



**Westwood Public Library Update**  
**Lizzy McGovern, Library Director**  
**May 15, 2023**

Staff Development day was a huge success! I received so much positive feedback from staff on the day. They felt seen, heard, and valued. I updated the library's Emergency preparedness document and had it reviewed by Detective Paul Sicard who then attended the day to go over it with staff. Staff were able to ask questions and get answers in real time. We also reviewed how to respond to behavior situations in general and specifically concerning First Amendment Auditors and those who seek to ban or censor books and programs. We also watched a webinar on how to properly back up a coworker when dealing with a difficult situation. I would like to continue this training with a library specific online training academy that covers various topics concerning libraries such as teen behavior, patrons with dementia, when to call the police, homelessness, and more. Staff will be able to go at their own pace and watch these webinars throughout the year. I will work with Department Heads on a schedule so that we are always reviewing this content and not just waiting until once a year to refresh.

The second half of the day consisted of team building and wellness activities to strengthen bonds and give staff a chance to have space to feel refreshed and ready to take on the numerous projects we have planned for the upcoming year. I want to thank the board of Trustees, Danielle Sutton, Paul Sicard, and the library department heads for helping to make the day a success. Staff were so appreciative of having a full day for professional development and wanted to extend their thanks to the board for their ongoing support.

Many staff attended this year's Massachusetts Library Association conference that was held this past week. Most excitedly Suzie Canale and Caroline Tighe presented their Living Library program at the conference. Their session was titled "The Living Library: It's Alive!". I am so proud of both of them and the amount of work that went into this and the amount of work that goes into the living library here at Westwood.

Other sessions that were attended included learning about Library of Things materials, building an effective Library website, programming and policies, library programs for neurodiverse youth and more. It was a great way



to connect with library professionals across the state where we can learn from each other and share ideas and best practices.



### **Wentworth Hall / Islington Branch Library:**

A new drop-in program series was developed by Kristen Barenthaler which will be held on Monday afternoons at the branch and will include games, arts and crafts, legos, and even karaoke! Book clubs are booming with interest in adding to the current offerings.

Children's circulation numbers are slightly rising and this uptick is due to the children's programs being held in the lower level by the Early Childhood Department as kids and their families visit the library before and after the events.

Claire and some of her knitters participated in the Council on Aging and Youth and Family Services Pen Pals program that matches seniors with high school students. The ice cream social was held at the COA this week where participants got to meet in person! We continue to collaborate with town departments to share resources and support the community wherever possible.

## Facilities Update

- At the May 1st Town Meeting, Jimmy received a Capital request for the main library for \$125,000. This will be put towards painting the inside of the main library, upgrading and improving the lighting system, upgrading and fixing the blinds. As Jimmy stated to the Fincoms' Capital Subcommittee, the building is 10 years old and very heavily used by community members so we need to make sure we stay on top of ongoing maintenance and upgrades to keep the state of the art facility at the top of its game.
- We will be having landscaping Spring refresh in the coming weeks and are looking to add umbrellas for outside tables in the back of the library.

## Budget

On May 1st, 2023 residents approved the FY24 operating budget and capital requests. We asked and received a 5% overall increase in our operating budget. The increase is due to both regular salary steps and an increase in the digital content line, Minuteman Membership fee, and additional materials for the branch, to name a few.

Our capital requests for FY24 were:

- \$45,000 for Library Technology: this bundled together three separate funding requests:
  - \$20,000 for new library website
  - \$20,000 for patron/staff technology (upgrade to computers; we put this in every year)
  - \$5000, upgrade network server
- \$50,000 for a Media/Creative Suite. This funding will go towards building out of a space in the AV room to be a podcast booth/media suite. This is a collaboration with Westwood Media Center who will provide the high quality equipment and training for creating and editing podcasting and the like to the public. I am working closely with Melinda Garfield on a plan and will be presenting to the board for review at a future meeting.

The residents voted unanimously to approve the above requests without discussion which goes to show the ongoing support and value the community and town admin has for the library and its services.

**State Aid:** We have begun utilizing State Aid to fulfill unanticipated incidentals that come up through the year that are not covered by the operating budget. Most recently, we used State Aid for Staff Development Day costs (training, branded jackets, team building, and food!). Also, after discussing it with the Chair and town admin, we used State Aid to recognize Terry Duane for her continued diligence and going above and beyond her duties during the last year; specifically during my leave and with the sudden departure of the Head of Tech Services.

With the resignation of June Tulikangas, I would like to take this opportunity to reorganize the department and restructure staffing so that we can work more efficiently and effectively and open up opportunities that would otherwise not be possible. I would also like to bring to the board the potential of State Aid to supplement these changes as we did with the staffing request for the Reference department for FY24. I have begun to discuss these changes with the support from town admin and the chair. More details to follow!

## Poet Laureate Update:

Lucie Sechler, Westwood High School class of 2024, is Westwood's first Youth Poet Laureate. She was formally appointed at the May 8 Westwood Select Board meeting by a unanimous vote. A selection

committee composed of myself, Friends of the Library member and poet Karen Michaelson, and Westwood Poet Laureate Lynne Viti reviewed applications of several applicants and interviewed three finalists before formally recommending Lucie to the Select Board. Her term runs for one year, beginning June 1, 2023.

In choosing Lucie, the committee noted the fine quality of her poetry in her submitted writing sample, her well thought out ideas for bringing more poetry to the town-- especially to elementary school students---and the strong support of her references. A member of the WHS chorus, the Cover to Cover Book Club, Model U.N. and WHS theater productions, Lucie is especially interested in working with elementary school age children in poetry workshops and other poetry-centric events. She will also be reading her poetry at important public events in the town, such as Westwood Day in September, and national and local events on holidays, including Independence Day, Memorial Day, and Town Founding Day.

In her application letter, Lucie wrote,

"Growing up in Westwood, I have been fortunate to witness the unifying force of poetry that lies in the way it highlights the power of small details and fleeting moments. I have been thinking recently about how small things go a long way to strengthen a community because of the Public Speaking and Community Action course I just completed at school, and poetry is the perfect example of this."

Lucie will be working closely with Westwood Poet Laureate Lynne Viti over the next year. Stay tuned for more on upcoming poetry events in town.

Lynne Viti as Poet Laureate will be reading an original poem written in honor of Memorial Day at this year's ceremony which is held on Memorial Day May 29th at 10:30AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lizzy McGovern, Library Director