**TOWN COUNCIL/LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORK SESSION**

**January 12, 2016**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Library Board of Trustees Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Jamestown Philomenian Library Museum Room at 26 North Road by Chair Peter Carson.

The Joint Jamestown Town Council/Library Board of Trustees Session was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Jamestown Philomenian Library Museum Room at 26 North Road by President Trocki.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Library Board of Trustees members present:

Peter Carson, Chair

Jennifer Cloud  
Paul Housberg

Marianne Kirby

Mary Lou Sanborn

Christopher Walsh

Members absent:

Laura Yentsch, Secretary

Town Council members present:

Kristine A. Trocki, President

Mary E. Meagher, Vice President

Blake A. Dickinson

Michael G. White

Thomas P. Tighe

Also present:

Andrew E. Nota, Town Administrator

Peter D. Ruggiero, Town Solicitor

Christina D. Collins, Finance Director

Donna Fogarty, Library Director

Michael Glier, IT Consultant

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, Town Clerk

**III. JOINT TOWN COUNCIL AND LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**WORK SESSION**

Mr. Carson explained the intent for this evening’s meeting. Guest speaker Karen Mellor of the Office of Library Information Services was invited to attend this session to review the structure of meetings and duties of the Library Board of Trustees in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws. Ms. Mellor will be approximately fifteen minutes late due to heavy traffic associated with current weather conditions. The Library Board of Trustees meeting will proceed and the joint work session will resume when Ms. Mellor arrives, followed by completion of the monthly Trustees Meeting.

The joint work session was recessed at 5:05 p.m. Upon Ms. Mellor’s arrival, the joint work session continued at 5:20 p.m.

1. Guest Speaker Karen Mellor, Director of the Office of Library Information Services

Ms. Mellor was welcomed and introductions for Town Council, Town staff, Library Board of Trustees, and Library staff members proceeded. Ms. Mellor is in attendance for informational purposes. Explanation of the role of OLIS proceeded.

1. Review and Discussion of Title 29 Chapter 4 of the RI General Laws relating to Public Libraries

Ms. Mellor referenced Title 29 and reviewed State funding for libraries and other services provided, including Askri.org, summer reading programs, blind and handicapped assistance, and the Library Reimbursement Construction Grant Program. The rules and regulations governing programs and services were referenced, established to promote resource sharing and procedures for distribution.

Ms. Mellor explained that Jamestown Philomenian Library is a municipal Library pursuant to Chapter 29, and she reviewed the governing General Laws and library structure. Discussion ensued. Trustee Sanborn and Trustee Carson inquired about evaluations and Library Board appointments. Ms. Mellor commented on procedures in Jamestown (appointed by Town Council) and other communities and the Trustees membership.

Trustee Housberg inquired about Trustee communications, and Ms. Mellor noted all communications are subject to the Open Meetings Act. Discussion of Open Meetings continued. Council President Trocki noted the transparency policy, the Council wants to keep the lines of communication open, and the Liaison to the Library Board of Trustees. Solicitor Ruggiero offered to conduct an Open Meetings workshop for the Board of Trustees and gave an overview of open meetings and proper procedures. Attendance at the annual Open Government Summit sponsored by the Attorney General’s Office was recommended. Discussion continued on open meetings, notice posting and filings, and Minutes of meetings. Roberts Rules of Order are used to conduct meetings as well as procedures listed in the Trustees’ bylaws. Solicitor Ruggiero outlined the procedures for approval of Minutes. Discussion ensued of interpretation of the Open Meetings Act and how it has evolved. As a division of the Town, the Solicitor’s Office is here to assist the Board of Trustees with Open Meetings questions. Discussion ensued of keeping the lines of communication open. Ms. Mellor commented libraries must comply with the Open Meetings Act if they receive more than 25% of their funding from public funds, as outlined in the RI General Laws.

Trustee Walsh referenced fiscal responsibility. Solicitor Ruggiero noted fiscal and financial responsibility lies with the Town. Conflicting information within the Statute were noted and discussed. Vice President Meagher referenced the budget development and approval process. Trustee Carson asked for clarification on the use of fundraising, bequests, endowment and donation revenues and how they are handled. Solicitor Ruggiero reviewed their handling according to how they are structured and received. If they are not part of the Town budget they and do not require Town approval to use them. However, donations made to the Town for the Library must be meshed with Town funds and proper procedures followed. Ms. Mellor commented on acceptance of gifts by 501(c)3 entities and Boards of Trustees and explained that endowment revenues used for operating expenses can be reimbursed through the State. Discussion ensued of a cooperative relationship between the municipality, council, and trustees working for the public good and that it is imperative in order to achieve goals.

Town Administrator Nota asked Ms. Mellor about collaboration and support afforded municipal libraries and the advantages, such as financial and legal assistance, not always available to private libraries. Ms. Mellor explained the advantages afforded a municipal library, with Trustees and Councils working in sync in a positive relationship. Discussion continued. Trustee Sanborn referenced Library expansion funding and its direct impact on property values. Finance Director Collins reviewed the budget process from development to submission to approval with past and present Library Trustees and that the Library is treated the same as all other Town departments. Salary/wage increases have been the same as other non-union Town employees. Vice President Meagher noted payroll taxes and other items provided by the Town that are not part of the Library budget.

Trustee Housberg asked for clarification on what is allowed in expressing an opinion regarding the Library. Solicitor Ruggiero explained that as a Board of Trustees, they speak as one voice. However, individual members may express their opinions and objections as an individual citizen and not as a member of the Board of Trustees or on behalf of the Board of Trustees. During a vote a trustee may state they do not agree with the decision or vote of the Board and may recuse on an issue. A Trustee may forward an objection to Council members explaining the objection as an individual and not as a member of the Board. More than two responses in a chain becomes a violation. Discussion ensued of communications between trustees and how that violates the Open Meetings Act. Solicitor Ruggiero explained that topics cannot be discussed in groups or communications outside of a meeting, by a quorum of members, and can only be addressed when they appear on an agenda, and must be discussed and voted on in an open public meeting. President Trocki recommended that any issue the Board of Trustees would like to bring before the Council can be reported to the Town Administrator, and that would not be a violation. Discussion of an issue between the Library Director and Town Administrator would not be a violation.

1. Review and Discussion of the State of RI Reimbursement Construction Grant Program

Ms. Mellor gave an overview of the reimbursement program and its guidelines. The program reimburses up to 50% of building or renovation costs up to $200 per square foot for new construction and $175 per square foot for renovations, not including fundraising costs. The Board of Trustees files an application for reimbursement as guardians of the Library, and reimbursement is awarded to the municipality. The guidelines require the hiring of an independent outside consultant, working with the architect, to perform a needs assessment, in order to assure it meets functionality and demonstrates how the project will benefit the community, in accordance with the Library’s Strategic Plan and the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. All criteria must be met prior to awarding of the Grant, and it then goes to the State Budget Office, contingent upon available funding. All monies must be in place prior to moving forward, and an audit must be performed to determine all is in order and how much is to be reimbursed, with written agreement the project cap will not be exceeded. Discussion ensued of bonding. A letter of intent is required (submitted last year), Jamestown is being considered for project funding, and the money is not signed off on yet. The application can be updated during the process. Discussion ensued of donations, and donations must be in place prior to going forward. The application and funding criteria is available online on the OLIS website. Discussion ensued of fundraising.

Councilor Dickinson commented he had not previously attended a Board of Trustees meeting, and you don’t tinker with something that works. Solicitor Ruggiero noted he will contact Library Director Fogarty to schedule an OMA workshop with the Trustees. President Trocki expressed appreciation to Ms. Mellor for her attendance and participation; we all learned a lot from her presentation. The Library is very important and the Council is committed to supporting the Trustees in their efforts to go about the process properly. The return on investment for libraries is one of the best investments a municipality can make. She applauds the Trustees work, noted the support of the Town Council, and extended an open invitation to the Trustees to be on a Council agenda.

1. Questions and Answers

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, the work session was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Attest:

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, CMC, Town Clerk

Copies to: Town Council (5)

Town Administrator

Finance Director

Town Solicitor