

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Monday July 12, 2021

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella  
Harmeet Narang  
Mary Redmond  
Lisa Scoons  
Michelle Walsh  
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe  
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer (remote)

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Mark Kissinger

GUESTS: Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director  
Chris McGinty, assistant director  
Chris O'Brien, CSEA Local 6015 vice president  
Kate Lambert, CSEA Local 6015 president  
Paul Mays, library architect

Vice President M. Walsh called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation.

MINUTES

H. Narang asked for an update on the status of new mobile app. G. Kirkpatrick said he was not sure when it would be out of beta testing and speculated it could be a couple more months. He said he was one of the testers and was impressed with the app so far.

Minutes of the 14 June 2021 board meeting were approved on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond, with C. Brancatella, M. Redmond, L. Scoons, and C. Wijeyesinghe in favor. H. Narang abstained.

OATH OF OFFICE

M. Walsh administered the oath of office to trustee-elect H. Narang.

BOARD OFFICERS

The following slate of officers was proposed for 2021-22:

- President: Mark Kissinger
- Vice President: Michelle Walsh
- Secretary: Caroline Brancatella

- UHLS representative: Lisa Scoons
- Board treasurer: Shari Whiting

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously accepted the slate as presented.

#### LONG RANGE PLAN COMMITTEE PRESENTATION BY PAUL MAYS

P. Mays began the presentation by noting that work he has gone into the planning process over the past two years, including interviews with patrons and staff, public meetings and a community dialog that was summarized in more detail in the draft report.

He said the meat of the report, from an architectural perspective, was about identifying options for providing better service to the community through improvements or additions, as well as identifying the services the community has said it wants. He said the Long Range Planning Committee had worked through various concepts before getting to the one presented in the report. He noted that one of the key takeaways from the process is the idea that it may not be fiscally possible to tackle all improvements in one project, which is why a series of phased concepts were presented.

One of the ideas that ranked highly among the public and staff was the need for a large 200+ person meeting space. This was included in the first conceptual phase, and P. Mays noted it could be done without interfering extensively with the function of the library. Other first phase concepts included improving the entry area to move the enclosed portion closer to the parking lot, mitigating some of the plaza icing issues experienced during the winter.

M. Redmond asked for some clarification about where the large meeting room would be and whether it would take up a substantial amount of space on the Green area. P. Mays said it would use some of the plaza/Green area but is designed to preserve a majority of the lawn as an important indoor/outdoor component that would utilize an outward facing stage. M. Redmond followed up with a question about whether a reconfigured interior would result in a longer walk to the circulation desk for those with mobility issues. P. Mays said that the concept presented did not increase that distance.

P. Mays said that a phase 2A concept would include parking lot improvements that would facilitate a drive-through structure. A phase 2B concept would then make improvements to the interior of the Circulation area to make it easier for staff to provide customer service to patrons. He noted that adding a study room to this phase could help the library if it were to appeal for public support.

He said the scope of what was included in each conceptual phase was based on balancing the costs. He noted that it would be possible to switch around the phases to take advantage of grants or donations.

M. Redmond asked what the plan was for the studio. G. Kirkpatrick said there would be a flexible tech space that could be used as a studio.

M. Walsh asked if there would be a pass through lane in the curbside pickup window concept so that people looking to just drop a book off would not have to wait in line.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked P. Mays to clarify that the phases and drawings were conceptual ideas that had been refined by the Long Range Planning committee and not a specific plan representing the will of the

whole board. P. Mays said it was a presentation representing the Long Range Planning discussions and board members were invited to share their comments with him through the director or the Long Range Planning committee so he could incorporate them in any revisions. He noted that at some point he would prepare a presentation for the public.

P. Mays said the final conceptual phase brings in more children's and teen space, as well as tutor space and study rooms. He said the committee had originally looked at addressing the mezzanine but felt it was not a priority at the moment. He reviewed the estimated costs of each phase in the report, as well as the contingencies. He noted that if the whole project was to be done at once, there would be major savings in escalation costs.

M. Walsh asked the estimated time from start to finish if the project were done all at once. P. Mays noted that significant time is required for the bidding and SED approval process but that just the construction itself would be about 18 months. He noted that the board might also want to consider a timeline that avoids conflicting with school projects and summer reading programming. He said the building may need to be closed entirely through any asbestos remediation.

C. Wijeyesinghe said that in her time with the school board, she found that the SED approval process could take 6 months to a year. P. Mays said the review times have been decreasing, and there is now an option for an expedited review. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the board was involved in the process of hiring the architect, project manager and contractor. G. Kirkpatrick said that the board does make those decisions.

P. Mays asked the board to consider the following concepts and let him know their thoughts so he could incorporate them in the final report:

1. Sustainability had been mentioned in a previous Long Range Plan, and P. Mays asked if that was still a goal, and if so what additional features might support those goal (ex. geothermal or photovoltaic systems).
2. Outreach has been identified as a priority in an earlier plan. He noted that if the library wanted to expand its fleet of vehicles or have some kind of specialized outreach vehicle, there might need to be some additional space considerations.
3. He noted that if the library were considering an RFID upgrade, it would be better to know that before making major space decisions rather than trying to fit it in after the fact.
4. Finally, he asked if providing a dedicated space for a Friends book sale was among the board's priorities.

H. Narang noted that the Long Range Planning Committee had taken the data and input from the community discussions and tried to prioritize those goals into bite-sized chunks. He said that when the board adopts the report, they are simply agreeing that it represents their priorities, but there is still a lot to be discussed before anything becomes a project.

P. Mays said that one of those discussions would likely include funding sources, including traditional fundraising by a foundation, construction grants, or a bond referendum, which would be the most political because it requires a vote. He said it may not be possible to go out for a bond year after year so it would be good to be thinking about a timeline that makes sense.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she would still appreciate additional discussion as a full board regarding the conceptual schematics with even rough numbers attached. She said she felt she needed to be part of all the discussions at this point because the board is discussing millions of dollars and structures.

G. Kirkpatrick said the numbers attached to the schematics mean that there are some very political questions that have not been discussed yet. He noted that the library has heard from the public what they want, but now need to find out what the public would support. He said that is why the building and service plans are part of the same process because they are meant to represent where everyone wants to take the library in the years to come.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked how the library plans to engage the community if there is a project of some size planned. She said she would be more comfortable with the full board being part of that discussion.

C. Brancatella said that the community discussion that took place prior to the planning process took place in a pre-pandemic world that was very different from today and assumed that would be addressed in the final report.

P. Mays said that in order to present a plan to the public, the board would need to agree on a cost. He would then be able to work up some graphics and other visuals to better present those ideas, which would reflect how awareness of public health may have affected the plan. He said he would be happy to return to Bethlehem to provide a more detailed overview of the process to C. Wijeyesinghe or any other interested board member.

The board thank P. Mays for his presentation, and he excused himself at 7:09pm.

## BOARD ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

### *Annual authorizations*

M. Walsh noted that the authorizations list was the same as the previous year.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the 2021-22 authorizations as presented.

### *Board meetings*

G. Kirkpatrick noted that the October proposed board meeting conflicted with Sukkot and recommended moving it to the following Monday, Oct. 17.

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the 2022 meeting schedule as amended.

### *Ethics statements/Conflict of interest policy*

Ethics statements were distributed to the trustees for signing and will be filed in the public record.

### *Holidays and other closings*

C. Brancatella noted that, if the contract is approved later in the meeting, Juneteenth will be reflected as a holiday, but because it falls on a Sunday in 2022, that won't affect the calendar. G. Kirkpatrick said the library traditional closes at 3pm on New Year's Eve to get people home safely before dark, but the chart provided should have the date represented in black in because it is not a contractual holiday.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved the 2022 holiday schedule as amended.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### *Treasurer's update*

S. Whiting presented her treasurer's report and noted that library ended year with surplus. She added in her report an additional schedule explaining the variances and identifying what makes up the surplus.

C. Brancatella noted that under the salaries and benefits category most went under budget, but the one that went over was health care.

H. Narang said that while the library was under budget in capital expenditures this past fiscal year, one might expect some catching up with projects in the next.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 June 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$92,291.82; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$64,198.92; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$183,312.32; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$339,803.06).

## PERSONNEL REPORT

The board reviewed the personnel report. There were no actions requested. G. Kirkpatrick said the library was working toward filling positions that would allow for evening hours on Friday. One recent clerk position was filled with a temp because the civil service list is not available.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Board members and staff have been aware of some recent comments on the Bethlehem Nextdoor site regarding fines. G. Kirkpatrick said that circulation staff have been given a lot of leeway to work with patrons on fines for overdue materials. M. Redmond said she was pleased to see the outpouring of support for the library from subsequent commenters. C. Brancatella said there was bound to be some confusion when restarting the process.
- A lot of library services have returned and things are starting look more like normal. G. Kirkpatrick said there were more people in the building on the previous Tuesday and Thursday since February 2020. He said it was nice to see children and activity in the building again.

- The Summer Reading Program is going strong, but some of the programs have had to be cancelled or rescheduled due to rain.
- The library will continue to offer virtual programs, though not as many now that in-person options are available.
- This was the first month the library's e-collection surpassed 100,000 items. More Library of Things items are available to circulate, including an 8mm film digitizer.
- Added 8mm film digitizer. One to borrow and one will be in studio back.
- An emergency repair to the A/C unit came in \$138 over the purchasing limit subject to authorization. G. Kirkpatrick used purchasing policy protocol to get the work done and included the invoice at the end of his report. M. Redmond asked how the experience with Trane has been. G. Kirkpatrick said he was pleased with the work they've done, and they have made a number of improvements to the HVAC system to cut down on noise.
- Streaming and e-material use is lower than last year when it was the only way to access library materials. The one category that continues to climb is e-audiobook use. L. Scoons said she thinks the pandemic forced a lot of people to finally try e-audiobooks and they never went back.

## UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said construction grants are out, and noted that the annual report booklets were available to those interested. M. Walsh said there was a lot of interesting information in the report.

## NEW BUSINESS

### *Collective bargaining agreement*

The union has voted to accept a Memorandum of Understanding for a two-year contract. C. Brancatella said she and L. Scoons were pleased with the package the library was able to offer. She said that now is the time for the board to start thinking about the next contract and identifying their priorities and the union's priorities. She said healthcare is likely going to be a big part of the next discussion and it is important to keep the lines of communication open over the next two years.

C. Wijeyesinghe said that staff is the heart of the library and she echoes C. Brancatella's statement about communication. She asked that if the board approves the MOU, would they be approving something that wasn't budgeted for. M Redmond said that she felt the push to get the process done before the budget was a false deadline and the library is able to absorb the cost. C. Brancatella said the financial impact of the contract has been reviewed by S. Whiting and budget contingencies are built in to make that possible.

M. Walsh thanked the negotiating committee for their work on the contract.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella and a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously agreed to the terms outlined in the contract between the library and the bargaining unit.

### *M/C salaries 2020-21*

The proposal for M/C salaries are in line with the bargaining unit contract, but must be approved separately.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond and a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the management confidential salaries, effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

*Updates to phased reopening plan*

The library is currently in phase 6 of the phased reopening plan, and G. Kirkpatrick presented a document that highlighted the actions currently taking place. He noted the document will eventually come to its natural conclusion once the library progresses through phase 7. While there are no toys in the Children's Place, chairs for reading have returned. Indoor public programs may resume at some point if they are rained out once people and performers are more comfortable.

M. Redmond asked about the occupancy rate after noting the numbers in P. Mays' draft report. G. Kirkpatrick said that the newer calculations actually increase the Community Room maximum occupancy from 90 to 109 people.

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

*Other new business*

None at this time

**OLD BUSINESS**

*Library bookdrop*

G. Kirkpatrick requested the board approve the purchase of a new bookdrop that would fit the existing concrete pad, in addition to 2 extra carts. C. Stollar Peters said the new bookdrop is twice as big from a capacity standpoint.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the purchase of a new bookdrop and additional carts from Demco for the quoted price of \$10,054.96.

*Other old business*

None at this time.

**FUTURE BUSINESS**

C. Wijeyesinghe asked what the process would be for getting the discussion about eliminating fines started. G. Kirkpatrick said that the Long Range Services plan is a good place to have that conversation. He said there are some equity and social justice and sustainability questions that need to be part of that discussion. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the draft service plan could be a jumping off point for a retreat or facilitated discussion. L. Scoons said she agreed and suggested having someone outside facilitate the discussion might be more productive. M. Redmond said it might be useful to come to a consensus on some portions of the services plan in order to move forward and leave some pieces as works in progress.

G. Kirkpatrick said he was overall very pleased with the outcome of P. Mays' draft report and noted that the board can accept the report without saying that they are agreeing the project is going to happen.

C. Wijeyesinghe said that as the board discusses the master plan, they should be mindful of how much they can do in a transparent way.

C. Wijeyesinghe suggested that board members come to the next meeting with their calendars and be ready to plan a facilitated retreat and decide the focus of discussion. H. Narang said he believes it would be helpful to dedicate that time to the services plan. Some board members asked for copies of the draft to be resent. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there might be outside facilitators available through Upper Hudson or the school district.

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

#### ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:16pm.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president