



**RUSSELL LIBRARY**  
**123 Broad Street, Middletown, CT 06457**  
**Annual Meeting of the Russell Library Company – Preliminary Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 20, 2017**

- I. Call to Order:** President of the Board of Trustees Thazhampallath called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
- II. Welcoming Remarks**

Geen Thazhampallath, President, Russell Library Company Board of Trustees, welcomed the members of the Russell Library Company, saying he was honored to work with the Board of Trustees, and introducing those Board members in attendance. He also thanked the volunteers, Company members, and staff, citing circulation and door count statistics, which are indicative of learning and engagement. Lastly, he recognized the efforts of the Friends of Russell Library for supporting Library programs through book sale fundraising, and recognized the service of Sarah Terrill, who will be stepping down after serving for many years as President of the Friends. President Thazhampallath explained that Library Director and CEO Matt Poland could not be with us due to a death in the family.
- III. Approval of minutes from the 2016 Annual Meeting:** President Thazhampallath asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2016 Russell Company annual meeting; Carolyn Shaw so moved and Andy Becker seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
- IV. Special Presentation:** *The Present & future of Public Library Teen & Children’s Services and What that Means for Russell Library* by Jennifer Billingsley, Director of Youth and Family Learning: Jennifer summarized her background in theater and library work, mentioning that she likes outreach, management, and teenagers. The new title for her position indicates the need to reach out to families and caregivers to reinforce literacy skills, working through library programs and engaging with the many community programs that reach parents and caregivers. Two of the programs that help educate parents are “Babies Need Words Every Day” and “Every Child Ready to Read.” Programs to reach teens and help them succeed in school and in life must bridge the digital and knowledge divide while leveraging their motivation to learn. Summer learning through use of computers, reading buddy volunteer opportunities, and workshops with an artist and a video game developer are planned.
- V. Special Presentation:** *The New Russell Library Organization: How our Patrons and Staff Will Benefit* by Brandie Doyle, Chief Public Services Officer  
Showing slides of the former and the current Russell Library organization charts, Brandie spoke of several reasons for the restructuring. Some library purposes have changed; leadership has been redistributed, involving more staff in decision making; office relocation has resulted in department leaders working close to each other; cross training is allowing staff to work in more than one area and to fill in where needed; there are collaborative systems so that staff can more easily access information from other departments. Benefits from the reorganization include staff promotions, professional development opportunities, scheduling flexibility, and staff having a whole-library perspective. Patrons benefit from staff outreach to the community, access to single-stop assistance as staff learn about other departments, and on-line reservations for museum passes and meeting rooms.

**VI. New Business:**

- a. **Finance Committee:** Andrew E. Becker, Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee, listed three sources of income for the Library. The city of Middletown provides \$2,800,000; the Russell Library Company provides \$180,000 from fines, fees, grants, donations, and its endowment; and the Friends' book sales provide a varying amount each year, from \$20,000 to \$25,000. Members of the Company had questions about the reduced library hours, success in receipt of grants, and the recent fundraising campaign.
- b. **Facilities Committee Report:** Steve Nelson, Chair of the Facilities Committee, noted the experience and talents of Company members and spoke of needing their help and support for the Library. He reported that steps are being taken to make the building more attractive and welcoming. Painting has been completed in many areas, a new phone system is under study, money is being sought to build a consolidated circulation and information desk in the lobby, and there are plans for new carpet, better lighting, and reading nooks.
- c. **Nominating Committee Report:** In the absence of Sowgol Zakarian, President Thazhampallath reported that there are no new Company or Board members to be approved at present. Two Board members are due to be reappointed by the Company, Wendy Berlind and Tisha Zawisky. It was moved (Charlotte McCoid) and seconded (Lisa Santangelo) that these two members be reappointed for a 3-year term. The motion passed unanimously. Geen Thazhampallath and Sowgol Zakarian have been re-appointed to the Board of Trustees by the Common Council. In addition, it was noted that Thomas Russell III will no longer be representing the Russell family on the Board of Trustees, and that his son Thomas Russell IV will be taking over. Tom spoke briefly about his earlier service on the Board, mentioning that he is happy to be returning after taking time out to raise a family.

**VII. Old Business:** There was no old business.

**VIII. Adjournment:** It was moved (Howard Rulnick) and seconded (Carolyn Shaw) to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind, Secretary

These members of the Russell Library Company, volunteers, and staff members were in attendance at the meeting: