

**Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees**  
**Wed. Feb. 3, 2021 at 7 pm**

This meeting will be held VIA REMOTE PARTICIPATION and recorded for later broadcast. The public can access the meeting online at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/769572749>

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**Agenda**

1. Call to Order/Attendance
2. Vote to Approve Minutes of Jan. 6, 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Reports:
  - A. Chairman
  - B. Library Director
  - C. Assistant Director
  - D. Review of Other Staff Reports or Information in Meeting Packet
  - E. Building & Grounds Committee
  - F. Liaison from Board of Selectmen
5. Correspondence
6. Old Business:
  - A. Update on Library Operations during COVID-19 pandemic
  - B. FY22 Budget Update
7. New Business:
  - A. Vote to Accept Monetary Donations
8. Trustee Reports and Requests for Next Meeting's Agenda
9. Upcoming Meetings/Events
  - A. Library Board of Trustees – 7 pm on March 3, 2021, April 7, 2021
  - B. Selectmen Finance Committee joint budget hearings – Sat Feb 27 – time TBD
10. Adjournment

Authorized posting officer

Virginia A. Hewitt

Brooks Free Library

Posted by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk's Office

Agenda submitted electronically to Town for posting. The full packet - Agenda, Minutes & Reports – will be posted on the Town website, [www.harwich-ma.gov/brooks-free-library-board-of-trustees](http://www.harwich-ma.gov/brooks-free-library-board-of-trustees), and Library website, [www.brooksfreeibrary.org/brooks-free-library-board-of-trustees](http://www.brooksfreeibrary.org/brooks-free-library-board-of-trustees) on the Friday preceding the meeting.

*\* Per the Attorney General's Office: Boards/Commissions may hold an open session for topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting following "New Business." If you are deaf or hard of hearing or are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation, contact the Library at 508-430-7562 or [brooksfreeibrary@clamsnet.org](mailto:brooksfreeibrary@clamsnet.org).*

**MINUTES**  
**BROOKS FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION ONLY  
Wed. January 6, 2021 at 7 pm

**DRAFT**

**TRUSTEES PARTICIPATING:** JoAnne Brown, Linda Cebula, William Crowell, Joan McCarty, Kathleen Remillard and Bernadette Waystack. Jeannie Wheeler was unable to participate.

**ALSO PARTICIPATING:** Library Director Virginia Hewitt

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair JoAnne Brown called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Ms. Hewitt read the following announcement:

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted but every effort has been made to ensure the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. Members of the public who would like to join the meeting live may do so using the link or phone number provided on the agenda. This meeting is being recorded and will be shown on Channel 18 and available on demand on Channel 18’s website and YouTube.”

The Chair conducted a roll call of Trustees present so they were identified to any remote participants or those watching the recording. Responding present were L. Cebula, J. McCarty, B. Waystack, K. Remillard, and J. Brown. William Crowell joined the meeting during the roll call, at 7:03 PM. The Chair noted that Library Director Hewitt was also present.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF Dec. 2, 2020.**

Ms. Hewitt stated the draft minutes of March 4, 2020 were not the final version and needed to be corrected. The March and June 2020 Minutes would be presented for approval at the next meeting.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Dec. 2 2020 meeting. (motion: J. McCarty; second: B. Waystack)

Roll call vote: L. Cebula – in favor, W. Crowell – in favor, J. McCarty – in favor, K. Remillard – in favor, B. Waystack – in favor, and J. Brown – in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mrs. Brown inquired if any members of the public would like to speak. There was no response and it did not appear that any members of the public had joined the meeting online or by phone.

**4. REPORTS**

**A. CHAIR:**

Mrs. Brown gave a brief report on the Trustees’ annual meeting with the Board of Selectmen and thanked the Trustees for attending.

B. LIBRARY DIRECTOR:

Ms. Hewitt told the Trustees that staff members have been very sad about the imminent departure of Staff Librarian Emily Carta who is leaving for a wonderful opportunity out-of-state after 4 ½ years as our Technology Coordinator. She has developed great ties with community members while providing technology assistance and outreach and will be missed. Ms. Hewitt noted that much of her written report was covered under other Agenda items and would be discussed under those parts of the meeting.

C. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Assistant Director Emily Milan was not present.

The Chair noted that the meeting packet contained an article written by Reference Librarian Jennifer Pickett conveying points to remember when buying electronic devices to those who do not have the technology skills to learn to use them independently. The Library is unable to provide in-person one-on-one Book-A-Librarian assistance to patrons due to the pandemic so those giving such gifts should consider how they will be able to assist the recipients when they're selecting devices for others. Ms. Hewitt noted passing along outdated devices to seniors who don't have good technology skills, as family members often do when upgrading their own devices, can be counterproductive as often apps will not work properly and this creates frustration when you are trying to get someone to adopt technology.

D. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:

The Chair noted that Buildings and Grounds Chair Jeannie Wheeler was unable to attend but asked that Mrs. Brown pass along her thanks to the Trustees for their contributions and work on the staff appreciation gifts in December. She noted that while the staff appreciation took a different form this year, the gifts were very much appreciated. Ms. Hewitt echoed that, telling the Trustees what a welcome treat it was for staff members.

E. LIAISON FROM THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Mr. Ford was not present.

5. CORRESPONDENCE: None.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. Mrs. Hewitt reported on the suspension of in-person browsing in December and the return to Curbside-only service. She noted she had implemented a cohort schedule for staff members which will help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID19 between staff members and ensure library services for the public can continue if some staff members have to quarantine, and discussed the challenges of meeting the volume of demand for curbside service.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY21 BUDGET:

Ms. Hewitt reviewed the FY22 budget submission, details of which were provided in the packet. To meet the requirement to submit a level funded budget funding was eliminated for a 36 hour per week Library Assistant position for the summer. This will affect summer hours and operations but will ensure that operations and open hours from Sept. to June

are not affected. She noted that further reductions could be coming. After discussion the following motion was made:

MOTION: To approve the FY22 budget submission for the Library (motion: L. Cebula, second: J. McCarty). Roll call vote: L. Cebula – in favor, W. Crowell – in favor, J. McCarty – in favor, K. Remillard - in favor, B. Waystack – in favor, J. Brown – in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. UPDATE ON TOWN REVIEW OF FY22 BUDGET

Ms. Hewitt reported that no meetings have been scheduled by the Town Administrator to review the budget with department heads. She noted that the Selectmen's budget warrant timeline now shows they will be having the traditional joint budget hearings with the Finance Committee on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>.

C. UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT FOR STAFF LIBRARIAN

Mrs. Hewitt reported that after some delays in obtaining the required signatures for the internal posting, this vacancy announcement should be signed and distributed to bargaining unit employees soon.

D. ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS

MOTION: To accept the donation of \$500 from Linda Jordan Sweeney and family in memory of Denny Jordan and the gift of \$100 from Cheryl Murphy (motion: L. Cebula; second: J. McCarty). Roll call vote: L. Cebula – in favor, W. Crowell – in favor, J. McCarty – in favor, K. Remillard - in favor, B. Waystack – in favor, J. Brown – in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

8. TRUSTEE REPORTS AND REQUESTS FOR NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA

The Chair polled the Trustees to ask if there were any items the Trustees would like to discuss or request for agenda items or information at next month's meeting. L. Cebula – none, W. Crowell – none, J. McCarty – none, K. Remillard – none, B. Waystack – none, J. Brown – none.

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Chair noted the next few meetings would be on Feb. 3 and March 3, 2020.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn. (motion: J. McCarty, second: B. Waystack). Roll Call vote: L. Cebula – in favor, W. Crowell – in favor, J. McCarty – in favor, K. Remillard - in favor, B. Waystack – in favor, J. Brown – in favor. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia A. Hewitt  
Library Director

Library Director's Report for  
Feb. 3, 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting

1.26.21

Personnel News

- I've selected Senior Library Technician Jamie Thornton for promotion to this vacant Staff Librarian position. Jamie has worked at Brooks Free Library for 4+ years, working in Reference, Circulation, Youth Services and Technology, and her performance has been outstanding. Jamie has planned on a career as a librarian and is already working on completion of a Master's degree in Library Science.
- I've decided not to fill the 19-hour per week Senior Library Technician position Jamie is vacating on a permanent basis until we have a clearer picture of the FY22 budget. This position would be the last hired and therefore the first to go if we have to make additional staffing reductions for the next fiscal year.
- In the meantime I've given a temporary promotion to that position to substitute Library Assistant Pam North. We are very fortunate to have Pam, who is a retired library director and could easily step into any role and do an excellent job.
- It was important to fill this Senior Library Tech position so that our cohorts wouldn't be short-staffed this winter and spring during curbside pickup.

Annual Town Report

A copy of our submission for the Annual Town Report is included in your packet.

Shared Streets Grant Application

- The initial drawings for the Town's application for a Shared Streets Grant covered Main St. from Rt. 124/Sisson Road to the Bank St. intersection. It did not include the Brooks Park intersection (Oak St), which has been the subject of numerous letters and newspaper articles regarding pedestrian safety at that intersection.
- I attended a meeting with Town officials and stakeholders on Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> to inquire why the Oak St. intersection was not included. Town officials were aware of the issues at that intersection and quickly agreed to remedy the oversight and include it.
- Various improvements such as shifting lanes, improving crosswalks and removing and/or realigning parking on the west end of the project area will reduce vehicle speed, make the area safer for pedestrians and create additional outdoor dining locations for the restaurants.
- At our end of the village center, the corners at Bank St and Oak St will be narrowed, helping to slow traffic, a new crosswalk will be added and existing crosswalks will have a 'pedestrian refuge' area in the middle of the street, between the traffic lanes.
- These changes will primarily be accomplished through striping and painting of the pavement rather than permanent changes to the hardscape. This will improve safety in

the short term and make the village a more friendly and walkable destination while also allowing the Town to evaluate if additional changes are necessary.

- If the grant is received the work will be accomplished before the summer season.

#### Letter of Support for Brooks Academy Project

I submitted a letter of support for Brooks Academy Museum Commission's grant application to the Cultural Facilities Fund of the Mass. Cultural Council for structural work on the foundation and to add a full basement to the building.

#### Annual Ethics Update

- Each year municipal officials are provided a Notice to Municipal Employees and a Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law, and are required to acknowledge receipt of these notices. This year you must also complete the online training again. This information has been emailed to you.
- Please return to the signed Acknowledgement form to the Library – either by email, mail, dropping it in the Book Drop or ringing the doorbell to hand-deliver it. This receipt is due by Feb. 19, 2021. Do not submit them directly to the Town Clerk.
- The deadline to complete the online training is April 9, 2021. Again, please submit the confirmation sheet to the Library and not directly to the Town Clerk's office.

#### FY22 Budget

- The Town Administrator has informed the Selectmen that even with departments' budgets level funded, the overall operating budget for FY22 has a large deficit. It is likely they will need to reduce departmental budgets.
- No feedback has been received on our budget and no meetings have been scheduled.
- The Town Administrator will submit his budget to the Selectmen on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>.
- The FY22 Budget-Warrant timeline shows the joint budget hearings with the Selectmen and Finance Committee will take place on Sat. Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Hewitt  
Library Director

## FY21 Budget Balances

1/27/2021

AREA OF EXPENDITURE	Appropriated Amt	Spent	Remaining Balance	Percent Spent
Advertising	\$180.00	\$0.00	\$180.00	0%
Dues, Subs & Travel	\$3,845.00	\$450.00	\$3,395.00	12%
Library Materials	\$157,660.06	\$71,079.19	\$86,580.87	45%
Electric	\$25,741.00	\$11,832.48	\$13,908.52	46%
Employee Fringe Benefits	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	0%
Gas	\$10,601.00	\$2,176.01	\$8,424.99	21%
Library Supplies	\$13,000.00	\$10,908.10	\$2,091.90	84%
Maintenance & Repair	\$5,700.00	\$1,810.40	\$3,889.60	32%
Office Supplies	\$5,750.00	\$1,922.89	\$3,827.11	33%
Professional & Tech	\$50,725.00	\$43,760.61	\$6,964.39	86%
Water	\$1,315.00	\$752.53	\$562.47	57%
Total Library Expenses	\$274,817.06	\$144,692.21	\$130,124.85	53%
Wages & Salaries	\$730,884.71	\$394,139.82	\$336,744.89	54%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,005,701.77</b>	<b>\$538,832.03</b>	<b>\$466,869.74</b>	<b>54%</b>

Assistant Director's Report  
January 26, 2020

Pine Oaks Outreach: This past month, I was approached by Pine Oaks Resident Services Coordinator Melanie Bach to determine how we could partner together to support her residents. Ms. Bach asked specifically how we could support her in three ways: getting books and movies to her residents, providing technology and training that would allow residents to connect remotely with family, and assisting her with a Pine Oaks Community virtual book group. On January 14th, we met via phone to discuss options related to her proposals.

To address the issues of getting books and materials to residents, I reached out to Books on Wheels (BOW) volunteer coordinator Barbara Obrig to determine if our BOW program could potentially take on additional deliveries in the Pine Oaks communities. Ms. Obrig assured me that volunteers are prepared to take on any number of new BOW recipients. Ms. Bach will collect the contact information of residents who would like to join BOW and we will proceed from there. Ms. Bach and I are continuing to work together to determine resident interest and need in terms of the technology assistance and book group portions of her outreach proposal. A survey was sent to residents to ascertain interest and need. Once we have a general idea of the volume of residents who are interested we will formulate a plan.

Shoretel phone issues: We are beginning to see equipment failure related to our Shoretel phones. This month I worked with Town IT Foster Bandford to determine which phones need to be replaced and to determine whether or not the town has a replacement plan for aging phones. We also took the opportunity to address some programming issues that impacted our ability to easily switch between call handling modes and to modify the main message and extension labels to reflect recent staffing changes.

Exit Interview with Staff Librarian Emily Carta: On Saturday, January 9th I met with Staff Librarian Emily Carta to complete an informal exit interview. In her four and a half years, Emily proved to be an insightful member of our leadership team and I felt it was important to gain as much of that insight as possible prior to her departure. A great deal of institutional knowledge will be lost in her absence, especially as it pertains to social media marketing and the technology needs of our user base. Ms. Carta provided the library with a comprehensive status update on all things pertaining to technology in her last weeks and I was able to gather some further insights on social media marketing during our exit interview. We also discussed the future of the staff librarian position, library organization and other related topics.

Disconnect from Tech take home kit: In January the library distributed nearly 50 "Disconnect from Tech" kits, a sign that many community members are looking for non-technology related outlets during this extended period of isolation. This month we are again offering the kit with a theme of "Winter Walks". The Harwich Conservation Trust provided us with their signature trail



guide to include in the kit. The kits will also contain crafts, scavenger hunts, word searches and make your own heat packs along with hot cocoa and tea. To date we have

Know Your Town: I am working with the other members of the Voter Information Committee to outline a way forward with the Know Your town series. The series was off to an excellent start last Winter when we hosted in- person forums with the various town department heads. Community attendance both in person and in Youtube views of the recorded programs indicated that there was a good deal of interest in this topic. Unfortunately, the series had to be postponed when Covid-related in person meeting restrictions were put in place. VIC is interested in using the library podcast as a way to continue the series. Benefits of using the podcast platform include more flexibility when scheduling department heads while maintaining the ability to roll out each episode of the series on a consistent basis. One disadvantage to the podcast is that community members cannot participate in real time. However, current plans would include an opportunity for community members to submit their questions in advance via email. Under current Covid restrictions, the podcast seems the most prudent choice.

Discussion group: In addition to our many monthly book groups, we hope to start a more in-depth weekly discussion group as we know many community members are looking for ways to stay engaged during these difficult times. In February, I will be hosting a weekly discussion group on Tuesday mornings and have selected the book "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz as our starting point.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Milan  
Assistant Director

Reference Librarian's Report  
January 26, 2021

New cohort schedule and current working conditions at the library:

I just wanted to report that the new cohort schedule has made a tremendous positive difference to me personally and I think most of the staff would say the same thing. The days that I am working at the library, I am very focused on circulation functions. At times it does feel like we are all working in a 'library warehouse' with the very busy phones and the piles of items to process, but with a smaller number of coworkers in the building, communication is easier, procedures are modified easily, and the work gets done efficiently. When I am answering the phones downstairs I get to contribute directly to the work of the 'team' which is something that I have not had the chance to do as much in years past, and at the same time I can easily take over a phone call about tax forms or the Libby App as they come in. As a mother with two young kids I have been very worried about what would happen if the kids have to 'go remote'. This has already happened (the week after winter break) and our cohort was able to keep going without any disruption.

Being able to work some days from home allows me time to do all the other things I would normally be doing at work but in an environment that allows me time to think, do research, and respond to more in depth questions. Having some flexibility and control over work at home days in these uncertain times is just a boon to the mental health of all the staff. Coming up with a working schedule for the three cohorts and implementing it was a herculean task and I thank Emily Milan for all her work to make it happen.

Other Reference Duties:

The Reference questions keep coming in from patrons via phone or email and from the staff as well. Lately I have been directing a lot of patrons to resources from the Boston Public Library. Any resident of Mass can get a BPL ecard online and get access to their numerous online resources - resources that we could never afford to buy with funds from our own small budget.

I completed two annual performance evaluations of the staff that I supervise over the past few months, one of which was for Jamie Thornton. I am glad to see that Jamie's excellent performance is being rewarded in her new position as staff librarian. She is a bright young person who has a long library future ahead of her and I hope she will stay with us for a long while. Emily Carta had many duties - one of which was ordering the ebooks and audiobooks for our patrons in the Overdrive system. I will be taking over that task at this time and over the next few weeks I will be mostly training myself to use that ordering system. I also continue to regularly place orders for nonfiction books, nonfiction DVDs, and large print items. I still order a lot of items that patrons have specifically requested - they usually fill out the form on the public catalog - and with limited browsing these days the focus when ordering items is on best sellers and high demand items.

Over the next few months I anticipate a lot of questions from the public related to TAX FORMS and also possibly about filling out forms/signing up for appointments for the Covid vaccine. I am currently reaching out to COA director Emily Mitchell in regards to these two needs. I anticipate a lot of our older residents will require assistance with tasks related to these topics and phone calls will start coming into the library as well as the COA soon. I hope to work with Emily Mitchell, the staff at the COA, and possibly the town health director to see what we can all do to help our town residents in these efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Pickett, Reference Librarian

## Youth Services Report

1/24/21

### School "visits"

While I am still unable to visit the actual HES school classrooms, I have continued to do virtual visits to classrooms. A virtual first grade classroom does a bi-weekly story read with me, where we read and discuss books. Two virtual second grade classrooms have weekly virtual book discussions with me that mirror the Mock Caldecott discussions I would normally be having with students if I were able to visit their classrooms. We just finished voting for our Mock Caldecott winner, and both classrooms chose *Swashby and the Sea* as their choice. The real Caldecott will be announced on January 25th. We will spend the rest of the year reading other excellent books each week. I was also invited to a third grade class as a special treat for them before the holiday vacations.

I was recently approached by a fifth grade teacher to help her put together some books for her classroom, and just finished checking out over 100 books to help supplement her unit! I also did some research for her when she asked, without much hope, whether we happened to have a copy of "a really old" Sears Roebuck catalog. Since I knew she was doing a unit on a book set in the 1930's, I focused on that period, and was able to find multiple catalogs archived online that she could share with her class. This week I gave a presentation to her classroom on historical fiction and how to download ebooks from our website. She recorded the video and will show it to other classes as well.

I have also begun weekly book discussions with a second grade class at the Laurel School.

### Virtual Gaming

Along with Staff Librarian Emily Carta I have been running an Among Us game every Friday for middle school students. A free-to-play-on-mobile game, Among Us is very popular with this age group. We created a Discord account so that we can voice chat with the students while we play. We have a number of "regulars" now, and it has been rewarding watching them form a sense of group identity and get to know one another, some of them without ever having met one another in person.

### Toddler Program with Lucy Gilmore

Starting on January the 9th I have been co-hosting a virtual story time with Lucy Gilmore from the Early Childhood Council. She used funds from the ECC to buy a variety of materials to give to families that we can use in a virtual story time, such as scarves or maracas. We have ten children signed up to participate. The name of the program is Chicka Chicka Zoom Zoom. We meet every Friday at 11:00 for 30 minutes of toddler time followed by a chance for the adults to interact with one another. While some of the families are regular library users, many are not, and this has been a good opportunity to showcase library services to nonusers.

## February Vacation

I have three special events planned for February Vacation.

The first is an Interactive Movie Event. Participants can pick up an accompanying kit at the library curbside pickup ahead of time. On February 13th at 6:30 we will all log in to a Google Meet together on one device, cue up Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone on another device (I'm still working out the details on this part - likely everyone will need to either borrow a dvd from the library or stream it from their preferred service) and then get ready to watch the movie "together". Inside the kit will be a variety of items to use while we watch the movie - paper airplanes to throw when the Hogwarts letters are trying to get to Harry, or wave a "wand" around when spells are cast, that sort of thing.

The second event will be a Flat Friend Sleepover. The Stuffed Animal Sleepover has been a staple vacation week program at Brooks for several years now, but we thought it would be safer not to have stuffed animals entering and exiting the library, so instead we are going to have children draw a picture - a "flat friend" - and we will do all of the regular "sleepover" program antics with the drawings. While we can't have a group storytime to present the resulting slideshow, we will still be able to email the slideshow to participants.

The third special event will be a Nailed It! Challenge. Nailed It! Is a popular Netflix show in which contestants are given a challenge to bake and decorate a cake in a very limited amount of time. The fun is that it's nearly impossible to create something that looks "good", so people just have fun doing their best and laughing when the whole thing falls over. We'll give out kits ahead of time with enough cake mix to make several cupcakes, as well as materials for decorating the cake. Then on the day of the event we'll all log on to Google Meet at the same time to start the timer and begin baking and decorating. At the end of the time we'll display our "amazing" creations to one another.

One of the points I am going to try to emphasize in my publicity for these programs is that because they are all done through Google Meet, it's possible for participants to include family members from all over the country. Even if they can't visit Grandma this February, she could still log on and be part of the Nailed It challenge with her grandchildren (and vice versa, if Grandma lives on the Cape, she can invite her grandchildren to compete with her from California). We will not be mailing our kits to anyone, but I will make a list of items in the Nailed It or Interactive Movie kits available to anyone who wants to recreate them from a different part of the country, and we can accept emailed versions of the Flat Friends if a participant cannot physically bring their picture to the library.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Carpenter  
Youth Services Librarian

**BROOKS FREE LIBRARY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
739 Main St., Harwich, MA 02645  
(508) 430-7562, [www.brooksfreelibrary.org](http://www.brooksfreelibrary.org)

Vision

“a world of ideas in the heart of the community”

Mission Statement

The Library will promote full and equal access to information and ideas, the love of reading, the joy of learning, and engagement with the arts, sciences and humanities.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020

Brooks Free Library is governed by a seven-member elected Board of Trustees. This year Chair Mary Warde completed her fourth term as a Trustee and did not run for re-election as she was moving out of state. Mary served nine years as Chair of the Board so we thank her for commitment and leadership. Linda Cebula was elected to the vacant position on the Board and incumbent JoAnne Brown was re-elected to her sixth term as a Trustee at the Town elections on June 30<sup>th</sup>. At their July meeting the Trustees elected JoAnne to serve as Chair of the Board.

As noted through-out this report, Library operations this year were greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings of the Board of Trustees were interrupted for several months but resumed with online meetings in June. The Board meets at 7 pm on the first Wednesday evening of the month and public participation is always welcome. Full packets of the agenda, draft minutes and reports are posted on the Town and Library websites in advance of the meeting.

COVID19 PANDEMIC

The Town closed public buildings in mid-March due to the pandemic. The Governor subsequently enacted a series of restrictions to limit transmission of the virus. Libraries were prohibited from loaning any physical materials to patrons for several months. During this time staff members reallocated resources to purchase more eBooks, audiobooks and online resources and assisted patrons learning how to use these resources. We created a page on our website with links to Town, County, state and national sources of information about the pandemic and steps community members should take to reduce their risk. Staff members expanded their efforts to connect to patrons online by sharing information and creating online content such as instructional videos, podcasts and social media posts highlighting use of electronic resources and ways to deal with the stress and isolation caused by the pandemic.

Our book groups and Knit Lit programs moved online this spring, with great success. The VITAL program, which teaches people with vision loss to use assistive technology, pivoted from in-person tutoring and began providing instruction online. A new book group was added in the spring, and online educational programs, craft workshops and other special programs began and

continue to be offered. Community members can also join these programs by telephone so participation isn't limited to those with good technology skills and access to the Internet. These programs have enabled community members to stay connected with each other and helped ease the loneliness caused by the pandemic.

Our Youth Services Librarian continues to provide online interactive story times for young children and has collaborated with the Cape Cod Children's Place on programs and activities. She holds weekly virtual Story Talk and Story Time visits with elementary school classrooms since she can't visit in person. This fall we initiated a new Friday evening online gaming program for youth led by several of our librarians. This allows youngsters to enjoy this type of online activity in a safe community setting.

#### No-Contact Curbside Pick-up:

Library patrons were thrilled to be able to borrow books, audiobooks, music and movies again when we were authorized to begin no-contact Curbside Service on June 1<sup>st</sup> and they made heavy use of our curbside service this summer. The statewide interlibrary loan delivery service restarted in June so items were able to move freely between libraries again. Following the guidance of state and national library agencies we began quarantining items returned by patrons before they were checked in and made available to the next patron. Also in June, the Friends of Brooks Free Library resumed their Books on Wheels service for homebound residents. This service is very important to these community members in normal times and even more appreciated during the pandemic.

#### Retro-Fitting of the Building

Brooks Free Library is a large building but our staff workstations were concentrated in small areas, which created a challenge for us to meet the Governor's COVID19 social distancing and occupancy standards. In the spring we created distance between staff members by utilizing the public areas of the building, stringing internet cable and phone lines across soffits to get to the new workstations. This was helpful in the short term, but since the staff side of our Curbside "fulfillment center" was occupying the main area of the first floor, it was a barrier to allowing patrons back into the building when the restrictions on inside access were relaxed.

Using funds for materials provided by the CARES Act, in August the Facilities Dept. of the Dept. of Public Works began work to enclose several alcoves in public areas to create separate staff work space. We are extremely grateful to the Facilities Dept. for the careful attention to detail they put into this project. The quality of their work was outstanding and the new walls appear as if they were always part of the building. The Facilities Dept. also installed plexi-glass partitions at all the public service desks as part of this project.

#### Inside Browsing

When the retro-fitting project was completed we were able to move personnel and workstations off the public floor and open the first floor to patrons. We began offering Grab and Go inside browsing at the end of September, with a no-exceptions mask requirement and restrictions on the number of patrons that could be inside at one time and on the length of time

they could stay. Initially offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we soon added inside browsing on Saturdays. No-contact Curbside service continued to be offered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This schedule of 3 days of inside access and 3 days of curbside pickup per week allowed equitable access for both those community members who wanted to come in and browse and those who preferred to be more cautious about contact with others during the pandemic.

### Return to Curbside-Only Service

We offered Grab and Go inside browsing for three months, in a carefully thought out manner that minimized risk to staff and patrons. Community members welcomed the opportunity to come in and our inside browsing hours were very busy. Patrons were respectful of the mask requirement and observed distance requirements and the time limits on their stay. As the fall went on, however, patrons began to acclimate to the restrictions, become more comfortable and began to use their visits as opportunities to socialize instead of popping in to quickly pick out some materials. At the same time this began to be a concern, cases began to spike in the town and across the region. In mid-December we joined other area libraries in suspending inside browsing and returned to a Curbside-only service model. At year's end we were providing curbside pickup service six days a week, Monday through Saturday, with morning, afternoon and evening pick-up options.

## NON-PANDEMIC NEWS AND INFORMATION

### FY20 Statistics (July 2019 - June 2020)

Weekly Schedule: Mon.–Thu. 10 am – 7 pm, Fri. & Sat. 10 am– 4 pm	48 Hours
Total Hours Open This Year (excludes holidays & weather-related closings)	1669
Number of Registered Borrowers	12810
Number of Harwich Residents with Library Cards	9203
Visits to the Library	1378
Items in the Collection (physical items, eBooks & downloadable Audio)	103803
Items Checked Out (physical items, eBooks & downloadable Audio)	196445
Use of Electronic Resources	69206
Inter-Library Loans	37989
Number of Reference Questions	13146
Number of Adult Programs	361
Attendance at Adult Programs	2240
Number of Programs for Youth	53
Attendance at Programs for Youth	254
Number of Programs for Children	562
Attendance at Programs for Children and Youth	10882
Number of Staff Members	27 (7 full-time, 8 part-time, 12 substitutes)
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staffing	11.9 FTEs



### Know Your Town Series

The Library partnered with the Voter Information Committee in the winter/spring of 2020 to host a very successful series with town officials called Know Your Town. Department heads gave a presentation to community members on the mission and responsibilities of their departments and audience members were able to ask questions. The sessions were well attended, with feedback from attendees that they very much appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the functions of Town departments. The last few sessions had to be canceled because of the pandemic but residents got to hear from the Chair of the Board of Selectmen, the Interim Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Finance Director, Treasurer/Collector, Deputy Assessor, Director of the Dept. of Public Works, Water Superintendent, Community Center Director, Council on Aging Director, Channel 18 Manager and the Library Director. We plan to offer this series again with the Voter Information Committee, though due to the limits on in-person gatherings this year the format for the winter/spring 2021 series will need to be revised.

### Eliminating Overdue Fines

Libraries have long had a practice of charging overdue fines for items not returned on time. Fines were not intended to be a source of revenue; they were intended to encourage the return of shared materials so they're available for others to use. Studies have shown, however, that the minimal fine amounts charged for overdue items do not impact patron behavior. The vast majority of items are returned by the due date. Recognition that fines often present an economic barrier to use of the library for some patrons has led to what is now considered a national best practice, going fine-free.

Advances in technology, such as online renewal and automated email notifications, have allowed patrons to renew or return items before fines are assessed, so the revenue from fines has dropped considerably in recent years. In FY19 we collected \$5814 in overdue fines. That amount dropped to \$3026 for FY20 as text notices went into effect, and would have continued to drop even more significantly with the adoption of the new 'automatic renewal' feature of our automated system in January 2020. The meant the cost of the staff time involved in managing the collection of overdue fines now exceeded the amount that would be collected.

For all these reasons, in October the Board of Trustees voted to make the suspension of overdue fines during the pandemic permanent. This change eliminates overdue fines on items checked out by patrons at Brooks Free Library, no matter what CLAMS library owns the item. It does not eliminate replacement fees for items that are damaged by patrons or that are not returned.

### 140<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary

This year marked the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Brooks Free Library by Colonel Henry C. Brooks, a Harwich native who became a successful Boston businessman. The movement to establish public libraries was taking root in communities across the country in the mid to late 1800's, but Harwich did not yet have a public library. Determined to remedy this, Colonel Brooks constructed the Brooks Block to provide a home for the library and donated the

original collection of books. The Library was located on part of the second floor and revenue from stores, offices and apartments in other areas of the building provided a revenue stream to help support Library operations.

The Library opened its doors on Thanksgiving Day, 1880 for an open house and community celebration. Circulation of items began on January 1, 1881 with the Colonel's sister, Tamesin Brooks, serving as the first librarian.

In 1910 Town Meeting accepted the gift of "the real estate known as the Brooks Block and the books, statuary and personal property therein" from the library association that had been managing it and Brooks Free Library became a municipally owned public library, a department of the Town of Harwich.

### Staff Changes

We were sad to lose Staff Librarian Emily Carta at the end of the year as she left us to pursue a professional opportunity out-of-state. Emily served as our technology coordinator, getting to know many community members through her one-on-one Book-A-Librarian technology assistance sessions at the Library and Council on Aging, and social media posts highlighting library resources. We know she will be greatly missed. We were fortunate, however, to be able to promote from within, selecting Senior Library Technician Jamie Thornton for this key position in January. Jamie is a graduate student in a Masters in Library Science program and is up-to-date with current and emerging technologies as well as new initiatives and trends in the profession.

### Friends and Volunteers

Brooks Free Library is extremely fortunate to have a large and active Friends group. The Board of Directors of the Friends of Brooks Free Library meet monthly during non-pandemic times and welcome members of the public who would like to learn more about what the Friends do and become involved in helping in their efforts. As noted above, the Friends operate the very popular Books on Wheels program. The coordinator for the Friends and the many volunteer drivers provide a wonderful service that truly makes a difference in the life of homebound community members. The Friends also sponsor all of the special programs for our Summer Reading Program for children and youth, pay to lease additional copies of bestsellers to shorten the waiting time for patrons, purchase passes for discounted or free admission to museums and attractions, and they provide additional support for our VITAL program for people with vision loss. The Friends also operate a very popular book sale utilizing donations of gently used donations from community members. The book sale forms a large part of their revenue but unfortunately this year it had to shut down during the pandemic. The Friends plan to resume book sale operations as soon as it is safe to do so.

In addition to the support of the Friends, the Library is blessed to have the services of many wonderful and dedicated volunteers. Their efforts shelving books, movies, audiobooks and other items returned by patrons, to "shelf-read" and keep our collections in order, and perform a myriad of other essential functions is much appreciated! We look forward to welcoming our wonderful volunteers back again as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Respectfully submitted,

#### BROOKS FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JoAnne Brown, Chair  
Joan McCarty, Vice Chair  
William Crowell, Treasurer  
Bernadette Waystack, Secretary  
Jeannie Wheeler, Building and Grounds  
Kathleen Remillard  
Linda Cebula

#### Brooks Free Library Staff Members

Library Director:	Virginia A. Hewitt
Assistant Director:	Emily Milan
Reference Librarian:	Jennifer Pickett
Youth Services Librarian:	Ann Carpenter
Staff Librarian:	Suzanne Martell
Staff Librarian:	Emily Carta
Executive Assistant:	Megan Green
Assistive Technology Coordinator:	Carla Burke
Evening Shift Supervisor:	Phil Inman
Senior Library Technicians:	Joanne Clingan, Lee Kelley, Pam Paine, Jack Sheedy, Carey Sims, and Jamie Thornton
Substitute Circulation Assistants:	Joy Buhler, Sue Carr, Cynthia Craig, Caroline Crowell, Sue Henken, Cathy Howard, Vince Kraft, Jackie Leach, Judy Nichols, Pam North, Sharon Shaw and Melissa Stello