MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Tuesday October 13, 2026 (DRAFT)

PRESENT: Jill Adams
Caroline Brancatella
Laura DiBetta
Katie McNamara
Mark Kissinger
Sarah Patterson
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED: Gail Sacco

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Chris McGinty, assistant director/Public Services
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jen Crawford, confidential secretary
Mary Service
Claire Crawford
Bruce Phillips
Lynne Lenhardt
Rose Marie Carey
Ronnie Blendell
Jane O'Neill
Mary Bigelow
Nan Rabinow
Barbara Kavanagh
Maryalice Svare

President C. Brancatella called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

One member of the public addressed the board. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday September 14 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

DRAFT

S. Whiting presented her report.

- She noted that the auditor's report will take place in November and will be a relatively brief outline as the document is quite extensive.
- L. DiBetta asked about the $11,000 payment to Solutions by Design. T. Choppy said that was for the replacement of WiFi transmitters around town that had reached end of life.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 September 2026 (Checks disbursed in August 2026 based on pre-approval $61,284.27; Checks disbursed in August 2026 relating to payroll $225,878.70; Checks being submitted for approval $55,095.37; Checks being submitted for approval – Capital Project Fund $2,340.98; Total: $344,599.32).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. There were no requested actions. C. Brancatella noted the two positions that are on hold.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The board noted the director's report.

- The library will be conducting an accessibility audit in November because, while it meets ADA standards, that does not mean the same as accessible friendly. M. Kissinger asked if it would include the parking lot. G. Kirkpatrick said that it does, along with the approaches and doors, as well as shelving.
- The restarted story times are already seeing good attendance.
- There has been some discussions with the middle school and Parks and Recreation about how to provide after school opportunities for tweens and younger teens, and to find out what they are looking for. There was some talk about the Pit, the now closed space at the middle school. J. Adams said she was glad there is interest from all of the organizations. L. DiBetta said it would be great if the school could push some of the libraries after school programs.
- Facebook is now limiting the number of links organizations can include in their posts without paying a monthly fee. The fee is currently too high to justify the service, but there is some talk that nonprofits and government organizations may get an exemption or a different pricing structure.
- L. DiBetta thanked C. McGinty for compiling the data from the kids' survey.

UHLS REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said the UHLS board is currently focusing a lot of attention on construction grant allocation. He also noted that the longtime head of IT at UHLS is retiring, and G. Kirkpatrick is on the search committee.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said the Friends' fall book sale was very successful, bringing in about $8,300. She thanked the volunteers, especially organizers Barbara Kling and Claire Crawford, for all their work. She said the Friends will also be holding a small-scale book sale in January. In honor of National Friends of Libraries Week, J. Adams presented a resolution recognizing the Friends for their support. A video highlighting the Friends will shared the following week.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously approved a resolution recognizing the Friends of Bethlehem Public Library for their ongoing support of the library.

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NEW BUSINESS

LGS-1 records retention schedule and subject matter list

G. Kirkpatrick said the library first adopted a records retention schedule in 2019, and adopted the LGS-1 standard in 2020. A copy of the LGS-1 is available on the library website. G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to renew the LGS-1 and approve a subject matter list that outlines the type of records the library keeps and what can be FOILed by the public. He said that going forward, those renewals will be part of the library's annual authorizations. M. Kissinger asked whether certain types of files, such as whistleblower files and benefit leave files, can be requested. C. Brancatella said the list includes what can be requested, but those requests are still subject to FOIL guidelines. G. Kirkpatrick said that the library tries to include as many of those documents online as possible so that they are available without the need to FOIL.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously recertified the LGS-1 as the official records retention schedule for the library.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously approved the subject matter list related to the records retention schedule.

IDA/PILOT

G. Kirkpatrick said the library received notice from the IDA that there would be some language changes to the tax exemption/PILOT agreement. He responded and noted that should there be PILOT negotiations, the library is a party and expects to be a part of the process. He also said that if the library were deemed an exempt special district (like fire and water), they would expect tax receipts for that portion. He did not receive a response. He told the board that the library is entitled to be part of PILOT agreements, but the school district would not be negotiating on the library's behalf.

As a note of history, C. Brancatella said that last year the library negotiated a PILOT agreement. Before that, the library had an MOU with the school district that they would negotiate on our behalf. There is no longer an MOU with the school district. Now as other PILOTs could come up, different districts in the town are going to be exempted and get their money from tax dollars. She said the problem is the language changes to the agreement don't say what is happening to the library, and there is some concern that it would fall into a gray area. The IDA wasn't open to changing the language, she noted, and in the absence of specific language in the law, it would be a good idea for the board to remind everyone where we are to make sure the library's voice is represented. She suggested that board members make themselves aware of new PILOT programs and have a presence at IDA meetings. L. DiBetta said she wouldn't want the library to be left out of everything or some other entity getting money that should be going to the library. C. Brancatella suggested a rotating schedule of monitoring IDA activity.

Delmar Progress Club meeting room request

G. Kirkpatrick said that the Delmar Progress Club has requested an exemption to the meeting room policy to have the library block out a regular meeting for them in the Community Room at a fixed day of the week/month and time from 9 a.m.-noon.

J. Adams said that one of the constraints is the popularity of the early literacy programs in the morning and asked if there was another daytime block that would be more convenient and not conflict with library programs. G. Kirkpatrick said that Fridays would be the most available.

L. DiBetta said that she would prefer not to grant an exemption to the policy, but would consider discussing what would be considered an affiliated entity. G. Kirkpatriack said that currently, The Friends of Bethlehem Public Library are the only library-affiliated group. The board discussed exemption versus affiliation. C. Brancatella said she would prefer to not create an exemption because it weakens the policy. She asked how the board would determine who becomes an affiliated entity. M. Kissinger said he was open to exploring an exemption or affiliation and noted that the board had agreed to regularly review the meeting room policy.

C. Brancatella said that if the board were to consider a group an affiliated entity, she would want to look at its bylaws and purpose to be sure their missions were aligned. She noted that the Friends do a lot to support the library. She proposed that the board review and circulate a copy of the Friends agreement and a formal request to the Progress Club for their bylaws, as well as a proposal of what they were seeking.

M. Kissinger said he wasn't sure what possible negatives could come from granting an exemption. G. Kirkpatrick said there could be backlash from other groups not granted the same consideration. M. Kissinger said he was prepared to deal with that. C. Brancatella said that she was concerned that an arbitrary exemption to policy could damage board credibility. L. DiBetta wanted to make sure that library programming takes precedence.

The board discussed the history of the demand for library meeting space, noting that it has become increasingly sought after as there is no availability at other public venues. M. Kissinger said that other town entities have walked away from the problem leaving the library alone to solve it. J. Adams said it underscores how space is a true need in the community.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

59 Borthwick demolition project update

G. Kirkpatrick said the building permit application has been submitted, and he is expecting to have a permit issued shortly, at which point demolition can move forward.

Long Range Plan Committee report

C. Brancatella noted that the board passed the first part of the long-range plan in August, and she presented the second part, which covers specific action items, to the board for a first read. She said the committee is seeking feedback from the full board. G. Kirkpatrick said he was specifically interested in whether there were any things that were not included that should be.

M. Kissinger said he had some questions about who identifies unrepresented voices and suggested some wording changes to the section about media literacy.

K. McNamara said that she would like to see a yearly Community Day included in the plan.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously voted to enter into executive session at 7:44pm regarding the employment history of a particular individual.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously voted to leave executive session at 8:05pm.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by K. McNamara, the board unanimously voted to provide salary adjustments for certain staff as presented by the director.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:07pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president

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