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PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Division for Equity and Social Justice

After a two years-long process, the Ad Hoc Human Rights committee recommended the creation of a dedicated Division for Equity and Social Justice with funding for a paid Director to be added to the structure of the Reading Public Library. The proposal has the support of a broad swath of the town, citizens, committees, the police, clergy - it is very specific to the needs of this town as seen by concerned citizens. As many will recall, this result followed a number of public, highly visible hate/racist acts. While these actions may no longer be as visible to many in the community, they continue and their negative impacts are felt around the town and by individuals whether or not it is officially reported.

The Reading Public Library is an institution central to the town; it belongs to and welcomes all. Situating a new Division for Equity and Social Justice will ensure programming and guidance that can reach all residents regardless of age, wealth, or education status.

The library thanks the Reading community for engaging in a thoughtful and thorough conversation around this new Division and moving forward with the position.

Library Trustee and former member of the Ad Hoc Human Rights committee, Andrew Grimes said, "I would like to thank the Town of Reading and their representatives in Town Meeting for approving funding for this position in the 2022 budget." He believes that the new division and position is critical. "This will give the town a dedicated resource to help address one of the most critical issues facing our society today. The budget support demonstrates that our community recognizes that promotion of justice and equity are core functions of our town and the government we create to oversee it."

New Library Trustee Monique Pillow Gnanaratnam added support and commitment saying, "The fact that Reading engaged in this discussion and process illustrates an investment for our town. It places us in line with many communities that are choosing to evolve in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Opportunities for integral community conversation, support, and engagement are a good thing."

The Ad Hoc Human Rights Committee, co-chaired by Select Board Members Carlo Bacci and Anne Landry, brought the proposal to the Board of Library Trustees in December 2020. At that time, the Library Trustees voted to accept the responsibility and went to work refining details of a proposed job description and adding the position to the FY22 Budget. The Director of Equity and Social Justice was one of two new positions Town Manager Bob LeLacheur in the FY22 balanced budget presented to the Finance Committee early this spring. On March 17, 2021, FINCOM voted unanimously to approve the FY22 budget that was then approved on Thursday, May 6 at Town Meeting.

After successful budget passage, Select Board Member, Anne Landry praised the process and the outcome saying, "I appreciate Town Meeting's expression of support for the critical work of equity and social justice in our community. It will take a village to support and make this position a success and one that will meet the needs of our community as they evolve. I look forward to working together with the Director and community members to ensure that Reading is a community where ALL members may feel a sense of belonging- and to working with all members of our community and Town Meeting to meet our community's varied needs. I commend and am grateful for the Library's willingness to take on this leadership role in our community."

There are several ways to stay informed and connect with the Board of Library Trustees. Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of every month. Due to Town Meeting, the next Board of Library Trustees meeting will be held on Monday, May 17 at 7 pm.

Public comment is welcome at rpltrustee@noblenet.org or rdgadmin@noblenet.org. Meeting minutes are located on the Town of Reading website and linked here: <https://www.readingpl.org/about-2/board-of-trustees/>. Virtual meetings have been recorded via RCTV: <https://www.youtube.com/c/RCTVStudios/search?query=board%20of%20library%20trustees>

We look forward to more engagement with the community and are excited to work with the Board of Library Trustees to begin the search process in finding a Director for Equity and Social Justice.

Thank you.

Amy Lannon, Director
Reading Public Library