

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Tuesday October 10, 2023

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Laura DiBetta
Mark Kissinger (arrived at 6:15 p.m.)
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Sarah Patterson

GUESTS: Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services
John McPhillips, BCSD Chief Business and Financial Officer
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Frank Somers, Public Services department head
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw Architects (virtual)

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

G. Kirkpatrick said he had received a couple of emails from people asking what the library planned to do with the bricks that have been removed from the plaza. He said they were interested in the bricks not being thrown away. In response to these inquiries, he has said that the board is still considering their options but that any sale of the bricks would be subject to government regulations. There is no plan to throw the bricks away.

Another longtime patron expressed dismay that there are no real choices for quiet study at the library. They asked that the library assign a quiet room or add a partition.

A patron expressed concern about the condition of the carpet in the Children's Place and said it should be cleaned or replaced.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Revised ethics statements were distributed and signed.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION – JOHN MCPHILLIPS, BCSD CHIEF BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL OFFICER

J. McPhillips encouraged the board to look at the building project from where it is at this point and where it needs to be in order to be included in the May vote. He said that a legal notice describing the proposition would need to be issued 45 days prior to the vote after being approved by the library board and the board of education at their April 6 meeting. He said the library

would have to vote on the scope of project and timeline at or before the March meeting and provide that information to the district.

J. McPhillips said that one of the biggest procedural steps that would need to take place is the consolidation of the separate entities that make up the library property, whether it be absorbed under the title of the school district or otherwise. He said that process might be cumbersome administratively but could be accomplished by December. He also said the SEQRA environmental review process could take 3-6 months but could run parallel to a bond vote.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the library had to approve the language for the ballot at the March meeting. J. McPhillips said the library's approval would need to be ready in time for the board of education to vote on it at the April 6 meeting because of the 45-day notification rule. The library board could call a special meeting any time before then.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the properties were consolidated under school district ownership, would the district handle the bonding. J. McPhillips said the district would go out for a bond on behalf of the library. The district would help prepare the language for the bond and make it clear who is paying for what. C. Brancatella said she wouldn't want it to look like the library was taking any money away from the education of the town's children.

J. McPhillips encouraged the board to use the district as a resource as the process moves forward.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked G. Kirkpatrick to prepare a schedule of the upcoming school board meetings to share with the library board.

ASHLEY MCGRAW ARCHITECTS – BRIEF PRESENTATION

S. Angarano said the architects expected to wrap up the schematic design process in the next month. She shared a visioning recap and design update, as well as a preview of some exterior design options. She noted that the board had decided on the larger option for the community room addition in order to accommodate all community needs. She also pointed out some other adjustments in the design, such as the right-sizing of lobby space and a reorientation of the children's space.

M. Walsh asked how much larger the planned children's space is compared to what there is currently. S. Angarano said the stack space is about the same but the overall footprint has grown to include an enclosed program area. M. Walsh said that it is her understanding that a vibrant children's area is very important to the community and she worries that the design isn't a significant enough improvement. G. Kirkpatrick said that he has heard from people who have been very concerned about losing stack space, and the library will not be taking that away. Others are asking to make it more of a gathering place for kids. L. DiBetta said she was in the children's area the day before and it was busy with activity. There was a question about whether the enclosed space could be an imaginative play space as well as a drop-in craft area and program room. L. DiBetta said she has also heard concerns about the prominence of the computers in the children's area. C. Wijeyesinghe said she is not interested in building a playground at the library but rather a place for people to engage. G. Kirkpatrick said he has heard from a lot of people who do want some kind of drop-in play area. S. Angarano said she appreciated the comments regarding the children's area, and there is still time to refine how that space is organized.

S. Angarano said she would be meeting in a few days with the board for a work session to discuss two exterior design options and the pros and cons of each. C. Wijeyesinghe said she won't be able to attend meeting but wanted to reiterate her concerns about sightlines and the safety of the building.

S. Angarano said the architects are working with the library to develop a communications plan to make sure everyone is well informed and knows what is going on.

The next steps in the schematic design process include an estimate of the costs and the amount that would need to be bonded, energy modeling, façade design, vote planning and community outreach.

MINUTES

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved minutes from the Monday September 11 meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

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

- In upcoming financial reports there will be a new revenue line to show the Friends of BPL contributions. This is good accounting practices and will be easier to understand.
- The library's CD and treasury bill both come due in November. The finance committee will meet to make a decision about whether to roll them over or not.
- The \$3,500 cost associated with audit shows up in the bill schedule under MMB+Co. Accounting, the company that absorbed Marvin and Co.
- M. Walsh thanked S. Whiting for being on top of the library's financial reporting.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 September 2023 (Checks disbursed in September 2023 based on pre-approval \$38,418.15; Checks disbursed in September 2023 relating to payroll \$182,082.11; Checks being submitted for approval \$81,453.21; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$22,217.17; Total: \$324,170.64).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board received an updated personnel report to reflect a recent opening. The online board packet was updated with the new document after the meeting.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to approve the following positions:

- Library clerk, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$31,992/annual or per contract.
- Library clerk, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$31,992/annual or per contract.
- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 18/hours/week, \$16.26/hour or per contract

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said the bulk of the plaza resurfacing would take place the following day. He said the workers from the Highway Department have done an amazing job so far. He

has received some feedback from people that were very happy that it was being done, as well as from people who do not want the bricks thrown away.

- The Friends book sale raised more money than in past sales even with fewer books. They are not yet accepting donations, but they are looking into getting that started.
- The virtual author talks through the Library Speaker Consortium continue to be very popular and bring in quality authors. They are also recorded and can be watched later.
- The library takes part in a number of outreach events. G. Kirkpatrick said it is a premium service as far as staffing, but the library is very well received when out and about.
- The library offered custom genre cards for Library Card Sign-Up Month. Staff in circulation were busy printing them up. L. Scoons also noted that Bethlehem printed all of the Expedition cards as well.
- M. Kissinger said he wanted to publicly thank Sarah R. for helping him with the Consumer Reports database. He asked if the Listening Parties would be starting back up again. F. Somers said that Michael Farley was uniquely suited to host those so the library would need to identify someone who could fill that role. M. Kissinger said he could provide some ideas, if needed.

UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said the Expedition statistics will be reported at the upcoming meeting. She said she was surprised to see that about 900 of the 2,000 people who took part became 36ers. She noted that the NYLA conference is being held next month in Saratoga, and attendance counts toward trustee training hours. C. Wijeyesinghe asked for a link to the schedule.

NEW BUSINESS

2023-24 plowing contract

G. Kirkpatrick presented a contract with the company that provided the service last year. He said they wanted to explore a three-year contract, but were told it was a more formal process. The cost of the service has increased by \$500 over last year.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously voted to accept a bid from Young Landscapes LLC for plowing sanding and salting from Oct. 25, 2023-May 1, 2024 in the amount of \$13,000.

SEQRA process

G. Kirkpatrick said he had met with Ashley McGraw and the landscape architects about what needed to be done to get the SEQRA review started. He said there is plenty of time to complete the process and it is the library's desire to be the lead agency as it was during the HVAC project. The library will have to engage an attorney to guide it through the process. C. Brancatella asked if the SEQRA review could hold the project up. G. Kirkpatrick said it is more about the requirement for public notice. M. Walsh asked if this could be completed before the property consolidation. G. Kirkpatrick said that he has been told that it could and that the biggest concern would be stormwater runoff. L. Scoons asked if the library could use the same attorney as the school district. G. Kirkpatrick said that would be looked into. M. Kissinger said it was the library's project and therefore it should be leading it.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously voted to act as the lead agency in the SEQRA review process.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick said a patron who works with EMS asked about having an AED at the library. He said he had looked at public funding in the past, but it is also something the library could afford to buy outright for \$1,000-\$3,000. Yearly training and battery maintenance would be a small ongoing expense. He asked if it was something the board was interested in pursuing. M. Walsh said it is something that school districts and summer camps are requiring. G. Kirkpatrick said the holdup has traditionally been less about the cost and more about staff interest. C. Wijeyesinghe said she would like to see a more formal proposal and assessment of staff interest at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Library properties consolidation

G. Kirkpatrick said that all parties agree that the library's four parcels need to be combined to allow for a building expansion. The question is whether it should be under school district or library ownership. If owned by the school district, all major building projects would require SED approval. The library is still exploring whether the school district can hold the bond if the library owns the property. Bonding options are also available through DASNY. At this time, the library's biggest decision is whether it wants to own the consolidated property or asked the school district to own it. The architects are recommending school district ownership because then it does not have to go before the zoning board of appeals. M. Walsh noted that bonding through the school district might have some savings over going through DASNY. C. Wijeyesinghe encouraged board members to read through the email from the library's attorney. She said she would like an attorney's recommendation with a clear legal opinion before moving forward with a decision. M. Walsh asked if delaying the decision would affect the project moving forward. G. Kirkpatrick said he didn't think so as the architects were already moving forward with the assumption of school district ownership. He said he would be reaching out to the school board with M. Kissinger to see where they stand. G. Kirkpatrick said that once there is an agreement, the process will be relatively quick.

Plaza entry – update

Work has begun and should be completed by the end of the week.

Mileage reimbursement policy – 1st read

C. Wijeyesinghe said the draft has not changed, but the policy was due for board review.

Gifts, Memorials and Bequests policy – 1st read

C. Wijeyesinghe said that based on feedback from the last meeting, this policy has been separated from the naming opportunities discussion. This first read draft is similar to the current policy but that book donations will no longer be accepted. C. Brancatella said she is not in favor of allowing any gifts with special conditions. She said the board probably already has the discretion to decline those gifts whether it says so or not, but she is concerned the wording might invite issues. M. Walsh asked why the library would not want restrictions. L. Scoons said they wouldn't want any restrictions that are in conflict with the library and its mission. G. Kirkpatrick said that of all the gifts the library has received, almost none has come with conditions. The board generally agreed it was fine with the wording of the policy. C. Brancatella thanked fellow board members for hearing her out.

Policy Committee update

- *Naming Opportunities policy discussion*

C. Wijeyesinghe presented a draft of a naming opportunities chart but said the policy was not ready for a first read at this time. She asked the board to decide whether they wanted to allow naming opportunities for program series and what other naming opportunities are there that haven't been listed. The board discussed the pros and cons of allowing sponsorships of library programs. M. Kissinger said he wouldn't want to say no to a gift, as long as librarians have full discretion over program selection. G. Kirkpatrick suggested that putting something in the policy that says all naming opportunities must come before the board for approval would make that clear.

Other old business

G. Kirkpatrick's evaluation process will begin later this month.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session to discuss the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property at 8:15pm.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned the executive session at 8:49pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:50pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president