

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday September 8, 2025

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Sylvia Taylor, library employee
Chris O'Brien, library employee and union representative
C.J. Goodwin, Schoolhouse Construction

President C. Brancatella called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Library employee C. O'Brien spoke during the public comment period and shared some thoughts on the language about the dress code in the proposed staff handbook update.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board approved the minutes from the Monday August 12 regular board meeting. J. Adams, C. Brancatella, L. DiBetta, M. Kissinger, S. Patterson and G. Sacco voted in favor. M. Walsh abstained.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report.

- The auditors are currently at the library finalizing their field work. The finance committee will meet some time in October to review the prepared financial statement from auditors.
- L. DiBetta asked about a two of the budget lines. One was for accounting services, which is an annual fee paid to BOCES for the accounting software we use, and the other was the workers comp line. S. Whiting noted that it was slightly over because it was based on the

previous year's salaries. T. Choppy said that the library typically receives credits that will reduce the amount in spring.

- The library's investments with Metropolitan Bank earned over \$5,000 in interest last month.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 August 2025 (Checks disbursed in August 2025 based on pre-approval \$91,905.06; Checks disbursed in August 2025 relating to payroll \$218,565.86; Checks being submitted for approval \$53,912.27; CapProject Fund Checks \$0; Total: \$364,474.19).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. There were no personnel actions requested at this time. A previously approved page position continues to be held.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick noted the great attendance at the library's summer programs.
- He said the number of people participating in the adult summer reading program was especially high this year. C. Brancatella asked what might have contributed to the jump in participation. G. Kirkpatrick said that a lot of it had to do with the prizes, which were sponsored by the Friends of the Library, supporting programming and marketing. M. Walsh said she was particularly impressed by the rainbow-themed prize baskets.
- The new Yoto devices reach a wider age range than the Tonieboxes and have been a popular addition to the library's collection. C. Brancatella asked if people can check out the cards individually or if they come with the device. P. Berardi said both options are available.
- The new Upper Hudson app has launched and has been customized by P. Berardi, who is working to restore all of the functions that the old app was capable of.
- L. DiBetta noted some missing data for computer signups.
- G. Sacco asked if there was a way for the library to have a more visible presence at the Thursdays in the Park events, such as a prominent banner because she feels like the library's and the Friends' roles in the partnership are being overlooked.
- G. Sacco praised the Summer Reading Challenge and said her granddaughter was very proud of completing it. She said she it might be nice if some of the programs took place outside summer camp hours so more children could attend.

UHLS REPORT

M. Kissinger said the board has not yet had a meeting since he joined. G. Kirkpatrick said that the biggest Upper Hudson news is the launch of the new app and the upcoming catalog switchover. M. Walsh asked if users of the old app would see a prompt telling them to download the new version. G. Kirkpatrick said Upper Hudson had asked for that but was unable to get the old app developer to do so.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said she will be attending the Friends' October meeting. She has met with Friends' president Mary Service. The book sale will be held Sept. 27, with book donations accepted on the 25th.

C. Brancatella noted that donations must be in good condition. G. Kirkpatrick said the Friends are still looking for book sale volunteers.

NEW BUSINESS

Boiler replacement project resolutions

C.J. Goodwin presented a breakdown of the boiler construction costs and contingencies. He noted that while the estimate with all of the contingencies and escalation estimates is \$300,000, he doesn't expect the final total to be anywhere near that amount.

M. Walsh asked why there was such a large escalation of costs in the estimate if the boiler replacement is anticipated to be short-term project. C.J. Goodwin said that the project had not yet gone through SED approval and there were still some final asbestos assessments to be made so he wanted to prepare an estimate that was conservative to avoid the need for the board to have to vote again if a significant change order came through. He also noted that tariffs could impact the cost of piping. Whatever is left unspent of the project estimate will remain in the library's general fund.

The board reviewed the necessary resolutions to proceed with the boiler project. M. Walsh noted that the library board acts as a body and asked that the wording in both resolutions be changed to reflect that. The amended language would strike the phrase "... or, in the opinion of the President, desirable..."

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board approved a resolution, as amended, finding that the boiler replacement project constitutes a Type II Action under SEQR and no further review is required. J. Adams, C. Brancatella, M. Kissinger, S. Patterson, G. Sacco and M. Walsh voted in favor. L. DiBetta abstained.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved a resolution, as amended, approving the scope of the boiler replacement project and directing the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$300,000 less any grants received to fund the project.

C. Brancatella asked if there would be additional board action required for the project once the proposal receives SED approval. C.J. Goodwin said the board would need to officially accept the contract. G. Kirkpatrick said that the school district will need to authorize the library to submit the project to SED. He said school officials are aware of the project.

Property history

G. Kirkpatrick presented information about the history of the library property, including the acquisition of additional parcels. He said that both the library building and the original property belong to the School District. The three parcels purchased after the library was built belong to the library.

L. DiBetta said that it was clear the original shape of property was never going to be sustainable over the long term so it makes sense that previous boards would have tried to acquire additional space.

C. Brancatella said the compiled information provides good context for the board and public. She noted the 59 Borthwick purchase is part of the history of trying to address the space constraints of the original parcel. J. Adams said it made sense to put the library in central location even with the challenges of the space.

PILOT update

G. Kirkpatrick said the library has retained counsel and a letter will be going out shortly to express the library's interest in being part of the PILOT discussions.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Staff handbook

C. Brancatella noted that concerns about the language regarding the dress code had been raised during the public comment portion of the meeting. She also noted that the document had been reviewed by an attorney and contained a lot of legal language. L. DiBetta said it might be more user friendly if the sections with a lot of legal language were moved toward the end of the document and sections of more interest to new employees were near the front. G. Kirkpatrick said the document would be accessible online, with hyperlinks to pertinent sections.

The board continued their discussion about the dress code requirements, specifically what constituted a graphic T-shirt. They agreed that it can be difficult to define, and while they want to be accommodating to staff, they did not feel like concert T-shirts and other types of graphic T-shirts should be part of the library work attire. Many board members felt that the language regarding "tight and revealing" clothing when not in reference to the nature of the work being done was unnecessary and should be removed. G. Sacco asked if there was anything in the dress code that would prohibit religious head coverings. G. Kirkpatrick said religious head coverings have never been prohibited at the library.

C. Brancatella asked if the board felt they had reached enough of a consensus to be able to approve the handbook, with the understanding that it is a document that can be revisited as the need arises. The board agreed to remove the portion about "tight and revealing" clothing and rearrange the sections to make it more user friendly.

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the updated Staff Handbook as amended.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Library employees S. Taylor and C. O'Brien addressed the board regarding the dress code in the staff handbook. S. Taylor asked if the board would consider another round of library T-shirts for employees. C. Brancatella said it was something that could be discussed at the next board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:50pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president

BOARD ACTIONS

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