

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (VIRTUAL)
Monday March 14, 2022

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: Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk

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

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

MINUTES

Minutes of the 14 February 2022 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe.

Minutes of the 20 January 2022 long-range plan committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

The board noted S. Whiting's treasurer's report. Additional items:

- The budget is expected to be 3-4% under in salaries by year end. Other budget lines are likely to break even. That surplus would be added to the fund balance at the end of the fiscal year.
- C. Wijeyesinghe noted that some amount of the fund balance is maintained to fund operations until taxes are received in October but can also be considered to finance any planned renovations or repairs to lessen costs for taxpayers. M. Redmond asked C. Wijeyesinghe, as a former school board member, if she had any insight into how much of the fund balance the board might consider using on a potential capital project and how much to hold onto for emergencies. C. Wijeyesinghe said that if the board moves forward on a project, the first step would be to get a cost estimate and then look at the library's resources to decide how much they would be comfortable using.

- S. Whiting said that some adjustments had been made to the 2022-23 budget to accommodate the fine-free decision made at the previous board meeting. The board noted that they would be discussing the budget later in the meeting.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 28 February 2022 (Checks disbursed in February 2022 based on pre-approval \$50,353.97; Checks disbursed in February 2022 relating to payroll \$185,827.67; Checks being submitted for approval \$43,571.70; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$279,753.34).

PERSONNEL REPORT

There were no requested actions at this time.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Approximately half of the staff and half of the patrons are wearing masks now that the library has moved to a mask-optional policy based on CDC guidance.
- Door count is still not at pre-pandemic levels, but people are staying longer on average during their visits.
- A recent weekend storm forced the library to close on Saturday. It is more difficult to manage snowfall on a weekend because there are fewer maintenance staffers working then.
- The UHLS and Mid-Hudson will be exploring reciprocal borrowing in order to expand the number of digital titles available to patrons. This is a new type of agreement, and a lot of other systems will be watching to see how the process works.
- The Seed Library launched the morning of the board meeting, and over 100 seed packets had been picked up in the first demand. There was even a line to browse the seeds when the library opened. This hybrid online and in-person model is new this year.
- The Friends book sale will take place in May and run for two days barring any weather issues. The Friends are stressing that it is more fundraiser than transactional.
- The number of area libraries going fine-free continues to increase, with Schenectady County libraries recently voting to eliminate fines.
- The library continues to investigate ways to participate in solar energy without putting panels up.
- About 28 groups totaling 329 people have met in our public meeting rooms. It seems more groups are feeling comfortable coming back to library. Recently, a local Girls Scout troop practiced properly raising and lowering the flag on the library's flagpole.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said UHLS is offering racial equity training with varying time commitments and is encouraging library boards to complete it as a group. The training discussion would be continued later under new business.

She also noted that of the 29 libraries in the Upper Hudson system, only five are keeping fines in place, and most of those are very small or municipal libraries.

NEW BUSINESS

Public PC and Chromebook purchase

GK presented two quotes for computer replacement. The first would replace the public PCs used inside the library. The current computers are aging and no longer eligible for the free Windows 11 upgrade. The quote is on state contract from Dell and with computers experiencing some shortages, the library wanted to get an order out ASAP. The second quote is to replace the 15 Chromebooks that can be checked out to the public for two weeks at a time, which were originally purchased in 2016. The library has some Chromebooks that are used to fulfill extended loans and are not being replaced at this time. The money for the purchases has been budgeted and will be charged to the IT Hardware and Software budget line.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the purchase of 10 desktop computers at a total of \$9,755.80 and 15 Chromebooks at a total of \$7,018.20, both through state contract from Dell.

UHLS racial equity training for trustees

G. Kirkpatrick presented the UHLS racial equity training menu available to the board. M. Kissinger noted that there would be a required trustee training element beginning in 2023, and these free sessions would fulfill that. L. Scoons said she recommended the board schedule the trainings as close together as possible for the most impact. She asked the board if they had a preference for any of the options. M. Walsh suggested that since the trainings were available into 2023, it might make sense to schedule then so it would satisfy the trustee training benchmark. The board agreed that would make sense and expressed an interest in the option with two 90-minute sessions with McClean to be completed in January and February. The idea would be to have the training during the regular board meeting schedule following a quick meeting to manage regular library business. C. Wijeyesinghe said the board should be mindful about fulfilling the training in a reasonable timeframe so that the trustees could be in synch with projects already under way by library staff. G. Kirkpatrick said he would share the board's preferences with Upper Hudson.

Phased reopening plan and Emergency Conduct Policy

G. Kirkpatrick presented the updates to the reopening plan and noted that the library is currently in the second-to-last phase. He said that while the library wasn't ready to bring back the toys in the Children's Place, it did make sense to put out some coloring and craft projects. More furniture is also returning as people start spending more time inside the library. The current phase also involves re-implementing indoor children's programs in a safe way. The emergency patron conduct policy has omitted the mask requirement. At some point there will be a discussion about whether the emergency policy can be dropped altogether. The phased reopening plan will stay in the event that the library needs to dial back on the phases.

The board discussed the logistics behind rolling out indoor children's programming. G. Kirkpatrick said it was likely the library would be holding them in the larger space of the community room and limit attendance at first. Outdoor programs are also an option in warmer weather. C. Brancatella said she brought her daughter to the library for the first time the other day and she was delighted. She said that she tends to be more cautious than most but would feel comfortable bringing her daughter to in-person programs and wanted to help get the word out that the library is bringing those events back in a safe and thoughtful way.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously approved updates to the library's phased reopening plan and Emergency Conduct Policy.

Displays and Exhibits Policy

G. Kirkpatrick presented a minor update to the displays and exhibits policy that reduces from 24 to 12 the months out that one can reserve space, as well as prioritizing people within the library district. Board members asked if the library expected any pushback from groups outside of Bethlehem. G. Kirkpatrick said it could happen. M. Redmond asked if the library could prepare some ready response based on what other libraries are doing in the area.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved updates to the library's Displays and Exhibits Policy.

OLD BUSINESS

2022-23 draft budget

S. Whiting presented the final draft of the budget with the fines line modified following the fine-free vote in February. She noted that the levy was \$4,000 more in this revision and that fine income had been reduced to \$2,000 while other savings were found in the photocopies and refund of real property taxes lines. She said the levy ask is still about \$45,000 under the cap. The levy represents a 3.2% increase, but there was no levy increase the previous year. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there is ever confusion about the levy increase and the 2% cap. G. Kirkpatrick said the budget letter and graph include notes that the levy is under the cap.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the 2022-23 budget to be put before the public at the May election.

Building committee update

The building committee has interviewed two additional architectural firms and have one more scheduled. They are hoping to have a recommendation to the board by the April meeting. So far, each has had certain strengths the board might consider. Once an architect is decided on, the board can begin discussing the design phase based on what is feasible and public input. Once the architect is in place, there will be additional efforts made to inform the public who might want to follow the process more closely. The funds to pay for the architect's services have already been budgeted. C. Brancatella asked if any of the candidates has offered a standard contract so there could be a general idea of the costs and stipulations involved. M. Redmond suggested that the board have a lawyer review any contract for this service.

Fines committee – recommendations for implementation

The board discussed some of the details that could have an effect on the rollout, including implementation date, card block threshold, billing period, fines for specialty items and whether or not to waive existing fines for Bethlehem cardholders. M. Kissinger noted that any of the decisions made could be revisited as part of the evaluation process. Board members asked if there was a way to find out the number of active users there are who currently have outstanding fines. C. Stollar Peters said she could get that information.

C. Wijeyesinghe MOVED and L. Scoons SECONDED the motion to approve the following fine-free lending parameters:

- Implementation date of July 1, 2022
- Keeping the current \$5 threshold to block accounts
- Keeping the current 31-day billing period
- Maintaining \$1/day fines on Library of Things items and \$5/day fines on museum passes

The board decided to table the discussion until the April meeting so they could think about it further before making a final decision on the parameters.

FUTURE BUSINESS

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if a discussion of the timeline for a performance evaluation for the director could be a part of the upcoming agenda.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:50pm to discuss the employment history of a particular individual.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned executive session at 8:30pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:31pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president