

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Tuesday October 12, 2021

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Michelle Walsh

GUESTS: Kate Lambert, CSEA Local 6015 president
Chris McGinty, assistant director
(virtual) Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Anne Moore
Jared King

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

Jared King told the board he was asked to leave the library building a couple of weeks ago over a masking issue. He said that he appreciates the library's policy requiring masks for everyone regardless of vaccination status but felt that some situations might be over-enforced. He also asked for more information about the process that goes into selecting materials for the library.

Borthwick Avenue resident Anne Moore said she has been a neighbor of the library for 30 years. She encouraged the board to reach out to those in the neighborhood about their experiences living near the library and how that might fit in to any long range building plans. In response to a question from M. Kissinger, she stated that she would consider anyone who could see the library from their yard to be immediate neighbors. The board thanked her for her comments.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 13 September 2021 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her treasurer's report. She noted that the auditors had finished up their field work at the end of September, slightly ahead of schedule, and the library should expect a draft by the end of October. She said the finance committee would meet to review the draft prior to the November meeting.

M. Redmond said that the board might want to start thinking about the next year's audit process at the beginning of the 2022 calendar year since the authorizations done in July at the beginning of the fiscal year give little time to make any changes before the audit begins.

S. Whiting said she has included a summary of the fund balance and how it has grown over the past five years in the board packet. She noted that the library had accumulated approximately \$2 million in surplus since 2015 and has spent about \$800,000 of it on capital projects – primarily the HVAC project in 2018. She noted that the library budgets for capital expenditures every year but doesn't always spend it, making it available for future years.

M. Redmond said it was important to remember that some surplus in the fund balance is needed to cover operational expenses until all of the tax revenue is received. She also noted that the surplus amount is included in the budget graphic presented to the public every year before the vote to maintain transparency.

The board also discussed state construction grants and how the library would have to match any awarded funds with cash on hand and not bonded money.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 September 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$63,113.44; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$90,833.49; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$192,143,70; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$346,090.63).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board reviewed the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he is seeking to backfill three positions, including a Librarian I, and add a temporary Librarian I position to help cover the desk schedule until a Librarian II can be hired. He said the Librarian II list is currently being audited and no one can be hired from it until the audit is complete. H. Narang asked if there was any sense of how long the audit might take. G. Kirkpatrick said he didn't know and has reached out for an answer but hasn't gotten one yet.

M. Kissinger asked what would happen to the temporary position once the list is ready. G. Kirkpatrick said it would be eliminated and that anyone hired in the position would know that going into it. He said it could be an opportunity for someone right out of library school to get the necessary experience.

C. Brancatella asked if the library was experiencing challenges in hiring like some other industries. G. Kirkpatrick noted that while there has been some turnover, the library is not having trouble recruiting people.

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, 15 hours/week, \$14.17/hour or per contract
- Library Clerk, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week, \$14.17/hour or per contract
- Librarian I, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$54,440/annual or per contract
- Librarian I, full-time, temporary, 35 hours/week, \$54,440/annual or per contract

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said that staff has had to deal with a couple of visitors in recent weeks who are frustrated with masking. Police had to be called for one of those interactions, which was the first time it had to be done for a mask situation. He noted that the burden of these interactions is falling primarily on the librarians, and he wanted the board to be aware.
- The board discussed signage and other ways to make the public aware that the library is enforcing the mask rule. M. Redmond said the board supports the staff in these efforts. H. Narang asked if someone needed to be stationed at the door again. G. Kirkpatrick said the library has tried that, but staffing is just not available for another point of service. He noted that the majority of patrons are compliant with the mask policy, and he is thankful for that.
- Staff Development Day will take place in December and will include some type of in-person diversity training. Staff may be split for a hybrid in-person/virtual event.
- Preschool programs will start going virtual in November. Other programs may take place in person if that group can be vaccinated, but space is being limited to 15 people at a time for now.
- G. Kirkpatrick mentioned several upcoming Halloween events the board was welcome to take part in as volunteers.
- The technical services department has been proactive in processing books that had initially been done off site in order to get the new releases out sooner. The vendors have been experiencing a backlog in that area, but seem to be catching up.
- Statistics continue to show increases in e-material use over pre-pandemic times. H. Narang asked if the library would be shifting more funds to e-materials in light of the expected paper shortage impacting new physical releases. G. Kirkpatrick said that money has already been shifted to e-materials and will continue for the time being.
- G. Kirkpatrick said physical circulation also continues to grow, but the library is still not seeing a lot of people coming to study or hang out for extended periods of time.
- L. Scoons asked what would be used to make reservations for limited in-person events. G. Kirkpatrick said it would likely be library cards, but staff would work with individuals who can establish residency in other ways.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said the UHLS board was working with area systems to determine how to administer American Rescue Plan money that is available. There is approximately \$300,000 to be split among four systems. The focus for the spending will be on digital equity and inclusion, as well as museum partnerships. She also noted that the Anti-Racism Task Force has been renamed the Racial Equity Committee.

G. Kirkpatrick mentioned that the governor recently signed a trustee training law that would require a certain amount of training for elected trustees every year.

NEW BUSINESS

Emergency patron conduct policy

G. Kirkpatrick said the policy has been updated to include current practices and to bring the document in line with the phased reopening plan.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved updates to the Emergency Patron Conduct Policy.

NYLA conference attendance

G. Kirkpatrick said the annual conference is approaching and will be in person, masked and socially distanced. Overall attendance is expected to be down, and many BPL staffers were not interested in participating this year. G. Kirkpatrick was requesting permission for he and C. Stollar Peters to go.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved NYLA conference attendance costs estimated at \$1,740.34.

November board meeting location

The community room will be hosting a program when the November board meeting is scheduled. The board room is available, but G. Kirkpatrick wants to limit the number of people in there to 5. The board discussed options for holding a hybrid in-person/remote meeting. The auditor is scheduled to present at the meeting but would be asked to do it remotely. S. Whiting said the related documents could be printed out and shared ahead of time. M. Kissinger recommended a hybrid meeting and said he would email board members asking their preferences for being in person or remote.

Other new business

No other new business.

OLD BUSINESS

Long range plan/facility report

G. Kirkpatrick said he was looking to have the board accept the facilities master planning report prepared by architect Paul Mays as the building portion of the long range planning process. He noted that the report is not the library's design but rather a distillation of a design based on the architect's interpretation of the feedback received during the process.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously voted to accept the Bethlehem Public Library Master Planning Report prepared by architect Paul Mays of Butler Rowland Mays Architects, LLP.

G. Kirkpatrick said the Long Range Planning Committee would be meeting for one last time finalize the services portion of the plan. C. Wijeyesinghe suggested the meeting be held in person.

The board discussed where the facilities document would be available for the public to view and suggested it be highlighted on the home page carousel and social media. Anne Moore suggested the link be moved to the top of the board page as well.

Building committee

The building committee is proposing the board charge them with interviewing architecture firms to create a design based on concepts developed during the long range planning process. M. Redmond mentioned the concept of design/build, which integrates the design and construction process. G. Kirkpatrick said he is aware of a couple of firms that do design/build.

C. Wijeyesinghe suggested the board discuss the timeline and steps involved in moving forward. M. Redmond asked if there should also be a parallel discussion about funding. She said she is not sure the project could be done without a bond, and so it would be good to get some estimates for general costs that can be presented to the public. She said the library should reach out to the school district and see who they work with, as well as get some direction and find out the range of costs they are looking at.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously voted to charge the Building Committee with interviewing architecture firms to create a design based on concepts developed during the long range planning process.

Long range plan services committee
Discussed earlier.

Other old business
None at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

Annual audit presentation in November
Discussed earlier.

Fines – ad hoc committee

M. Kissinger said the fines discussion keeps coming up and he would like to set up a committee to take a deeper dive on the topic and make a recommendation. C. Wijeyesinghe asked what the process for discussing fines was before. G. Kirkpatrick said he and C. Stollar Peters had presented information and data previously to the whole board and that it is his opinion that eliminating fines is the way to go, but he is seeking input and direction on that from the board. C. Brancatella noted that earlier discussions had sometimes been set aside in the face of more immediate issues. G. Kirkpatrick said there is even more detailed data to examine from the time fines were halted during the pandemic. M. Kissinger asked who would be interested in serving on the ad hoc committee and C. Wijeyesinghe, L. Scoons and C. Brancatella volunteered.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously voted to create an ad hoc committee to discuss the elimination of library fines.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:26pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president