



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

Town of Natick Finance Committee

Meeting Date: February 2, 2021

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion:	Approval
Made by:	Mr. Scurlock
Seconded by:	Mr. Pope
Vote:	4 – 0 – 0
Date:	February 9, 2021

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Evans
Clerk
Natick Finance Committee



TOWN OF NATICK

Meeting Notice

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A, Sections 18-25

Natick Finance Committee

DAY, DATE AND TIME

February 2, 2021 at 5:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/96933630517?](https://zoom.us/j/96933630517?pwd=Q245YUVZc1V6QUdOa0dIZGQyTIVSQT09)

[pwd=Q245YUVZc1V6QUdOa0dIZGQyTIVSQT09](https://zoom.us/j/96933630517?pwd=Q245YUVZc1V6QUdOa0dIZGQyTIVSQT09)

Meeting ID: 969 3363 0517 Passcode:

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US (Washington D.C) Dial by your

location +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

PLACE OF MEETING

Virtual Meeting

Posted: Saturday January 23, 2021 12:30 PM

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
 - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
 - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Announcements
3. Public Comments
 - a. [Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location](#)
4. Meeting Minutes
5. New Business
 - a. Review Library Budgets
6. Adjourn

FINAL

Attendees:

Education & Learning Subcommittee:

Jim Scurlock

Bruce Evans

Jeff DeLuca

Richard Pope

Town Administration:

Amy Sadkin, Assistant Library Director, MIL/ Director Bacon Free Library

Gerald Mazur, MIL Trustee

Robert Foley, Bacon Free Library Trustee

John Townsend, Deputy Town Administrator – Finance

Mr. Evans moved to open the meeting, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 4 – 0 – 0.

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Presenter: Ms. Sadkin

[Link to presentation slides](#)

The Morse Institute Library (MIL) and the Bacon Free Library (BFL) are continuing to collaborate on library services for the town sharing resources, costs and ideas, with the goal to enrich the lives of the community, and with also to improve the access of library materials and programs.

MIL and BFL Usage:

- In FY21, the MIL had over 408,000 uses of the collection, and that includes both the physical collection and the online collection.
- Despite COVID closure, there were 408,384 uses of the collection despite being closed due to COVID
- Over 90,000 e- resources were borrowed in FY21, a 48% increase over FY20 and the numbers continue to go up.
- Almost 20,000 people attended over 1100 programs – both virtual and in-person, a 13% increase compared to FY20. There was an incredible 60% increase in teen programming attendance alone.
- At BFL, the collection was used over 27,000 times in FY21- both the physical collection and the online collection. We've noticed that, with curbside pickups, book circulation increased over the past year, demonstrating the high demand for library services during this time.
- Over 4000 people attended 369 in-person and online programs.

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Operating Budget

	Morse	Bacon	Total
FY22 Proposed	\$2,388,653	\$184,520	\$2,573,173
FY21	\$2,357,612	\$182,306	\$2,539,918
Difference	\$31,041	\$2,214	\$33,255
% Change	1.32%	1.21%	1.31%

Each year to meet the state Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR), the library needs to demonstrate that 2.5% increase over the average of the prior three years. The requested 1.31% budget increase will allow us to meet the MAR requirements. Note that the funding for library materials remains under state spending minimums, but is supplemented by grant writing and private donations.

Network Fees

The MIL is a member of the Minuteman network and the BFL is considered an independent library but can participate in the Minuteman network as part of the Natick library system and the two libraries share the costs of the shared resources that Minuteman provides. So if you have a Natick library card or a Minuteman library card, you can access the Minuteman network resources. The way the budget works between the two libraries is that the BFL pays approximately 5% to 7% of the value of the MIL's circulation. The Minuteman reached the record-breaking 2.5 million digital book checkouts in 2020 which illustrates how important that digital lending is during these times and its exponential growth. We expect that even when things go back to "normal", this trend will continue. The Minuteman network consists of 41 libraries in the MetroWest Massachusetts area and is one of only 102 library systems worldwide that surpassed 1 million checkouts last year.

Other Shared Costs

- Shared programming budget, with an emphasis on community outreach and collaboration. With COVID, we've switched to a lot of the virtual programs for all ages. Going forward, it will include the summer reading program also.
- In the last month, we have changed how we handle daily deliveries between the two libraries. In the past, when you ordered items from one library online, they go to a central sorting facility, and then they get divvied out to your specified pickup location. Although patrons have access to all the libraries in the Minuteman network, all items went to the sorting facility and, with COVID, there's quarantining so it was taking over a week to get an item that you might place a "hold" to reserve to arrive at your pickup location. To eliminate that, we're using our Bookmobile to do pickups and deliveries to significantly reduce the wait times for patrons (the bookmobile was been idled due to COVID since patrons couldn't enter the closed space of the bookmobile). We're also utilizing the bookmobile for outreach services to patrons of both libraries - people that can't get to the libraries either due to health concerns or mobility issues.
- Shared administration: The Assistant Director of the MIL is also the Director of the BFL.

Augmented Costs

While private contributions have remained stable, the cost of services continues to increase. The Natick libraries augment their budget with grants, donations, and contributions from the Friends organizations of each library.

- The trustees of the BFL continue to maintain and preserve the cultural heritage of the building and are responsible for the building and the upkeep of it.

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- Both the MIL and BFL trustees raise funds for the books and other library materials and supplement the costs.
- Both libraries have two great wonderful Friends organizations that continue to fund special programs, events, museum passes that are very popular, and special collections.
- MIL also has a special relationship with the Department of Veteran Affairs to maintain the Veteran's oral history project.

Staffing

- MIL has 31.2 FTEs and an additional 1.25 FTE is funded by grants
- BFL has 2.6 FTEs. All of the BFL staff are part-time, including the BFL Director.
- When we compare ourselves to libraries in communities of comparable population size (based on FY18 data, the most current data available), Natick falls in the middle of the pack.

Pandemic response

Both libraries quickly transitioned to safer model a library services, both with online programming and with curbside and contactless pickup. Library materials continue to be quarantined for 72 hours when they're returned for safety. Limited in-person browsing was implemented along with limited public computer usage. The libraries worked with the Board of Health and the town to make ensure safety. The MIL created a walk-up window, just off the lobby of the MIL that has been efficient and very popular with patrons.

- Other projects that were taken on included checking out library materials for outreach delivery, delivering virtual programming, virtual ESOL classes and services.
- Both the MIL and BFL staff added RFID tags to the entire collection. At the MIL, this was almost 136,000 items. The RFID tags that go on the book and every item are processed separately so that was a big project that was completed by both libraries.
- At the MIL, grant-funded play space was completed in the Children's room, including a lovely mural that one of the staff members completed in the Children's room.
- At the BFL, the same thing occurred - virtual programming quickly kicked and curbside pickups. There were 60 virtual programs and delivered from the beginning of COVID closure to the end of the fiscal year. And there were 166 curbside pickups during the month of June alone.
- Additional staff projects at BFL include selecting book bundles based on patron's interests (call the BFL and the staff will put together a bundle for you) and delivering the very popular children's outdoor story time readings.
- BFL completed RFID tagging on 12,000 items
- BFL worked with the Natick Historical Society to provide an online booking system where you could choose to come to the BFL, the Historical Society or both and follow safety protocols. We're also working with the Historical Society on virtual programs.
- BFL staff worked with the Council on Aging to provide virtual instructional programming on how to use Zoom and how to access library resources.

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Questions from the Committee

Mr. Evans asked for an overview of the salary differences – with salaries management up 4.9%, supervisory at 17.6%, and the others are between 1% and 0%. Mr. Townsend noted that the comparisons are made against the amended FY21 budget that was prepared for the July Town Meeting. We questioned which budget to use for historical comparisons and chose the amended FY21 budget because that's what was actually published. However, it did not contain all the changes that were made during Town Meeting and during Town Meeting some money was put back into the budgets, including the Library budget. This accounts for some of the percentages being a little higher than one would expect. Further, we intend to put out a revised version of the FY21 budget in March that will also include all the changes that were made at the Fall Town Meeting. The FY22 salaries include the changes that were made through either contractual increases or the increases from Fall Town Meeting. Salaries Management is a 4.9% increase that we discussed with the MIL Trustees since the previous Library Director was hired at the lower end of the salary band because he was a first time Director. The Trustees felt that the salary needed to be increased to \$100,000 to enable them to be competitive to attract a new MIL Director.

Salaries supervisory are up 17.6%. This is one of the numbers where funds were added back into the revised FY 21 budget at Town Meeting, so the actual change is about 5.4%.

Salaries operational staff is shown as 0%, but there will be a 1% contractual increase in that line item since FY21 was the final year of the collective bargaining agreement that had a 1% increase. Plus, there will be an additional amount for step increases.

Part time operational staff was down 2.1% because there were two individuals were budgeted at the wrong a great.

Longevity (9.2% increase) is another of the changes that were made at Fall Town Meeting and and there will be a 0% increase in the Longevity line for FY22. That actually is more reflective of what it was for previous years as you can see that from looking back on the FY19 and FY20 figures for that line item.

Mr. Evans asked for clarification on the budget for purchasing library materials, noting that there is a \$245,000 increase in library materials (or +1.13%) but the town must spend 2.5% to meet MAR requirements for materials purchase. Further, you said the balance to achieve the MAR was from donations and Friends of the Library funds and asked how confident were they that the MAR level can be met, given COVID restrictions that limited fund-raising events. Ms. Sadkin said that she believes they are on track to meet the MAR requirements and the state released a statement saying that the materials expenditure and the open hours requirements are being waived this year due to COVID.

Mr. Evans asked whether given the change in the mix of e-books versus printed material was that reflected in your purchasing decisions and does the Minuteman Library network buy as a group to get better pricing for e-books. Ms. Sadkin said that they purchase materials on based on patron preference and needs and more people are requesting ebooks now. That was the case even before COVID - both books on CD and periodicals, so we are spending more of the library materials budget on ebooks and e-resources. Minuteman purchases them and as a group purchase that is shared between all of the Minuteman libraries. So if you have a Natick library card, you have access to all those e-resources along with all the physical resources. The MIL also does some separate purchases so that Natick residents have a wide variety and don't have to wait so long for the materials because there is such a high demand for these items.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether an analysis of the director position was undertaken that supports the 5% increase, expressing concern that when someone leaves a position that the salary increases. We clearly want to keep up with market conditions and attract and retain talent rather than constantly search for talent because we can't keep up with pay structures.

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Mr. Mazur said that the salary of the previous Director was at the very low end of the scale that the Personnel Director and the Personnel Committee put together and noted that our salary is lower than many comparable libraries. Further, the market is such that you don't have many people applying for jobs. So the Personnel Committee is using the salary range that exists. Right now, we're in the process of interviewing prospective candidates. I think the \$100,000 was a placeholder that the town put in because we don't know yet what the actual salary may be and the fact that it's a standalone line item reflects that. In order to get good talent, there may have to be a different salary. As far as retention, the previous Director was hired as the Library Director in the city of Worcester which is a larger job and has a much higher pay scale than we could offer. So, we're looking at comparable salaries from other libraries and we're finding we may be at a disadvantage. We agree 100% in wanting to retain good people and have been fortunate over the years to be able to do that – this was an unusual circumstance that we just faced. Mr. Townsend agreed that the Library Director position is one of the management positions that are on a pay scale and the previous director was toward the bottom of that pay scale because this was his first Director position. Mr. Townsend noted that it's very hard for us to compete with a larger community like Worcester that can pay a lot more than we can and they got an excellent Director. We settled on the \$100,000 figure as a starting point for the search. If we are not attracting suitable candidates, we will have to revisit that figure.

Mr. Scurlock asked what the average salary for Library Director was in the cohort of libraries that was provided. Mr. Mazur said that this is difficult to pin down given the variation in the number of hours the Director worked (from 32 to 40 hours), even though that's really less than far less than they actually work. So we, along with the Personnel Board are looking not at annual salary but also hourly salary to arrive at a fair amount for the candidate. We know that some of the applicants were making higher than what we were offering.

Mr. Scurlock asked whether the town is meeting the MAR requirements. Mr. Townsend said he sat down with the previous Library Director to calculate what was needed to reach the MAR requirement and determined that the town needed to put an additional \$20,000 into the materials line. Mr. Scurlock asked if the Library Director salary ends up higher than \$100K, would it be possible to reduce the materials line and increase the director line. Mr. Townsend said he is committed to increasing the materials line by \$20,000. If the Director Salary line item needs to be increased, then I'll find that funding elsewhere.

Mr. Evans asked what the timeframe is to make a decision on the salary and hiring of the MIL Director. Mr. Mazur said the screening committee has met and the Trustees have interviewed candidates. The Trustees have an upcoming meeting to talk about the interviews and plan next steps.

BFL Questions

The BFL Director position is now shared with the MIL. The 15.4% increase in salaries are the additional staff hours for technical staff to comply with safety standards of having a minimum of two staff members present during open hours. This increase is an additional 14 hours, split between two part-time staff. Both of those staffers remain below 20 hours per week and are not benefited positions.

Mr. Evans asked for the basis of the 22% increase in the heating line item. Ms. Sadkin said the increase is due to two factors:

- The age of the heating system. Although the town provided BFL with a second-hand heating system a few years back and building maintenance is paid by the BFL Trustees, it requires more maintenance than a newer system might.
- The main cost is the natural gas and oil prices. Mr. Townsend added that DPW has indicated that they are seeing natural gas and oil prices increase and forecast this 22% increase in oil and natural gas prices.

FINAL

Mr. DeLuca noted that the replacement of heating systems would be a capital expense and asked whether the town or the BFL Trustees would be responsible for that capital expense. Ms. Sadkin said it would be the responsibility of the BFL Trustees.

Mr. Evans asked for clarification on the shared programming line item, noting that perhaps for one-third of FY22, in-person programming may not be available which is why it is relatively lower and it will return to shared normal programming levels in FY23. Ms. Sadkin said their best guesstimate is that shared in-person programming will re-start in the fall.

Mr. Pope asked what the cost of shuttle service is to move books between the two libraries faster. Ms. Sadkin said that this is being covered by the bookmobile right now, since patrons cannot go inside the bookmobile because of COVID. It also continues to go to all of its stops and places requested items on a table set outside of the bookmobile to ensure social distancing and safety.

Mr. Pope asked whether the interlibrary transfers would cause the bookmobile budget to increase. Ms. Sadkin said it would not because it's a quick stop right along the route. We've organized it so that it delivers books to the BFL either on the way to one of their stops or on the return trip. Someone from the BFL staff meets the bookmobile driver and safely exchanges the books (new requests & returned requests).

Mr. Mazur cited the following towns in a cohort study from 2018

Town	Population	Library Director Salary
Natick	35,000	\$100,000
Marlborough	39,000	\$105,000
Shrewsbury	36,000	\$106,000
Lexington	33,700	\$128,000
Needham	28,800	\$113,000
Norwood	29,300	\$114,000
Watertown	35,954	\$105,000
Milton	27,592	\$112,000

Mr. Evans moved to recommend approval of the Morse Institute library budget in the amount of \$2,380,653, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 4 – 0 – 0.

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Mr. Evans moved to recommend approval of the Morse Institute library budget in the amount of \$184,520, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, voted 4 – 0 – 0.

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

FINAL

Mr. Evans moved to close the meeting, seconded by Mr. DeLuca, voted 4 – 0 – 0.

- Mr. DeLuca = yes
- Mr. Evans = yes
- Mr. Pope = yes
- Mr. Scurlock = yes