

Minutes of Public Hearing on Reduction in Staff
Kelley Library
Salem, NH
January 11, 2012

Attendees: Library Trustees Martha Breen, Kathleen Norton, and Joan Fardella; library director, Alison Baker, library assistant director, Michele Garneau; eight members of the public.

The public hearing was declared open by Kelley Library Board of Trustees chair, Martha Breen at 5:00 pm for comments from the audience.

1st Speaker identified as James Thomas:

Listed three points for asking for a public hearing on the reduction of two positions in the 2012 library budget:

- 1) the how's and why's of the decision,
- 2) why the trustees didn't fight for the budget cuts as other departments did,
- 3) indicated that it was his opinion that the decision was based on the library director's vindictive, unprofessional and biased treatment of the individual, and initiating further proceedings.

Library board of trustee chair, Martha Breen commented that the trustees were there to receive input from the public.

2nd Speaker identified as James Lombardozzi:

Expressed his dismay at the decision to cut two positions, relating an encounter with a local politician who told him the trustees did not go to the town manager to fight for their employees. Expressed his opinion that Jim and Elizabeth are needed. Appears to him that seniority was not considered when the decision was made, that he was told nine employees were hired after the night custodian.

Asked for an explanation of how someone becomes a library trustee.

Response from library chair was that it is an elected position. Ask for an explanation of how the decision on which positions not to fund was made. Response from library chair was that personnel issues are discussed in non-public meetings by state law. Mr. Lombardozzi then referred to union procedures that take seniority into account. He stated that if he was a union employee here he would ask for a vote of no confidence against the library trustees because it appears to him that the trustees do not stand up for their employees.

3rd Speaker identified himself as Kevin:

Indicated his disappointment in the loss of the night custodian position. Related a personal story of when Jim loaned him an umbrella when he was walking home in an unexpected rain storm, saying Jim was an asset to the library.

Mr. Lombardozzi spoke next on the lack of communication about the reduction in hours due to the reduction in staff. Stated that he wasn't able to find copies of library budgets for recent years, the last found being from 2009. He expressed his concern that he could not find copies of recent town budgets online. He asked where to find minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting

minutes. The response from the library trustee chair was they are posted on the library website as soon as possible after the meeting.

Mr. Thomas returned to the union issue, admitting the library only mirrors SEA, but felt that seniority was not taken into account, stating that nine employees were hired after him and alluding to several other staff members who should have been considered.

Mr. Lombardozi spoke next on the safety of the library being a concern with the elimination of the night custodian, bringing up an incident that happened in the Quiet Study area of the library where two gentlemen almost came to blows over a disagreement, insinuating that the women on staff that night wouldn't have been able to handle the situation. He asked for an explanation of the budget process.

Library trustee chair, Martha Breen explained the budget process saying that the budget has been submitted and approved by the budget committee and will be up for open discussion by Salem residents at the First Deliberative session on February 4, 2012. At that session, residents are able to amend any of the articles to be put on the ballot to be voted on in March. This includes the library budget.

Mr. Thomas expressed displeasure with the town budget procedures, saying much of the decision making takes place behind closed doors without public knowledge. He commented that the library budget is just pushed through by the budget committee with no contest. Mrs. Breen restated that library trustee meetings are open to the public, but there are issues that are discussed in closed, non-public sessions as provided for by NH RSA when discussing personnel issues.

An unidentified speaker commented on the need for the proctor position to control rowdy children after school. Asked why seniority was not taken into consideration when cuts were made, referring to the nine employees hired after the night custodian.

At this point, issues were brought up by the public questioning the budget process being held behind closed doors, secret meetings, and bureaucratic decision-making and other comments unrelated to the purpose of the public hearing. Library trustee chair, Martha Breen restated that the hearing is to get input from the public. She repeated that library trustee meetings are public meetings that anyone can attend, but that personnel issues are discussed, by law, in non-public sessions for privacy. Mr. Thomas gave his opinion that the RSA regarding purpose and holding of non-public meetings did not protect the employee.

Library trustee chair, Martha Breen asked for further comments. Not receiving any, thanked attendees for their input and closed the public hearing at 5:40 pm.