

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday June 14, 2021

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Harmeet Narang

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator

*All present via Zoom broadcast live on YouTube and the library website.

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 5:59pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 10 May 2021 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond.

Minutes of the 20 May 2021 Long Range Plan committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her treasurer's report and noted \$500,000 in projected savings for the year. Salary and benefits savings in the 2020-21 fiscal year accounted for about 38% of the total savings, with a 17% savings in library materials. She added that \$105,000 in capital expenditures line was not used in 2020-21. She said she would provide additional year-end details at the July board meeting once the fiscal year wrapped up.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the projected \$500,000 in year-end savings was higher than it would be in a non-pandemic year. S. Whiting said that it was, with it being in the neighborhood of \$200,000-\$300,000 in a typical year. She noted that one of the reasons for that was because the library has a budget line for capital expenditures, which hasn't been used for any major projects in a couple of years. She also said that there are generally some staffing savings every year, and the library has taken steps in next year's budget to make a more conservative estimate that still accounts for turnover, bringing the budgeted amount closer to the actual amount.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she found it interesting that the library budget is developed to anticipate \$200,000-\$300,000 in savings every year and likes the idea of budgeting as close to zero without jeopardizing library operations. G. Kirkpatrick said it is something for the board to think about as they finish up the Long Range Planning process, including the plan for spending the money, as well as the board's philosophy on whether they want to accrue a surplus each year to pay for projects or create a budget that has a surplus close to zero and go out to bond for any big capital projects.

M. Redmond asked the board if they preferred receiving the detailed expenditure report every month or quarterly. S. Whiting said she'd be happy to provide it monthly.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 May 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$25,725.86; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$118,554.78; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$198,511.04; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$342,791.68).

S. Whiting noted that the yearly audit with Marvin and Co. is coming up. She said that it would be the third year working with them, and she will be reaching out to see if there's anything she can prepare ahead of time to help them get a jump start.

M. Redmond asked if there had been any movement on an RFP for auditors and whether the library has another year with Marvin and Co. under the initial agreement. S. Whiting said the library could continue with Marvin and Co. without an RFP and would just need to negotiate a new agreement. M. Redmond asked the board if they were OK with proceeding without an RFP and said that she has been happy with Marvin and Co.'s service. S. Whiting said it is not generally a good idea to switch auditors too frequently as it can be a red flag. She noted that if the library was looking for a fresh perspective, they can always switch up the lead auditor.

Investment presentation

S. Whiting shared an investment presentation that reviewed the library's investment policy that was overhauled a couple of years ago and outlined some recommendations for moving forward with the purchase of treasuries and/or CDs should those investments become more attractive in the future.

Her recommendations:

- Monitor interest rates at least quarterly and report to the board.
- In consultation with the Finance Committee, take advantage of opportunities in the market as they present themselves.
 - Explore the purchase of T-Bills with KeyBank, once rates increase.

- Consider purchasing CDs from banks authorized by the investment policy, once rates become more attractive.

M. Kissinger asked if it would make sense to explore purchasing CDs at this time to see how it works or if the paperwork would even be worth it considering the low rates right now. S. Whiting said there would be some paperwork involved if the library wanted to purchase them through a new bank. She said purchasing from TD Bank would be easy but the interest rates are so low that it wouldn't make sense. M. Redmond said the current agreement with TD was negotiated, but if the board decides that diversification is important, they may need to consider other banks. S. Whiting said the board could try an investment in the amount of \$250,000 to get a feel for the process, but the board ultimately decided against it as long as the library is ready to move if the rates pick up.

PERSONNEL REPORT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved a new hire for the following vacancies, pending Civil Service approval:

- Librarian I, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$53,373/annual or per contract
- Library Clerk, part-time, permanent, \$13.89/hour or per contract

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The board noted the director's report. Additional items:

- K. Coffey is working to get quotes for a door awning to protect people providing curbside pickup service in inclement weather, but the construction industry is overwhelmed right now, leading to some delays.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that now that the library is open, curbside service will be halted during inclement weather, especially lightning, to keep the staff safe.
- G. Kirkpatrick said a special thank you to the temporary librarians who started in the middle of the pandemic and helped with staffing shortages and to the board for approving those positions.
- The library has been getting quotes for a new book drop. The cost is around \$10,000, and a bigger size than the current one is being looked at. The return shed is still being used, and the library has looked into pouring a larger concrete pad where the old return box sits, but there aren't any contractors available. G. Kirkpatrick said the old book drop is rotting away and needs to be replaced, but staff will continue to find a workable solution in the interim.
- The new cash register is now accepting money and credit card transactions for lost materials, so it will be ready for when fines return in July.
- There is a new mobile app on the way, and one of the key features may be the ability to scan and check out books with a smartphone.
- The May stats showed some good increases for e-audio over last year. There was a slight drop in e-books and streaming video as people have more entertainment options than this time last year.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said the annual celebration was held the previous week, and there was a link available to watch it for those who couldn't make it. She said the Youth and Family Program award went to Voorheesville and the Adult Program award went to RCS.

NEW BUSINESS

Investments policy

M. Kissinger noted that there was one small wording change to the policy, as well as the addition of a line that noted investment reports would be furnished to the board monthly.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the update to the library's Investments policy.

Community participation in library board meetings policy

M. Kissinger presented the policy and noted the change from "citizen" to "community," as well as the speaking time being extended to 30 minutes. The policy also clears up how community members can get in touch with the board.

L. Scoons asked if the policy could include an option to e-mail. G. Kirkpatrick said a link to the director's e-mail form could be included in the policy. The board agreed to add it.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously approved the update to the library's Community Participation in Library Board Meetings policy with the noted revision.

Updates to phased reopening plan

G. Kirkpatrick said the library continues to proceed toward normalization through its phased reopening. He discussed plans for mask guidelines and ending scheduled work from home shifts. Staff have been told that even when masks are no longer required, they may continue wearing them. He said the library is planning for limited indoor public meetings in the future. He noted that the community room no longer serves as a workspace for staffers and has been cleaned in preparation for the upcoming board meeting. G. Kirkpatrick said he appreciates that the board has allowed the library to move in a graduated way to give staff time to acclimate to each new phase.

In-person/hybrid board meeting – logistics

G. Kirkpatrick said staffers were currently trying to figure out the technology involved in a hybrid in-person and remote board meeting and asked the board their thoughts.

M. Redmond said she was looking forward to meeting again in person and supports a hybrid model. C. Brancatella said it would be nice to have a hybrid option for a while. M. Walsh said she was in favor of meeting in person. She noted that if masks are required, it would make it difficult to hear. L. Scoons said she was in favor of meeting in person, and C. Wijeyesinghe said she would love to meet in person. M. Kissinger said, based on the board members' opinions, a hybrid meeting was the way to go.

G. Kirkpatrick said library architect Paul Mays would be at the July meeting, and staffers would continue to investigate how to handle the sound and video stream for a hybrid meeting. M. Kissinger said that if it can be figured out, the board would do a hybrid

meeting in July. C. Wijeyesinghe said sound amplification would help. M. Redmond asked what the hybrid meeting would mean for public participation and how soon other groups would be allowed to meet at the library. G. Kirkpatrick said the public could still comment via email, and the library is awaiting further guidance on outside meetings.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the proposed updates to the library's phased reopening plan.

Cyberliability insurance

The board discussed this type of insurance last year, but ransomware attacks have become more frequent in recent months, even targeting a local school district and smaller library. G. Kirkpatrick said that although there are some structural advantages with a majority of the library's user and financial data already protected, there is some data the library would be loath to lose.

C. Brancatella said she supports the purchase of cyberliability insurance as ID theft and ransomware attacks are a much more rampant problem than a year ago. M. Redmond said that it makes a lot more sense to be considering it now. L. Scoons said she felt the cost is minimal compared to what it is buying for the library. M. Walsh agreed that things have changed since the last time the board discussed the topic. She said there seemed to be a range of prices quoted and wasn't sure if the library needed the highest coverage available. G. Kirkpatrick said he would work with the insurance broker to see what was involved. C. Wijeyesinghe said she would like to see more specific information and a recommendation.

Hoopla monthly limit increase

M. Redmond had a request from a patron about expanding the monthly download limits in one of the library's streaming services. There is now the option for individual libraries to increase their limits for Hoopla, a pay-per-use service with a current limit of 5 that was agreed upon by the Upper Hudson libraries when the service was first introduced at the beginning of the pandemic. G. Kirkpatrick said he would like to meet the higher level of service expectation of Bethlehem patrons and expand that limit to 10. He estimates the change would cost the library about \$1,500 more each month. M. Kissinger asked if there was a way to get data on the percentage of people who request more than 5 items.

Five Rivers WiFi

Five Rivers has installed a new outdoor classroom and asked if the library would be willing to extend WiFi service out to the new construction. To do so would involve extensive trenching and cabling. G. Kirkpatrick has reached out to pursue funding through elected officials because it is a unique partnership between the library and the DEC. He asked the board if they would be interested in covering the cost of the work or if they would prefer to wait and see if funding from elected officials happens.

The board agreed that they would wait and see if funding came though. M. Redmond said she didn't believe the library should bear the cost of the construction. C. Wijeyesinghe said she didn't want to take the concept off the table but wanted to explore other funding opportunities.

Other new business

M. Kissinger said the nominating committee for the upcoming year is looking for volunteers and asked that those interested get back to him or G. Kirkpatrick.

OLD BUSINESS

Long Range Plan steering committee – update

G. Kirkpatrick said he included a draft of the Long Range Services Plan so people could have a chance to go through it before it came up for discussion. He said it outlines what the library is planning for the future from a services standpoint and asked the board to take a look at it and share their input.

M. Kissinger said the services plan was essentially the long range plan, and the building component is just one part of it.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she would like to look it over and asked if it could be a full board discussion in July or August.

M. Walsh asked if passport services had been taken off the table. G. Kirkpatrick said that passports, along with fishing and bus passes did not make it into the draft, but that is the kind of thing he'd like the board to discuss.

M. Kissinger said it would be a good time to discuss what the library could offer or even what isn't necessary anymore.

The board agreed to discuss the document further at the August or September meeting.

Other old business

C. Wijeyesinghe asked how the fine policy fit in with the Long Range Services Plan. G. Kirkpatrick said the plan was exactly the place to have that discussion. He said the library has a lot of data from the past year that C. Stollar Peters would be able to present.

M. Redmond said she felt the fines policy has Long Range Plan implications but did not see it as part of the services discussion and thought it might be something the board could hold off on for now.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she remembered H. Narang had said at the last meeting the board should make a decision before the library goes back to collecting fines. G. Kirkpatrick said that his direction from the board was to reinstitute fines July 1 with as much advance notice as possible.

L. Scoons said the board would be remiss to not have the conversation with all the data from a fine-free pandemic era. She noted that a lot more libraries are going to a fine-free model.

G. Kirkpatrick said his viewpoint is public libraries are moving away from having fines as a part of their business model.

C. Wijeyesinghe recommended the board focus on the building plan in July and discuss the Long Range Services Plan shortly after, including looking at the fines policy through the lens of social justice and inclusion stated in the service draft.

M. Kissinger said he would work with G. Kirkpatrick to talk about scheduling the discussion.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked whether the library would seek public opinion on the services plan and asked if the final version could be presented to the public like the budget is. G. Kirkpatrick said the draft was put together based on community feedback groups and surveys. He said he welcomes further public opinion.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the board would be discussing the capital fund pros and cons. S. Whiting said she wanted to have a discussion with the auditors for a better understanding of it from an accounting standpoint. M. Redmond said the discussion should go to the finance committee before it goes to the full board.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:53pm to discuss contract negotiations pursuant to Article Fourteen of the Civil Service Law

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned executive session at 8:46pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:47pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president