

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)  
Monday November 13, 2023

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella  
Laura DiBetta  
Mark Kissinger  
Sarah Patterson  
Lisa Scoons  
Michelle Walsh  
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe  
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director (virtual)  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary  
Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services  
Chris McGinty, assistant director  
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk  
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw Architects  
Elbert Eller, Ashley McGraw Architects  
David Layton, Sage Engineering  
Karen Beck, Bethlehem Historical Association  
Bill Ketser, Bethlehem Historical Association  
Heather Lewis, auditor, Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co.  
Andrew Reilly

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

#### PUBLIC PARTICPATION

K. Beck, a Town of Bethlehem Historical Association trustees, said she and Town Historian B. Ketser wanted to advocate for secure area for local history documents at the library as part of the upcoming building project. She said it would increase the safety and accessibility of the source material that is currently stored at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse in town.

C. Brancatella asked what the historical association was offering in terms of collaboration. K. Beck said that staff and volunteers would help the library organize the material. C. Brancatella asked if the organization would be willing to help get the word out about the building project. K. Beck said they would. M. Walsh asked if they were envisioning a need for a room with public access or just storage space. C. Wijeyesinghe said that adding the materials to the collection would have some staffing implications.

#### ANNUAL AUDIT PRESENTATION

S. Whiting introduced H. Lewis, the principal in charge of the library's recent audit. H. Lewis noted that the copies of the audit and letter in the board packet were in draft form, but she didn't expect them to change significantly. The required communication letter outlined the audit

process. H. Lewis discussed elements of the draft and said that auditors did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls that would be considered material weaknesses. The letter also included corrected misstatements that were not considered material weaknesses. H. Lewis said the auditors were required to note a significant risk that management could override controls and financial reporting bias based on their potential significance to the financial statements and revenue recognition. She said that this is an inherent risk in any organization and not specific to the library.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked about the recommendation that journal entries be formally reviewed and approved by the treasurer. S. Whiting said that change has already been implemented.

M. Walsh questioned the wording regarding the significant risk. She said she was concerned about how it would appear to the public without any context explaining that it is a risk that can be found in any organization and not the result of the library doing something wrong. L. DiBetta asked if the auditors could add an explanation to the effect. H. Lewis said she would send some proposed language changes to S. Whiting.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously accepted the draft audit report pending additional wording to explain the significant risk statement.

#### ASHLEY MCGRAW ARCHITECTS – BRIEF PRESENTATION

S. Angarano presented the final schematic design proposal after recapping the visioning and five “whys” of the project. She said that there is still time to develop and refine the concept, but that it is a good time to have a conversation about the cost and scope of the project.

She said that a big part of design rationale was enhancing visibility of the library from Borthwick Avenue. Flexible meeting rooms would provide ample space for community and library programming. Inside, public study rooms would increase from 4 to 12.

In the design, both the teen and children’s area have enclosed designated spaces attached, with an open play/reading area in the back of the children’s area. The architects said they had received a lot of feedback about the space along with concerns that it did not represent the improvements that staff and trustees were looking for. That is why they wanted to take a closer look at the space needs and make sure everything fits appropriately. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the craft room would be available as flexible play space when not in use. G. Kirkpatrick said he would be talking to staff about their thoughts on how to best use that room. M. Walsh said the storage area still seemed a bit small. L. DiBetta said she felt much better about the space after seeing the latest design.

Trustees met about four weeks ago to narrow down some exterior design options, and the architects came up with something that incorporates organic shapes and natural materials, along with a modified butterfly roof. All of the exterior elements are meant to complement the existing building’s architectural elements. M. Walsh said that the new roofline looks very tall and she was worried voters might have concerns. C. Wijeyesinghe said she was concerned about sightlines into the children’s area.

S. Angarano said the next steps would be planning for the bond vote, community outreach and determining project cost. She shared some design options that would either add to or subtract from the total cost, which is estimated at almost \$38 million.

M. Walsh asked what kind of safeguards exist to protect this cost estimate. S. Angarano said that the contingency line is trying to account for any unknowns.

D. Layton from Sage Engineering presented two different types of potential HVAC systems. He said the first option and the least expensive would use the existing gas-fired system and add units as needed. A second greener option would use a geothermal well under the parking lot and ceiling heat pumps. He said that option has high upfront costs and is not likely to provide a timely return on investment although there are opportunities for incentives from the federal government.

S. Angarano said that the board should consider their target project cost moving forward. G. Kirkpatrick said they would likely need that by the February meeting so that it would be ready for the school district to add to the May vote.

## MINUTES

C. Wijeyesinghe said that she was not at the October 16 meeting as noted on the minutes.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved minutes from the Tuesday October 10 meeting.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved minutes from the Monday October 16 building committee meeting with the change noted above.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### *Treasurer's update*

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

- The timing of tax revenue payments from the school district is a little different this year than in the past. Although the library has received nearly 95% of the payments, they did come in a little later than last year.
- Interest income is higher this year because rates are better.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the finance committee works with S. Whiting on the T-bill and CD investments. S. Whiting said it is discussed at the meeting, but when one comes due, a decision is made right then. M. Walsh said the committee defers to S. Whiting's expertise. She thanked S. Whiting for all of the positive investments she has made on behalf of the library.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 October 2023 (Checks disbursed in October 2023 based on pre-approval \$53,859.43; Checks disbursed in October 2023 relating to payroll \$194,091.23; Checks being submitted for approval \$89,040.62; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$21,272.00; Total: \$358,263.28).

## PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said a couple of positions have been filled internally, meaning there is a need to backfill those newly vacant spots.

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

- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week, \$16.26/hour or per contract.
- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 7.63 hours/week, \$16.26/hour or per contract.
- Custodial worker, part-time, permanent, 18/hours/week, \$18.72/hour or per contract
- Librarian 1, part-time, permanent, 7.67/hours/week, \$29.83/hour or per contract

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Librarian Rachael C. was interviewed on Spectrum News along with local author Catherine Bruns to promote NaNoWriMo at the library.
- G. Kirkpatrick included all of the public services programs from the last month to highlight how much is going on at the library.
- He also noted that October was a big month for outreach. He said an increase in outreach activities was outlined in the Long Range Plan. Outreach is labor and staff intensive but worth the investment.
- G. Kirkpatrick said he wanted to thank the Guilderland library for providing trustees with a tour of the space and an up close look at their RFID system.

## UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said there is some additional construction grant money that will go to library projects they weren't able to fully fund before. The central library budget was approved, and almost all of that money goes directly to OverDrive. There will not be a UHLS meeting in December. L. Scoons said she attended NYLA this year and found it very worthwhile. M. Walsh, who attended before COVID, agreed.

## NEW BUSINESS

### *NYS and local retirement invoice*

G. Kirkpatrick said that the invoice offers a small discount if it is paid before Dec. 15. M. Kissinger asked if there was a way to see how many employees are at each tier. G. Kirkpatrick said he could pull together that information.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to approve pre-payment of the NYS&L Retirement System invoice in the amount of \$263,799.

### *Computer purchase*

G. Kirkpatrick said he was requesting the purchase of five laptops for staff and 10 to replace the public PCs. L. DiBetta asked what happens to old computers. G. Kirkpatrick said some are put to other uses in the library like running smart boards and slideshows and are eventually offered up to other libraries in the Upper Hudson system. M. Walsh asked when was the last time computers were replaced. G. Kirkpatrick said that they are replaced as needed. Last year the library replaced 4 of them.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously voted to approve the purchase of five Dell computers at a total cost of \$4,873.00 and 10 Dell computers at a total cost of \$8,239.50 available through government contract.

*Boiler repair*

Another section of the boiler is leaking and in need of repair. Quotes were sought from multiple vendors and Trane came in with the lowest price. C. Wijeyesinghe asked where the money would come from for the repair. S. Whiting said it is budgeted for in the Capital Expenditures line.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to approve the cost of repairs to the library's boiler in the amount of \$8,025.00 with work to be conducted by Trane.

*Public Library Association Conference attendance proposal*

G. Kirkpatrick said the conference happens every other year, and the one in 2024 is within driving distance so he is proposing that four staffers be allowed to attend.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to approve the cost of sending four staffers to the PLA conference in Columbus, Ohio, in the approximate amount of \$7,869.20.

*Staff Development Day*

G. Kirkpatrick said trustees were invited to take part in all or part of Staff Development Day Friday, Dec. 1. Ashley McGraw will make a presentation to staff in the afternoon and AED training and the State of the Library will take place in the morning. S. Patterson and C. Brancatella volunteered to coordinate dessert for the staff.

*Other new business*

G. Kirkpatrick presented an estimate for Patron Point, a system that integrates e-mail marketing with other library software and provides an opportunity to better target and market to library users. He said East Greenbush is in the process of implementing the software. While it is expensive, with the upcoming building plan it would add value to the way the library communicates with the public and extend the reach of marketing opportunities. M. Walsh asked if the discussion could be put on the agenda for the December meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

*Library properties consolidation*

Conversations about consolidation continue with the school district. M. Kissinger and G. Kirkpatrick will be meeting the following Monday with school officials and their attorneys to discuss whether the transfer of property below market value would require a referendum. Everyone is on board with the need to consolidate the property but it is still undecided who would hold the title.

*Mileage Reimbursement policy – 2nd read*

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously voted to accept the proposed updates to the Mileage Reimbursement Policy.

*Gifts, Memorials and Bequests policy – 2nd read*

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to accept the proposed updates to the Gifts, Memorials and Bequests Policy.

*Displays and Exhibits policy – language update*

The board agreed to table the discussion until the December meeting. M. Walsh noted that the date of the first read needed correction.

*Other old business*

There was no old business discussed at this time.

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. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 8:12pm to discuss the employment history of a specific individual.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board adjourned the executive session at 8:32pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:32pm.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president