

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Monday August 9, 2021

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk (remote)  
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator (remote)  
Chris McGinty, assistant director (remote)

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 5:56pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

No public participation.

MINUTES

M. Kissinger thanked M. Walsh for conducting the July meeting in his absence. C. Wijeyesinghe clarified her comments at the end of the July meeting regarding the Long Range Plan discussion.

Minutes of the 12 July 2021 board meeting were approved on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, with C. Brancatella, H. Narang, M. Redmond, L. Scoons, M. Walsh and C. Wijeyesinghe in favor. M. Kissinger abstained.

FINANCIAL REPORT

*Treasurer's update*

S. Whiting presented a corrected revenue and expenses report. She noted expenses were pretty standard, although higher than the previous July for reasons related to the pandemic. She noted that purchases of materials, accounting fees and UHLAN fees were among the July expenses.

M. Kissinger asked if the fine revenue was coming in as expected since fines were reinstated at the beginning of July. G. Kirkpatrick said the amount is a little less than normal but is related to total physical items circulated, which is also less than average.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked for more information about the \$20,936.35 payment to Upper Hudson. T. Choppy explained that the amount included the portion the library pays to be a part of the Upper Hudson System, which is paid quarterly, as well as other Upper Hudson subscriptions and fees. G. Kirkpatrick also noted that the library's Hoopla subscription costs are paid to Upper Hudson.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$16,938; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$55,886.87; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$184,990.74; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$257,861.30).

## PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said the library was seeking to fill four positions, including a full-time Librarian II. M. Kissinger asked if the library was actively looking to fill the previously approved positions on the list. G. Kirkpatrick said that some of those positions are related to circulation level, so when that goes up, the library would fill them as needed.

The board reviewed the personnel report.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved new hires for the following vacancies, pending Civil Service approval:

- Library Clerk, part-time, permanent, 16.57 hours/week, \$13.89/hour or per contract
- Librarian II, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$63,207/annual or per contract
- Library Page, part-time, permanent, 12.8 hours/week, \$12.50/hour
- Librarian I, part-time, permanent, 7.67 hours/week, \$27.86/hour or per contract

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said that although the library is seeking quotes to fix the leaking condenser coil on one of the rooftop units, there are three redundant backups so there should be no tangible effect on cooling the building. M. Redmond asked if there would be any trouble getting the repair quotes needed to make a decision. G. Kirkpatrick said the library already had two quotes so he isn't expecting it to be a problem.
- He also noted that Trane said it wouldn't be catastrophic if the boiler were to go down for a while before fixes are made because it helps control the heat but isn't the primary heat source. M. Redmond asked if there was a boiler failure, would the parts be readily available. G. Kirkpatrick said that Trane has assured the library they would be.
- The new library app is moving out of testing and will be advertised soon. There was some question about working out some issues with the self-checkout function, but the rest of the app works well.
- M. Walsh asked if the replacement costs collected for lost materials in July was normal. G. Kirkpatrick said it was higher than average. T. Choppy noted that part of the reason might be due to that fact that some people pay their fines online to Upper Hudson, which then passes them along to the home libraries all at once each quarter.
- Circulation trends look very good compared to last year when the library was just getting curbside pickup up and running. G. Kirkpatrick said the numbers are not quite where a normal July would be, but they're getting closer.
- C. Wijeyesinghe said she appreciated the invitation to speak to the library's diversity committee and said much of the feedback she gave was related to language and the way it is used to convey

messages to a diverse audience. She also noted the discussion touched on how the library could do mindful, diversity-related work when it is seen as a neutral space. She said the fine policy also came up in regards to the pursuit of equity.

- G. Kirkpatrick said he was initially hoping to hold in-person diversity training at the December Staff Development Day but was unsure if that could happen in light of recent COVID-19 data.

## UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said there was no meeting in August to report on.

## NEW BUSINESS

### *Phased reopening plan – masks*

With community transmission rates rising, the library has stepped back to phase 5 of the reopening plan. G. Kirkpatrick said that he is recommending the board approve mandatory masks for everyone inside the library. M. Kissinger asked what percentage are coming in currently without a mask. G. Kirkpatrick said the number of people wearing masks has been steadily growing over the past few days. L. Scoons said a lot of people would wear a mask if they see a sign posted requiring them. M. Redmond noted that she is seeing more people masking up in public places. G. Kirkpatrick noted that some people might be unhappy about the return to wearing masks, but the library would be enforcing it. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if masks are available to the public on site if they forget to bring their own. G. Kirkpatrick said there were plenty. M. Kissinger said he doesn't believe it is a negative to have an all-mask policy because it's everybody's job to protect others if they can. C. Wijeyesinghe said that if people didn't want to use a mask, they could still use curbside pickup.

M. Walsh asked what would trigger the library to roll back a mask requirement. G. Kirkpatrick said the library would look to the CDC community risk guidelines and begin softening the mask stance when things edged down to moderate risk. C. Wijeyesinghe recommended creating talking points for the staff and using every communication method at the library's disposal to get the word out.

The board discussed when and how to implement the new rules. C. Brancatella said that she didn't think it would come as a surprise to patrons as many other businesses have returned to masking. G. Kirkpatrick said that the library could work quickly to put the rule into effect, but signage and staffing at the entrance would have to be put in place first.

L. Scoons noted that the line in the phased reopening plan draft referring to staffers and masks should be removed.

M. Redmond asked how the new rules might affect programming. G. Kirkpatrick said that outdoor programs that get rained out will not be moving indoors. He noted that the weather in September may allow for a few outdoor programs and give staff time to see if indoor spaces might be usable for future programs.

G. Kirkpatrick said he would be removing the kitchen as an option for public community room use. M. Walsh asked that the library reach out to groups that have already booked to let them know it won't be an option.

M. Kissinger said he believed it was OK to be a leader when it comes to mask guidelines and that, as a public institution, the library has a responsibility to protect public health. He asked if the library has a way to disseminate vaccine and testing information. C. Brancatella suggested an online program with a health professional to talk about the Coronavirus and vaccine facts.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the proposed updates to the library's phased reopening plan regarding mask rules with the changes noted in the discussion.

#### *Board retreat*

The board discussed the when, where and why of a potential retreat and agreed it would be beneficial to meet outside of the regular business meeting to tackle some aspects of the Long Range Plan and other larger philosophical concepts.

H. Narang identified three topics he thought would benefit from that kind of discussion: The Long Range Plan, the services plan and going fine free.

G. Kirkpatrick said library architect Paul Mays is ready to issue his report soon but would appreciate any final feedback. L. Scoons said that P. Mays has mentioned a library foundation as a source of funding, but Bethlehem does not have a foundation so it really shouldn't be in the report. She did note that a foundation seems like something the community could embrace. M. Kissinger said the board should also discuss the public's capacity to pay for any major library projects as there is some varying opinions among trustees.

The board agreed to hold a three-hour discussion after an abbreviated September board business meeting, in the community room and with snacks. Board members agreed that a facilitator would be necessary to keep the discussion moving along, and C. Wijeyesinghe suggested that they narrow down the discussion topics to about two in order to make the most of their time. C. Brancatella suggested they might want to consider scheduling more than one of those sessions in the future to discuss other important issues the library faces.

G. Kirkpatrick said he would investigate potential facilitators.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the fine-free discussion can be part of a regular business meeting if it does not come up as a retreat topic.

#### *Meeting room policy*

The policy committee has reviewed the proposed changes, which included language addressing no-shows.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously approved the proposed updates to the library's meeting room policy.

*Other new business*  
None at this time

## OLD BUSINESS

*Long-range plan committee report*

P. Mays has asked for some final feedback to the Long Range Plan. M. Redmond said trustees should read the draft carefully and mark it up so they are ready to discuss it at the upcoming retreat. The board discussed the cost of a facilitator, and C. Wijeyesinghe said the going rate is usually \$200-\$300/hour and they should look for someone who has experience working with groups and moving things along.

*Other old business*

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if C. Stollar Peters has been able to get data showing how fines affect people with different economic backgrounds cross referenced by race. G. Kirkpatrick said it looks to be possible, but C. Stollar Peters is still working on getting the data.

## FUTURE BUSINESS

M. Kissinger said that at the previous board meeting, C. Brancatella talked about setting up a framework of discussion before contract negotiations start that would involve union members early on. He said he supported the idea and would like to keep it in the forefront.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

## ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:31pm.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president