

**BETHEL PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL
CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, 06-Nov.-2008**

The Special Centennial Committee Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bethel Public Library was held in Meeting Room A at the Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center November 6, 2008.

Present

Chair Shani-Burke Specht, Library Director Lynn M. Rosato, Director Richard E. Merritt, Children Librarian Joanne Grumman, Volunteer Committee Member Elisa Volpati, Volunteer Committee Rebecca Hussey.

Absent

Director Robert Crnic, Adult Librarian Barbara Van Achterberg, Volunteer Committee Member Wendy Smith, Advisor Doratheia Gulya-Stasney.

Introductions

Chair Shani-Burke Specht introduced the Committee Members and interested attendees.

Public Comments

Soon to be Volunteer Tom Addonizio who will be sworn in to the Centennial Committee on a future date and Library Board of Director Member Gerald Mills provided historical commentary and insight. Their comments will be noted further in the report.

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Shani-Burke Specht called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm and led everyone in the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Correspondence

No correspondence at this time.

Announcements

Shani-Burke Specht handed out a Freedom of Information Commission (FOI) document (see attached) depicting the proper protocol in conducting meeting notifications. Shani also handed out (see attached) a historical overview of the Bethel Library.

Consideration of the Committee Goals and Celebration Activities

Shani-Burke Specht handed out a Centennial Celebration Activities document (see attachments) and asked for further suggestions to be presented at the next meeting.

RECEIVED

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TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

Library Director Lynn Rosato mentioned that a special Centennial Library card could be offered. Details will be worked out later.

Rebecca Hussey suggested that an old book drive would be an excellent fundraiser program.

Lynn Rosato said that the Mom's club wants to sponsor a Read-A Thon to start in the month of January 2009.

Lynn also said that Director Lorraine Go will research former Library Board members over the past 100 years. A book with the member entries could be published and Elisa Volpati said the book should be distributed to the public.

Director Geraldine Mills said that a good resource for this book would be the Bethel Historical Society and also the former First Selectman Charles Steck. Mrs. Mills said a period fashion show (100 years) would be a wonderful idea and the Bethel Historical Society and others could possibly provide period gowns and clothes for the festivities.

Future Centennial Committee member Tom Addonizio commented that suggestions for the celebration come from the Bethel Schools and open up suggestions to the public.

Shani Burke-Specht said that a period book that depicts the 1909 era life would be a good read for the adult and children community.

Chair Burke-Specht set the next meetings to be held at the CJH Municipal Center, Thursdays at 7:30 pm. November 20th, December 11th, and if needed (inclement weather) December 18th.

Shani-Burke Specht moved to adjourn at 8:37 pm. Richard Merritt seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard E. Merritt

**Richard E. Merritt
Centennial Member
Acting Recording Secretary**

NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Type	Notice	Agenda/ Notice Contents	Adding to Agenda/ Notice	Filing Record of Votes	Filing Minutes
Regular	File yearly schedule with Sec'y Of State (state) or Town Clerk (municipal) by Jan. 31 st .**	Agenda available at least 24hrs. before meeting. **	Agenda items may be added by 2/3 vote of those members present and voting.	Within 48 hrs. after meeting (if minutes not available within 48 hours).	Within 7 calendar days after meeting. ***
Special	At least 24 hrs. before meeting, file at Sec'y Of State (state) or Town Clerk (municipal).*	At least 24 hrs. before meeting. Time, place and business must be included in notice.*	Not permitted	Within 48 hrs. after meeting (if minutes not available within 48 hours).	Within 7 business days after meeting.***
Emergency	None required if emergency is justified.	None required if emergency is justified.	Only emergency matters may be considered.	Within 48 hrs. after meeting (if minutes not available within 48 hours).	Within 72 hrs. after meeting. Must state reason for emergency.***

* Available with Sec'y Of State (state) or Town Clerk and in place of business. Also, must be posted on agency website.
 ** Available with Sec'y Of State (state) or Town Clerk and in place of business. Also, must be posted on websites for state agencies only.
 *** Must be posted on agency website.

*Bethel Public Library
Centennial Celebration Activities*

	Activity	Category	Chair
1	100 New Library Cards	Community Outreach	
2	2yrs - 5th Grade Read-a-thon	Fundraising	
3	100 Library Tours	Community Outreach	
4	Community Read	Community Outreach	
5	Community Solicitation Direct Mailing	Fundraising	
6	Monthly "Did you know" Article	History	
7	100 New e-Newsletter Subscribers	Community Outreach	
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15	Library Awareness Day	Community Outreach/History/Fundraising	
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Bethel Public Library
Centennial Celebration Activities

	Activity	Category	Chair
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*Bethel Public Library
Centennial Celebration Activities*

	Activity	Category	Chair
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Bethel Public Library
Centennial Committee

Overview: During the next year (2009), the Town of Bethel will "***Celebrate the Centennial***" of Our Public Library. In 1909 a Bethel resident donated books, personal property and \$2000 to begin the Bethel Free Public Library. As Chair of the Library Board of Directors, I will name a Centennial Committee to plan and implement "A Century of Service" Celebration.

Goals:

1. To investigate, reflect and report on the first 100 years.
2. To set the strategic focus of the Library and its Board of Directors.
3. To Plan and Implement 100 ways to commemorate A Century of Service.
4. To augment the current capital campaign.

Committee Members

The Committee will consist of ~7 members from these groups.

- LBOD
- Library Staff
- Friend of the Library
- Community Members

In addition, numerous volunteers will be called upon to help implement activities.

Time Line

Date	Activity
Sept 2008	• Name the Committee and plan meeting schedule
Oct 2008	• Strategic Plan
Oct –Nov 2008	• Schedule & Assign activities • Get Sponsors
Dec 2008	• Finalize 1 st quarter Activities
Jan-Mar. 2009	• Execute 1 st quarter Activities
Mar 2009	• Finalize 2 nd quarter Activities
Apr – June 2009	• Execute 2 nd quarter Activities
June 2009	• Finalize 3 rd & 4 th quarter Activities
July – Sept 2009	• Execute 3 rd quarter Activities
Oct – Nov 2009	• Plan final Celebration
Oct – Dec 2009	• Execute 4th quarter Activities
Dec 2009	• Execute Final Celebration

Activities Categories & Examples

- 1) Community Outreach
 - a. Sign up 100 new Patrons (new Library Cards) each quarter.
 - b. Sign up 100 new e-newsletter subscribers.
 - c. Make a Library Services Presentation to 100 citizens who are members of community organizations.
 - d. Read 100 books in 2009.
- 2) History of the Library
 - a. Publish a Monthly article in Local papers and on-line re: the history of the Library.
 - b. Make Posters of the 100s—1st 100 books, videos, patrons, etc.
- 3) Fundraising
 - a. Goal to collect 100,000 each month. (Total fundraising activities.)
 - b. Town wide mailing
 - c. Events
 - i. Kids Read-a-thon—100 books read \$1/book, co-sponsored by the Mom's club.
 - ii. Tours

in 1915, most of whom had gone through eight years of Bethel's elementary schools. In 1965 there was a reunion of this class, when members of this class came from all over the country to attend.

A large addition to this building was built in 1926 at a cost of \$26,000, but the increase in population made it necessary to build a new and larger structure. This was built in the 1930's under the W.P.A. The old building on South Street was converted into a firehouse and was used as such until 1965 when the new firehouse was built. The old high school which had been converted was then demolished.

The new school was built at Library Place, and a new street to be named School Street was constructed. This building served the community, until still another high school was built on the Whittlesey property. This 3½ million dollar school was put into use in March, 1970.

The purchase, by the town, of the 119 acre tract from the Whittlesey family was a giant step toward providing sufficient land centrally located for Bethel's educational complex.

About twenty years previous, 1947, a smaller piece of property in this same area had been acquired for the erection of the Frank A. Berry elementary school.

When the new High School was built in 1970, the former high school on School Street was put into operation as a "Middle School". It was soon necessary to build a third school, the Anna Rockwell School, as Bethel's population continued to increase. This was built on the Judd Avenue (Whittlesey property) in 1971.

The names of the two newest elementary school buildings were named after two of Bethel's best known educators. Frank A. Berry was principal of the oldest High School and later became Superintendent of Schools, in which capacity he served for many years. The Anna H. Rockwell School was named after Mrs. Frank Rockwell, who taught in the one room Plumtrees School for forty three years. Mrs. Rockwell was guest of honor at a dinner in December, 1956 when she retired.

Another educator with a long term of service, Ralph M. T. Johnson came to Bethel in 1943 as High School principal, in which capacity he served for three years, and then served as Superintendent of Schools until his retirement in 1962.

These people and many others have served over the years. Many of our teachers were residents of Bethel, and a number still live in Bethel in retirement. A heartfelt thank you should go out to all these people who prepared Bethel's children to go out into the world.

Bethel Public Library

A meeting held November 8, 1909, established the Library. Wm. P. Bailey was elected chairman and William A. Gilbert clerk.

It was voted to adopt by-laws for the operation of the library, and that two hundred dollars annually be paid by the town toward its expense. That there be

twelve directors, and that suitable rooms be provided to house it.

It was also voted that the directors be authorized to receive from the Borough of Bethel, the books and other property bequeathed to said Borough by Miss Maria Parloa to be used as a part of the free public library.

The following directors were elected for one year: H. H. Woodman, C. R. Morse, H. A. Gilbert and Rev. W. I. Bowman; for two years, Rev. Henry Macbeth, Rev. William Kiernan, Horace L. Shepard and Rev. H. O. Judd; for three years Rev. A. T. Steele, William P. Bailey, W. E. Andrews and John Melvin.

It was also voted to instruct the directors to take steps for the organization of a ladies auxiliary of the library.

On November 13, 1909, the Board of Directors elected officers as follows: Cady R. Morse, Chairman, Horace L. Shepard, Secretary and Howard H. Woodman, Treasurer. A committee on by-laws was also elected, and a temporary building committee appointed. By-Laws were adopted and the report of the building committee accepted on November 20, and on November 29 the executive committee was instructed to hire rooms for the library from F. E. Tomlinson, commencing December 1, at a rental of three dollars per month.

The library was to be kept open two hours in the afternoon and two in the evening on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Miss Marie Macbeth was appointed librarian.

In February 1910, it was voted to seek larger quarters, and on March 15th, four rooms were rented at 19 Fountain Place (now P. T. Barnum Sq.) from a Mr. Kroff for six dollars a month, where the library was moved April 28, 1910.

An appropriation was made in May of one hundred dollars for new books. Three hundred dollars received from the Ladies Auxiliary was deposited in a building fund.

Plans for acquiring property on Center Street (now Greenwood Ave.) from Ursula Benedict were started in August, 1912. Price of the property to be six thousand dollars, of which two thousand would be donated to the library by the Benedict family. It was decided to form an incorporated association to acquire the property.

A resolution was adopted "That the Directors of the Bethel Public Library place on record their sincere and grateful appreciation of this generous action and direct that copies of this resolution be sent to Miss Ursula E. Benedict, Rev. Arthur Benedict, and Dr. Frank A. Benedict individually by the secretary".

On June 24, 1914, the following preamble and resolution was unanimously adopted. "WHEREAS: The Rev. L. Clark Seelye, D.D., Thomas Seelye and all the other legatees under the will of the late Hannah H. Seelye, have most generously offered to present to the town of Bethel, the homestead and all the land connected therewith of the late Hannah H. Seelye under conditions that the house thereon or any building erected in its place with enough land surrounding the same to meet the approval of the donors, shall be held in perpetuity for library purposes and a perpetual memorial of the late Seth and Abigail Seelye, the parents and

from Bethel, Edward J. Gallagher became chairman. In 1967, Mr. Gallagher was appointed Administrator of the Library and Erwin Rankin chairman of the Board.

The following persons have served as librarians since 1909: Miss Marie Macbeth, Mrs. P. J. Garvin, Harold Patchen, Miss Alice Serre, Mrs. Frances Coulter, Miss Catherine McLachlan, Mrs. Robert Keeler, Mrs. Katherine LaValla, Mrs. Albert Carey, Mrs. Katherine Hodgson, Mrs. Marsden Shaw, Mrs. John Gallagher, and Mrs. Anna Marie Costello Carey.

In 1967, a new wing was added to the library. The quarters provided by the old building had become cramped. It was estimated that there were at least 4,000 book borrowers due to the increase in Bethel's population. Under the direction of Edward J. Gallagher, who had served for 15 years on the Library Board, and due to his persistence, the town's fathers agreed to the addition. The Board of Finance allotted \$148,000 for its construction. The final cost was \$186,000 of which \$53,000 was received from federal funds, \$38,000 from the library's endowment funds and \$95,000 from the town.

Mention should be made of the Huntington Sculpture standing at the entrance of the new wing. It is a statue of Abraham Lincoln reading a book on horseback. It was a gift of Mrs. Anna Hyatt Huntington, famous sculptor of Redding, Conn., and was publicly dedicated April 2, 1967.

According to the records, the following bequests have been made to the library.

1909	Maria Parloa	\$2,000.00
1911	Frances Seeley	\$25.00
1914	Sally Cole	\$100.00
1917	Frances Gilbert	\$800.00
1925	Carrie Sherman	\$45.97
1925	J. L. Shepard	\$217.12
1931	Sidney Smith	\$9,120.00
1950	Flora Young	\$100.00
1950	Wm. Gilbert	\$500.00
	Alfred C. Howell	\$1,000.00

Other gifts include \$1,000 from the Bethel Lions Club

gift in memory of Mrs. Florence Hunt Howell

gift in memory of Mrs. Katherine Hodgson

gift of art books by Alfred C. Howell

Ladies Library Auxiliary

On December 10, 1909, a ladies auxiliary was formed and the following officers were elected: Mrs. Robert C. Keeler, President; Mrs. H. L. Slack, Vice President; Frances P. Coulter, Secretary and Mrs. Cady R. Morse, Treasurer.

A drive was immediately started to secure books from the people of Bethel. Solicitors were appointed to canvass every street in town.

They report that the formal opening of the new library took place in rooms over a store on Center Street (now Greenwood Ave.). A parlor room was also provided, adjoining the library room by Mr. and Mrs. E. Tomlinson.

A Danbury News Times tribute December 29, 1941, to Mrs. Jennie A. Keeler who had served as president of this organization since 1909 and on the Board of Directors since 1938, said:

"No adequate payment could have been given for the services of Mrs. Keeler rendered so faithfully, so lovingly, so unostentatiously, nor any estimate be made of the riches her devotion contributed to the work."

To Mrs. Keeler and the other members of the Ladies Auxiliary goes much of the credit for the organization and development of Bethel's Library of which all Bethel can be proud.

Compiled from notes loaned by Katherine LaValla

Seelye Family

The Family history started with Robert Seelye who sailed from the Isle of Wright, England in 1630 as Captain of one of the eleven vessels of John Winthrop's fleet. He landed with his wife, his servant, and two sons and made his home in Watertown, Mass.

His descendents brought up large families of children, some of whom settled in New Haven, Fairfield and Danbury.

The seventh generation concerns the family of Laureus Clark Seelye. The third son, Nathan Seelye was born in 1766 in Stratford and married Hannah Hawley in 1790. The third of eight sons, Seth was born in 1795, and was the father of Laureus C. Seelye.

Seth's wife, Abigail Taylor, had a background of the same type as his own, reaching back through seven generations of Connecticut Puritans to John Taylor who, with his wife, Rhoda, came from England in 1639 and settled in Windsor. Abigail had a sister who married the scholar and philosopher Laurens I. Hickok.

The children of Seth and Abigail numbered ten as recorded in the family Bible.

Thomas Taylor	born Aug. 23, 1818 died Feb. 6, 1890
Thomas Benedict	born Aug. 18, 1820 died June 16, 1823
Samuel Taylor	born Oct. 24, 1822 died Feb. 24 1902
Julius Hawley	born Sept. 14, 1824 died May 12, 1895
Henry Eckford	born June 20, 1827 died Aug. 17, 1913
Elizabeth Benedict	born Aug. 27, 1829 died Feb. 22, 1880
Abigail Clark	born Aug. 27, 1831 died Sept. 1833
Hannah Hawley	born Dec. 20, 1833 died June 9, 1912
Laureus Clark	born Sept. 20, 1837 died Oct. 12, 1924
A daughter	born May 1839

The little house in which Seth and Abigail first took up housekeeping was on the site of the present homestead, surrounded by wide acres of wildland, field and pasture. Some of the acres were Abigail's inheritance from her father and the rest was acquired by Seth, who had a keen eye for business along with his silent

AMENDED ORDINANCE RE TERMS OF LIBRARY BOARD DIRECTORS

BE IT ORDAINED by the Selectmen of the Town of Bethel that pursuant to Title 9 Sections 164, 207, and 208 of the Connecticut General Statutes, Revision of 1958 as amended in 1967, all existing terms of Library Board Directors shall terminate on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, 1969 and at the municipal biennial election to be held in 1969, five directors of the Free Public Library Board of Directors of the Town of Bethel shall be elected for a term of six years each, five directors for a term of four years each, and five directors for a term of two years each, and biennially thereafter five directors shall be elected for a term of six years each. All contrary ordinances are repealed.

This amended ordinance shall become effective on the date of publication in a local newspaper.

Dated at Bethel, Connecticut this 13th day of February, 1969.

GEORGE T. BIRDALL

CHARLES S. GILLOTTI

EDGAR C. PLATT, JR.

Board of Selectmen of the
Town of Bethel

House Bill No. 1626

(391)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE POWERS AND DUTIES
OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE BETHEL FREE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Board of Directors of the Bethel free public library shall have exclusive supervision, care and custody of the grounds, rooms, buildings and equipment of such library. Any person desiring to make any gift for the benefit of the Bethel free public library may vest the title to such donation in said Board of Directors to be held and controlled according to the terms of the gift of such property, and said board shall be special trustee thereof. Such Board of Directors shall also be special trustee of and shall manage and control all devises, bequests or gifts made to the town of Bethel for the establishment, increase or maintenance of the Bethel free public library.

Approved June 18, 1953

Vol. 23.

TO ALL PEOPLE TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME- Greeting-
 Know Ye, that We, L. Clark Seelye of Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts
 and Thomas T. Seelye of the City, County and State of New York, Executors of the
 the last will and testament of Hannah H. Seelye late of the Town of Bethel,
 County of Fairfield, State of Connecticut, deceased, under and by virtue of
 the authority contained in said will and by virtue of the written consent of
 of the heirs of the said Hannah H. Seelye under said will, as appears from the
 the records of the Probate Court for the District of Bethel, for and in con-
 sideration of the acceptance by the said Town of Bethel, of the trust herein
 after contained, do grant, bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Town of
 Bethel, all the right, title, interest, claim and demand which the said Hannah
 H. Seelye had at the time of her decease in and to the following described
 land with the buildings thereon situated on Center Street in said Town of
 Bethel, bounded on the North and West by land of The New York, New Haven and
 Hartford Railroad Company, on the East by land of Jennie T. Andrews, land owned
 jointly by Mary E. and Georgia A. McGregor, land of Samuel M. Hayercraft and land
 of Daisy L. Miller, each in part, and on the South by land of Julia E. Cole, land
 of Hannah A. Ree, land of Daisy L. Miller and by said Center Street, containing
 three acres, more or less.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above granted and bargained premises and the appur-
 tenances thereof unto the said grantee or its successors IN TRUST for the
 purposes following, viz.,-

To hold and use that portion of said premises with the dwelling house there
 on as is contained within the following bounds-

Commencing at the southeast corner of the above described tract at its inter-
 section with said Center Street, running Westerly along said Center Street
 275 feet, thence northerly through said tract 250 feet, thence running east-
 erly through said tract 138½ feet to land of said Daisy L. Miller, thence run-
 ning southerly along said land of said Daisy L. Miller 275 feet to the point
 or place of beginning.

FOR THE SOLE AND EXCLUSIVE PURPOSE OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY, with power to use
 the land on the east side of the dwelling house as a site for a Town Hall
 provided it shall not be located within 69½ feet of said dwelling house or
 any future Library building.

The remaining portion of the premises herein conveyed to be held as library
 property with power on the part of said grantee to sell the same at any
 time and to hold the proceeds of the sale thereof in trust for the maintain-
 ence and support of said Public Library.

Reference being had to a map of said property on file in the office of the
 Town Clerk in the Town of Bethel for a more particular description of the
 same.

At a regularly warned meeting held in the Town Hall on Monday evening, November 8, 1909 at 8 o'clock, William P. Bailey was elected chairman and William A. Gilbert, clerk.

The warning was read and accepted as read.

Voted. That the following by-laws of the Town are hereby adopted, to be known as the public Library by-laws.

- I. (a) A public library is hereby established, which shall, under the proper regulations to be adopted by the directors, be free to all the inhabitants of this town.

(b) The number of directors of the public library shall be ten.

(c) The town treasurer is authorized to receive such sums as may from time to time be paid to the town for library purposes, and to pay the sums upon the order of the library committee.

(d) The amount which shall be annually expended by the town for the maintenance and increase of the public library shall be \$200.00 to be paid by the town treasurer upon the order of the directors of the public library.
- II. That \$200.00 is hereby appropriated out of the funds in the hands of the treasurer for the establishment of a public library and the treasurer is directed to pay such money and any other money available for library purposes to any person authorized by the directors of the public library to receive it.
- III. That the directors are authorized to provide a suitable room or rooms for the public library.
- IV. That the directors of the public library are hereby authorized to receive from the Borough of Bethel the books and other property bequeathed to said Borough by Miss Maria Parloa and are authorized to accept the same as a part of the free public library.
- V. The directors are authorized to arrange with the officials of said borough for the placing of said books and other property in said public library and the directors are also authorized to agree to assume the care and custody of said books and property so long as they are permitted to use them in the same manner as the books and property of the public library.
- VI. That this meeting proceed to the election of four directors to hold office until the next annual town meeting, and four until the third annual town meeting thereafter.