increased by 7% and total visitors for the year were up by over 130%. Our new website went live last June and even with only being active for 7 months, the total traffic was up over 65%, with 39,000 visits in 2021 and 65,000 in 2022... that's over 175 page visits a day. And finally, one of the figures that I have been tracking ever since we initially closed due to the pandemic back in March 2020 has been the ebb and flow of physical item circulation vs digital item circulation. From 2021 to 2022, while we saw a small (about 5%) decrease in digital material circulation, our physical circulation was up by a third, breaking over 105,000 items circulated through this Library. That is a new record for this Library.

I can happily admit that I'm confident in the direction this Library is headed. Those that know me know that confidence is not my strong suit. We entered 2020 with the notion of considering a renovation project without having much to work from as we are all somewhat new to the building renovation process. Through many, many, Zoom meetings and discussions, interviews, client testimonials, we feel that tonight, we can officially move ahead with the first steps in designing our "new" building with Butler, Rowland and Mays Architectural Firm. From a safety standpoint, we are getting very near the long overdue upgrade to our camera system as well as getting everyone on staff CPR certified by the end of the summer. Both of which are thanks to a grant from New York State.

And speaking of thanks, I would be remiss if I didn't mention our outgoing Board members who devoted more time (than they even had) to making this Library (and my job) a wonderful place to be. Mary, you organized and structured years of exhibitions and art openings with such perceived ease... and how you wrangled all these artists to submit their work and hangings and takedowns with such efficiency is astounding. Not to mention, I wish I had your ability to call us all out when some Zoom meetings were going on for too long. And Adora, I've never met someone who was so good at putting all the \$%&@ aside to focus on the task at hand... no matter what else was happening. If you said you'd get back to me, you'd get back to me... even if it was 1:00 am and you just got home from two round trip treks to Long Island. If it's any consolation, I usually leave work emails for the morning but whenever you had the chance to get back to me, I would read them immediately since I valued your opinion that much. Starting after

tonight, you can officially start coming to me for tech help. Mary, Adora, thank you for the time you've given us.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Buildings and Grounds Committee

The Building and Grounds Committee has continued researching which architectural firm would best guide the library in identifying ways the building and/or property could be modified to better serve the needs of our patrons and community. The committee has communicated with four firms since 2020 and this year narrowed down the search to two firms: Butler Rowland Mays Architects and Lothrop Associates. The Board and committee chair communicated with library Directors from both firm's respective client lists, while members of the committee made site visits to several of those library clients. After careful and thorough discussion, the Library decided to proceed with Butler Rowland Mays Architects. Paul Mays, a principal of that firm and our main contact so far, sent the library a contract regarding preliminary design and planning services. After receiving legal guidance from the library's pro bono lawyer, and additional information from Paul Mays, the Board is satisfied with the contract and intends to proceed with Butler, Rowland Mays Architects for the renovation project.

- Art Committee

- The Art Committee mounted 5 exhibitions this year. We have returned to offering artists the option of hosting a reception with snacks and drinks. This option was not available during the Pandemic.
- The artists who exhibited from May 2022- May 2023 are as follows:  
May- June 2022- Theresa DeSlavio, paintings  
July-August and Sept-Oct 2022- Address Earth-Group Show , curated by [Bibiana Huang Matheis](#)  
Nov-Dec 2022- Karen Allen, paintings  
Jan-Feb 2023-Howard Ellis- paintings and drawings  
March-April 2023- Inez Andrucyk, paintings  
May-June 2023-Roya Zarrehparvar, photos
- This year, the Art Committee began using a new website application for reviewing artist submissions for 2024.
- Margaret Mahoney will serve as Chairperson of the Art Committee , beginning in May 2023, replacing Mary McFerran, who has served since 2016.

- Croton Reads Committee

Croton Reads was a raucous event this year, dancing included!

Jeannie Zusy, the local author of “The Frederick Sisters are Living the Dream” came to the library and brought her lessons of caregiving and family love, along with her courage, perseverance, determination, and her unassuming and seemingly innate work ethic that keeps her continually motivated and pursuing her creative endeavors daily. Her book is rare in literature, a look into the life of someone with special needs. It is touching, funny, and realistic look at her sister’s complicated path as a caregiver. They are quite a duo. It is inspiring. They are inspiring. And above all, Jeannie is quite inspiring.

Along with Jeannie, her dear friend Bianca Mancinelli, and her band Bianca Grooves came out in force, and not only celebrated Jeannie’s achievement, this being her debut novel in her 50’s, but entertained us with both her original songs and songs from the book, which were, as previously stated, very dance-able! We ended the evening spontaneously dancing on stage, and in the audience.

It was the first time Croton Reads did a hybrid event, thanks to the brilliance of Marianne Merola. It was her idea! Our tickets, always free of course, sold out quickly. Brava Marianne, once again.

There was also Margaret Mahoney, who organized the Croton Caring boxes for donations, organized the masses of candy for the audience, and zhuzhed the prizes. Whenever I needed a volunteer, there she was, thankfully.

And of course, Gwen Glazer, who takes care of all of our social media (thankfully for the many of us who are not on social media... that would be me!) and created a super cool online Scavenger Hunt with clues from Jeannie’s book. *Such* fun!

And kudos to the rest of the committee who stepped in for help, advice, and support: Leslie Ellis who you can always count on for everything no matter what, no matter when, and Barry Feinberg who keeps a calm head and always offers his brand of much appreciated enthusiastic. Along with the rest of the committee, to be sure.

One must never forget Mary Bernal who knows all there is to know about having an event in the program room and never says “no” to any help requested. Thankyou Mary.

And lastly, but certainly not least, Jesse Bourdon, our fearless library Director. Who leads, guides, advises, and does a lot of the work! He oversees all the publicity and tech and so much more. Oversees us! He keeps us on track and moving ahead. And a true diplomat, he is.

Speaking of moving ahead, I have a lead to an exciting prospect for next year, and Marianne has a super cool idea - this all before the committee has actually met. Mums the word till we know more. But we do are confident that it’s going to be good.

Thanks to you all and see you next year!

- Long Range Planning Committee

The revamped Library website went live in June 2022 and that implementation allows for a convenient and accessible site to post and store and make publicly available the Library's policies and annual Strategic and Long-Range Planning Reports.

One can now find posted there the latest 2023 Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report as well as the policies that have thus far been reviewed, revised and updated as necessary, most recently the Library Room Use Policy and Library Room Use Application Form. Additional policies continue to be under review and will be posted once considered by the committee and approved by the Director.

The committee has also recommended that the Director's annual Blue Sky Meeting--in which library-related possibilities are discussed more informally and the ideas generated during which inform the annual revision of the Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report--be moved from June to September in order to better co-ordinate with the planning of the Annual Appeal in that season and to offer more up-to-date suggestions for the revision of the Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report each January.

Also, in order to keep better track of long-range ideas and actions suggested during monthly Board meetings, the Board aims to capture those ideas in the meeting minutes so that they may be incorporated into the "Objectives and Action Steps" section of the Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report.

- Fundraising Committee

### **Book & Bake Sale Fundraisers**

2 Book & Bake sales were held in 2022 after our last Annual meeting (May and November 2022) and we have our May 2023 sale coming up May 20-21, 2023.

May 2022 sale generated \$8,852.21

- November 2022 sale generated \$9,753.00
  - Total of \$18,605.21
- Thanks for the many volunteers that assist with these efforts, particularly Art Almeida, our tireless curator.
- Thanks to the local businesses that have donated lunch for our volunteers and baked goods for our bake sale table. These include Piato Greek Kitchen, The Harmon Deli, Capriccio Pizza, Baked By Susan, and Homestyle Bakery.

### **Annual Appeal letter**

- Annual appeal letter went out in Fall 2022 – thanks to Mayla for spearheading the efforts this year!



- Artwork was graciously provided by local Croton artist Judy Scheck.
- We had issues with the post office (un)successfully delivering this appeal.
- We managed to raise \$18,557, despite the issue of the appeal reaching mailboxes.
  - There were 198 overall donations (vs. 215 the year prior, and 262 (an all-time high) in 2020/2021).
    - This (198) is the least number of donations we have received as of our tracking (6 years).
- However, our average donation amount was the highest ever, at \$93.72, with 38% of people donating \$100 or more (counting donations to PayPal that were \$100, netting us \$96.62)
- As is expected, over time more people seem to prefer paying electronically.

### **Fundraising account details**

- We will fully transition from Wells Fargo to our new Chase account within the next 1-2 months.
- We are proposing a move from a Paypal system at our events to a direct e-deposit into our Chase account. Sadly this will still require a payment back to Chase at a percentage, but this fee is unavoidable.

### **Thank you**

- Thank you to Jesse, Gwen, and the entire library staff for working with us so seamlessly and providing guidance and support as we planned and executed our fundraising activities.
- Thank you to the whole fundraising committee – Leslie, Marianne, Mayla, and Susan.
- Thank you to our seasoned volunteers, and those who went above and beyond by joining some of our committee meetings, including but not limited to Anamika Bhatnagar, Kate Fabian, and Sara Mills-Cohen.

### **Going Forward**

- We will have our hands full with larger-scale fundraising projects as the building renovation project picks up. Hold onto your hats!

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Proposed By-Laws Changes

All of the following recommended changes were voted on and approved unanimously.

- **Article VI: Board of Trustees**

- **Section 6. Election of Trustees**
- The Board shall reach out to the community each year to solicit community members interested in serving as Trustee. A Board committee will be constituted each year as necessary to interview each prospective candidate and make recommendations regarding candidates to the Board. The election of Trustees shall occur by majority vote of the Board at the meeting of the Board prior to the Annual Meeting. The presentation of elected Trustees shall occur at the Annual Meeting, which the public shall be invited to attend.
- **Recommended change:**
- The election of Trustees shall occur by majority vote of the Board prior to the Annual Meeting, when possible. The presentation of the elected Trustees shall occur at the Annual Meeting, when possible, which the public is invited to attend, or the May meeting, which is the first meeting of the new Trustee's term.
- **Article VII. Committees of the Board**
  - **Section 2. Standing Committees of the Board**
  - **5. Fundraising Committee**
    1. Co-ordinates and runs fundraisers for the benefit of the Library.
    2. Shall have two co-chairs who are elected Trustees.
    3. Shall encourage community inclusion and participation.
  - **Recommended change:**

Remove 2. Shall have two co-chairs who are elected Trustees
  - **7. Publicity Committee**
    1. Works with the Director as needed on general Library publicity, including but not limited to:
      1. Publication of "Shelf Life," the Library's annual newsletter.
      2. Publication of the monthly newsletter.
      3. Promotion of other Board sanctioned events.
      4. Works closely with the Fundraising Committee.
  - **Recommended change:** Remove this committee from the Bylaws

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Kauderer  
Secretary