

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)
Tuesday October 15, 2024

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella (virtual)
Laura DiBetta
Mark Kissinger
Sarah Patterson
Gail Sacco
Michelle Walsh
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Lisa Scoons

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Elbert Eller, Ashley McGraw
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw
Bob Schofield, library attorney
CJ Goodwin, construction manager, Schoolhouse
Meredith Savitt
Polly Hartman, Friends board
Mary Service, Friends board
Jeremy Johannesen, Friends president
Mary Kinnaird, Friends board
Richard Naylor, Friends board
Anne Moore
Texanne Corrigan
Fran Royo
Robert McDonnell
Bonnie Goldsmith
John Fallon
Jeff Brown
Agnes Zellin
John McPhillips, BCSD chief business and financial advisor

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

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Five people spoke during the public comment period. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube. See addendum for e-mail correspondence from two patrons.

ARCHITECTS' PRESENTATION

S. Anganaro from Ashley McGraw presented a design and project status update, reviewing the project goals, plan and scope, costs and next steps.

E. Eller noted that the proposed site plan increases parking from 117 spots to 136. He said designers understand and appreciate the green spaces around the building and worked to create a welcoming environment, including an outdoor stage and pavilion area. The façade facing Delaware Avenue would remain the same.

S. Anganaro said that 40% of the project is an addition, while the remaining 60% is renovating and providing new infrastructure for the existing building. She noted that a lot of work will go into rehabbing the 50-year-old building to bring it up to current code and maintain its long term lifespan. She said that the final design reduced the size of the community rooms to remain mindful of the costs and scope of the project.

C. Goodwin, principal construction manager with Schoolhouse, said he joined the project two months ago, at which time he worked with Ashley McGraw to create an independent budget estimate that took into account design and construction contingencies.

S. Anganaro said that one part of the most recent design update focused on refining the children's area to provide dynamic and whimsical elements that would be safe to play on, as well as the exterior green spaces. She presented the updated renderings of spaces throughout the library and an exterior flythrough video.

She said the architects would continue to schedule information sessions, and work with staff to review stacks and storage, along with interior furnishings.

RESOLUTIONS RELATED TO BUILDING REFERENDUM:

SEQR STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW

M. Kissinger said the board would be discussing four different resolutions.

B. Schofield said that taking action on the resolutions would represent the culmination of the project planning process. He said they would need to be addressed in the following order to comply with New York state regulations:

1. Conclude the SEQR process with the issuing of a negative declaration stating that the project will not have a significant environmental impact.
2. Pass a resolution that defines the project scope.
3. Protect the library district from any unintended effects of the tax cap.
4. Ask the BCSD board of education to call special district meeting to allow people to vote on the details of the project.

B. Schofield reviewed the details of the full environmental assessment form and how the answers were arrived at.

G. Sacco asked if another SEQR would be required if the public does not pass the building project bond. She said she was concerned about the work and expense that went into it. B. Schofield said that if

a follow-up project didn't significantly expand the scope, then they might be able to use the existing work. He said even if it was necessary, much of the work could be reused.

M. Kissinger said he wanted to make sure that the public knew that the new design would not be an eyesore to the community and that the architects took great care to make sure that the design fit in with the character of its surrounding neighborhood.

On a MOTION/OFFER by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board approved a resolution adopting a negative declaration under the state environmental quality review act for the renovation and expansion of the library. C. Brancatella, M. Kissinger, S. Patterson, G. Sacco and M. Walsh voted in favor. L. DiBetta abstained.

REFERENDUM SCOPE

B. Schofield said the referendum approving the scope of the project represents the board's decision to go forward with the proposal as outlined by the architects and construction manager.

M. Kissinger asked if the resolution includes the estimated budget for the project. B. Schofield said the project cost would be part of a later resolution and would note the budget presented at the October 15, 2024 meeting.

On a MOTION/OFFER by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously adopted a resolution approving the scope of the Bethlehem Public Library capital project.

M. Kissinger said that he has been a part of this building project journey since 2017 and before, and he wanted to thank the architects and everyone on the team. He said he was hopeful that the community would support this investment in the future of the library.

TAX CAP OVERRIDE

B. Schofield said he was not sure a tax cap override vote was necessary but it would insulate the board from any issues that might arise during the repayment of the bond.

G. Sacco asked if the bond repayment will appear as part of the library's budget each year.

On a MOTION/OFFER by G. Sacco with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously adopted a resolution overriding the tax cap levy limit with respect to the library's capital project.

RESOLUTION TO DIRECT BCSD TO CALL A SPECIAL DISTRICT VOTE

B. Schofield said that state education law allows school district libraries to piggyback on the school district's voting process while still governing themselves independently. He said the following resolution would ask BCSD to hold an election for a bond to cover the library building project with an election date of December 12, 2024. He said that the election will likely be held at the library but it would be the school districts decision.

On a MOTION/OFFER by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board adopted a resolution to direct the Bethlehem Central School District BOE to call a special meeting of school district voters to vote upon a proposition authorizing the financing and construction of the BPL building project. C. Brancatella, L. DiBetta, M. Kissinger, S. Patterson and M. Walsh voted in favor. G. Sacco voted against.

M. Walsh said that she wanted the public to know that the board did select the date after careful consideration. G. Sacco asked if early and absentee voting had been worked out. She said she wanted to make sure as many people as possible can vote.

B. Schofield said those details would be worked out by the school district. The expenses of the election would be covered by the library.

BUILDING EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Noted under new business

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday September 9 regular board meeting.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by G. Sacco, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday September 16 building committee meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report. She said the library was looking at investment options when a CD comes due November 4, but she didn't want to tie up funds too much with project with a building project on the horizon. M. Walsh praised S. Whiting for being on top of available investment options.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 September 2024 (Checks disbursed in September 2024 based on pre-approval \$45,628.76; Checks disbursed in September 2024 relating to payroll \$199,439.28; Checks being submitted for approval \$98,118.24; CapProject Fund Checks \$20,821.12; Total: \$364,007.40).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

There were no personnel actions requested at this time.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Sacco noted that one of the programs was attended by 138 people with some children's sessions totaling more than 100. M. Walsh said attendance at the library's historical programs was also evidence of the need for space at the library.
- M. Kissinger said he recently attended an event featuring a former diplomat and it was excellent.

UHLS REPORT

There was no UHLS report at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Ashley McGraw contract

The board reviewed an amendment of the existing contract with Ashley McGraw that included the remaining project phases and outlines payment terms for the construction document phases. G. Sacco asked why the architects were working on construction documents before the passage of a bond. G. Kirkpatrick said that the construction documents are needed to apply for SED approval. The architects have said they would be ready by the end of December if the vote passes. M. Walsh said they would need the documents right away to get the process moving in a timely manner. G. Sacco said she was uncomfortable with that and she felt like someone else is running the board's timeline.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board approved then amendment of the contract with Ashley McGraw Architects for construction document fees. C. Brancatella, L. DiBetta , M. Kissinger, S. Patterson and M. Walsh voted in favor. G. Sacco voted against.

Other new business

L. DiBetta said the building project education committee meeting is developing a tactical plan leading up to the Dec. 12 vote, featuring outreach, tabling and other options. She said the committee is working to refine key messages and prepare a special mailer that will go out in late November. She said the group would meet the following day to discuss the details. S. Patterson said she talked about the project at the Presidents Council.

M. Walsh said she had recently had a book request that took a full week in transit and asked if there was some way to flag when those issues arose so they could be dealt with promptly.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One person spoke during the public comment period. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube. G. Kirkpatrick read submitted emails from Bonnie Goldsmith See addendum.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously voted to enter into executive session at 8:26pm to discuss matters involving proposed, pending or current legislation.

G. Sacco MOVED to adjourn executive session at 9:15pm. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

The board adjourned the regular meeting at 9:16pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president

Fw: Bethlehem Public Library, Board of Trustees

From: Donotreply <Donotreply@bethlehempubliclibrary.org>

Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2024 3:56 PM

To: Trustees2 <Trustees2@bethpl.org>

Subject: Bethlehem Public Library, Board of Trustees

From: Jeremy Johannesen

Question/comment:

Firstly – please note that I am writing strictly speaking for myself as an individual patron of the library, and NOT in my role with the Friends.

As the Trustees consider when to schedule a Bond vote, I implore you to pursue a May 2025 date, concurrently with the School Budget Vote.

There seems to be a sense of urgency to move forward on the Bond vote as quickly as possible. The need for a significant renovation of our town's library has been steadily growing for quite literally decades. Yes, delay does increase the cost – but there are other costs to be considered as well.

Today is October 9; December 12 is just over two short months away.

63 days is completely inadequate to design, implement, and execute a successful promotion and get out the vote campaign. That unnecessarily tight timeline will all but doom the effort to failure.

Failure on a December Bond vote will cost the community for a second vote implementation. More importantly, failing once will cost the next generation of this community the benefit of the renovation project as it has been designed. To justify a re-vote the project will likely need to be revised downward. Our kids will have less of a library because the vote was rushed.

History has demonstrated that the most likely time and place for the passage of a library bond vote is in conjunction with the school budget vote, on the same ballot in May. (Evidenced in Guilderland.)

Our community has time and again demonstrated their overwhelming support for the school district and the library on the May ballot. It is worth a concerted effort to ensure that this project is presented to the voters in a way that will result in the greatest participation. The May school budget vote will draw multiples of participants over a December vote, and is the best and most democratic way to determine the support of the community.

PLEASE don't give up on this important process by needlessly rushing the bond vote forward.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Johannesen

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Bethlehem Public Library website - Board of Trustees.

Public Comment received 9/30/24

From: Bonnie Goldsmith-Rooney

I REQUEST THAT YOU READ ALOUD MY QUESTIONS AND YOUR RESPONSES to be included in the minutes of the next Library Board meeting.

How much has been spent, to date, on the building project (i.e. architects, studies, surveys, attorneys, etcetera)? Please itemize and be specific about all expenditures thus far. Is this amount part of the \$36 million? What is the funding source of the monies spent to date?

Please post my questions and your answers on the Bethlehem Library website in the section entitled "Building Project Updates, FAQs"

From: Donotreply <Donotreply@bethlehempubliclibrary.org>

Sent: October 11, 2024 11:45 AM

To: Bethlehem Director <director@bethpl.org>

Subject: Bethlehem Public Library, Library director

From: Bonnie Goldsmith-Rooney

Subject: email the director

Hello Library Director:

Have there been any other library bond votes in Bethlehem over the past 10 years? If yes, please specify what those bonds were for, if the votes passed, and if they did pass, what was the annual average tax increase per household (and for how many years)? Please read my question aloud at the upcoming meeting next week and respond with your answers.

Thank you.

Bonnie Goldsmith

Outlook

Bethlehem Public Library, Board of Trustees

From Donotreply <Donotreply@bethlehempubliclibrary.org >

Date Fri 10/4/2024 10:24 AM

To Trustees2 <Trustees2@bethpl.org >

From: Bonnie Goldsmith-Rooney

Question/comment:

Good Morning Library Board of Trustees,

I am a frequent patron of BPL and very much enjoy going and perusing the shelves.

I have two questions for you:

- 1) I recently sent you an e-mail with a question about how much has been spent so far on the library expansion project and have yet to hear back. What is the turnaround time for responses?
- 2) Is there a law regarding how much notice must be given to Bethlehem residents prior to the Library Bond vote? If yes, how much notice must be given? If no, how much notice will be given?

Again, please read my questions aloud and respond at the next library board meeting. And, please send me an e-mail response.

Thank you,
Bonnie Goldsmith-Rooney

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Bethlehem Public Library website - Board of Trustees.