

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday August 11, 2025

PRESENT: Jill Adams
Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger (remote)
Sarah Patterson
Gail Sacco
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED: Michelle Walsh
Laura DiBetta

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Robert McDonnell

President C. Brancatella called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public spoke during the public comment period. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

K. Roberts noted a mistake that would be corrected in the final version.

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by G. Sacco the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday July 14 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report.

- She noted that the auditors were in the library in July for some preliminary work and will back later this month to finish up. She said staff have been getting them the requested information and the process was going smoothly.
- The finance committee has been looking into automating checks from the H fund to make it more secure. The system won't allow two signatures on the check, which has been a past practice, but the finance committee is comfortable with dropping that practice because the checks are still reviewed by multiple people. C. Brancatella asked if that would raise any questions with the auditors. S. Whiting said she does not foresee it being a problem.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by J. Adams the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2025 (Checks disbursed in July 2025 based on pre-approval \$53,606.17; Checks disbursed in July 2025 relating to payroll \$214,967.58; Checks being submitted for approval \$43,518.66; CapProject Fund Checks \$4,537.50; Total: \$316,629.91).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he was requesting to refill a library page at some future time when needed. He also noted that he would be moving some of the hours around to even them up for all of the pages.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to approve the following position:

- Library Page, part-time, permanent, 11.4 hours/week, \$15.50/hour

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- The squeaky motor on the rooftop HVAC unit is being addressed.
- The scope of work and SEQR for the boiler project will be presented at the September board meeting.
- Longtime volunteers from gardening arm of the Progress Club will be stepping back and discussions have begun on how the library will move forward with landscaping planning. G. Kirkpatrick said he was very grateful for the contributions of these longtime volunteer. G. Sacco asked if there was some kind of certification of appreciation that they could be presented with. G. Kirkpatrick said he may put together a resolution of recognition for the next board meeting.
- G. Sacco asked if any progress had made on acquiring a new fish tank for the Children's Place. G. Kirkpatrick said the glass would be arriving the next day, with the cabinet and lights coming at a later time. G. Sacco asked about the plaque noting the donation. C. Brancatella said the topic needed further discussion.
- G. Sacco noted that the self checkout station in the Children's Place really enhances a child's library experience.

UHLS REPORT

M. Kissinger said the Upper Hudson board does not meet in August. He will provide a board update after they reconvene.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said she will not be able to attend the upcoming Friends meeting. G. Kirkpatrick said that the Friends and HILL have launched a new websites hosted on outside servers that can be managed solely by them. He said their first sponsored trip to Tanglewood was a success, and they will likely do more in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Room Access and Use Policy

G. Kirkpatrick presented the proposed updates to the policy. C. Brancatella noted that the board has committed to continue reviewing the policy, and many of the updates are changes based on how the policy is working in in real life.

One change would allow the acknowledgement form to be completed online as part of the signup process. The publicity requirement has been dropped as it was not enforceable. G. Kirkpatrick said the library is still requiring room applicants to provide information about any speakers being brought in and note that their program is not affiliated with the library. The board discussed the possibility of signage to indicate that those programs are not library-sponsored events.

Updates would also raise the number allowed in a room checkout event in the Community Room to 30. The training requirement for room use will also no longer expire.

C. Brancatella said that community groups are required to meet one of three conditions that are legally defined, and political groups that meet that definition are permitted to use library meeting spaces, but the library wanted to further define what type of activities those political groups are allowed to conduct on library grounds. That language would be included in an update to the Solicitation and Distribution Policy. G. Sacco asked if the board could further explore whether or not to allow a 501c(4) designation as eligibility for room use.

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved updates to the Meeting Room Access and Use Policy.

Solicitation and Distribution Policy

M. Kissinger asked how the library currently defines a political group. G. Kirkpatrick said it was primarily defined by activities described in the Solicitation and Distribution Policy. C. Brancatella said the policy outlines what political activities are permitted or not and is based on legal guidelines.

The board agreed the addition was needed to the policy but asked for some clarification from an attorney about what constitutes a political activity and where the line is between partisan and non-partisan.

G. Kirkpatrick said the board could pass the updates to the policy in the current form and revise as needed pending additional legal guidance.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by J. Adams the board unanimously approved updates to the Solicitation and Distribution Policy.

Communications Committee – update

C. Brancatella said the purpose of the committee is to strengthen and expand communications about board issues.

- The committee made a note of current communication methods and areas where to expand.
- Library staff would be putting together an opt-in email group for neighbors in the immediate vicinity of the library to communicate activities like tree cutting, paving, etc. that could have an impact on them.
- C. Brancatella proposed that after each board meeting one of the trustees would provide a short video highlight of the main discussions. She said she will film the first one, but welcomed other trustees to take part.
- The committee plans to meet again in September.

- G. Sacco asked if the committee could add a discussion item at the next meeting about creating a small printable that can be handed out to people while out and about in the community.

Staff Handbook

C. Brancatella said that attorneys have gone through the staff handbook to make sure it meets all the legal requirements, and because of that, it is not the most reader-friendly document. G. Sacco had suggested that it be paginated to make it easier to search, and staff is currently working on that.

G. Kirkpatrick said that at one time, the library had a dress code, but it was suspended during the pandemic, and during that time dress expectations have changed across all industry. He said the library is still trying to figure out the appropriate thing to say about clothing and has suggested that nothing torn, ripped or dirty be allowed, along with non BPL graphic T-shirts (promoting concerts, movies, etc.). The board discussed what would be considered a “graphic T-shirt” and suggested additional guidance in the wording in the handbook.

G. Kirkpatrick said the revised handbook would likely come before the board in September.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick presented a proposal for attendance at the upcoming NYLA conference in Saratoga Springs. He was looking to get approval to lock in early bird rates.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by S. Patterson the board unanimously approved the attendance of six employees at the November 2025 NYLA conference at a cost of \$1,571.50 to include registration and incidentals.

OLD BUSINESS

Trustee training

G. Kirkpatrick said he would start polling trustees to see when they would like to watch the ALA training videos to complete their required 2 hours of yearly board training.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:18pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president