

Special RFPL Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday April 15, 2014

6:15 PM

Meeting Room, RFPL, Bellows Falls, VT

Present: Doreen Aldrich, Carol Blackwood, Hope Brissette, Patricia Fowler, Carolyn Frisa, David Gould, L. Raymond Massucco, Janice Mitchell-Love, Trustees

Press: None

Others: Tim Doherty, Steve Geller and Joel Love

Call to Order: The chair called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Public Comment: Joel Love mentioned the letter written by Elayne & Arnold Clift and asked that it be entered into the minutes. He added, if what is written in the letter is true and the trustees indeed promoted themselves under false pretenses to get elected, it is a travesty. You said you had no agenda. Your first responsibility is to the voters and the citizens of Rockingham. Steve Geller spoke up and said that is true and the voters of the Town of Rockingham have voted a new board to turn this board around. His wife did her job well as Library Director. A vast majority spoke very loudly to bring back a Director that was a leader. He said he hoped the trustees would take that into consideration. He added that he trusts that we will be true to our calling. Tim Doherty said he voted for Gould and Aldrich because he believes them to be honest and that was all he wanted to say. Love added that Mr. Geller is an advocate for his wife and that's ok; but asked the trustees to look at all the facts before they make a decision.

Gould said the trustees have not made a decision yet; but would consider their comments.

At 6:20 p.m., Blackwood moved to go into executive session to discuss the upcoming mediation where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the RFPL at a substantial disadvantage. Massucco seconded the motion and the motion carried. The trustees came out of executive session. Blackwood moved that Gould, Brissette and Massucco attend the mediation meeting, seconded by Mitchell-Love. The motion carried. Blackwood then moved to have a special trustee meeting on May 16th at 6:16 p.m. in the meeting room of the RFPL to discuss the results of the mediation. Frisa seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Brissette moved to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. seconded by Mitchell-Love. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Doreen Aldrich, Secretary 4/19/2014

Letter Submitted by Elayne and Arnold Clift:

9 April 2014

Dear David, Carolyn, Carol, Doreen, Pat, and Ray,

We are writing to express the frustration and concern we feel, obvious at last night's Trustees meeting, as the newly constituted Board moves beyond its first month in office.

The four newly seated Trustees were voted into office with a clear and compelling mandate: to end the travesty of Celina's wrongful dismissal and to reinstate her. It was no secret that this was the mission of all of us who worked so hard to get out the vote. We hope we were correct in believing that this mission was shared by the slate of candidates we supported. We fought for you because we trusted that you would do the right thing – bring Celina back and end a painful year of mismanagement and bad behavior with all possible haste.

New trustees were voted in because a great many of us worked desperately hard for months. Hundreds of people in the community joined us by casting the largest number of votes for library trustees in recent years and handing the former vice-chair of the Board of Trustees, a principal architect of the former library director's dismissal, a resounding defeat. When our candidates won a sigh of relief rippled through the entire community. But two meetings in, that sigh is now becoming a gasp of despair and frustration as this board appears to proceed as if it were little more than an appendage of its predecessor.

We note that the discussion yet again of a Search Committee, running ads and discussing possible candidates for Celina's position is an appalling throwback. It is a continuing charade that had no place on the agenda last month, or this under current circumstances, and strongly suggests a betrayal of the public trust. We recognize that the Board seeks to be sensitive to the views of the minority, a sensitivity totally absent when they held the majority, but it is now quite misplaced.

The urgency of the majority of this board speaking with an unambiguous, unified voice with respect to Celina's reinstatement as it enters into mediation on April 30 - let alone finding its voice at Trustee meetings – could not be more clear. We all know that Celina is asking for reinstatement. Board

representatives need to go to that meeting bearing a clear message: The board, by majority vote, is willing to consider and indeed support Celina's reinstatement assuming that a reasonable settlement can be agreed.

To enter mediation without that proactive posture is to invite prolonging the outcome to the detriment of everyone concerned, including members of this community to whom you pledged transparency, accountability, good judgment and a commitment to chart a new course. To be reminded of public sentiment in this regard, we urge trustees to re-read the many letters from former staff and trustees, Friends of the Library (one attached as example), and others that were submitted to the former board in support of expeditiously reinstating Celina.

We did not work as hard as we did on your behalf only to find ourselves experiencing "déjà vu all over again." To be frank, we find the passivity and indecision the newly constituted board has demonstrated in its first two meetings puzzling, unsatisfactory, and very disappointing. We never thought we would be pleading with you to find your voice, take decisive and timely action, and live up to a mandate that is now an obligation. Once again, we find ourselves asking that the Board of Trustees act clearly and decisively to ensure that our beloved library returns to its respected place in the community. We hope our rather desperate cry will not fall on deaf ears as it has in the past.

Sincerely,

Elayne Clift

Arnold Clift

cc: Jan Mitchell-Love; Hope Brisette; rfp repository