

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday March 9, 2026

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Chris McGinty, assistant director/Public Services
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Robert McDonnell
Bruce Phillips

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There were no public comments at this time.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

L. DiBetta noted that there was an errant line of notes in the minutes that needed to be deleted.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously approved the minutes with the deletion as noted from the Monday February 9 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report.

- G. Sacco asked what the PEG funds were for. T. Choppy said that it is money that the town receives from local cable provider fees that can be used for equipment to create content for the public access channel. She said the money was used to purchase vlogging equipment.
- M. Kissinger asked about the CDPHP and MVP expenses.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 28 February 2026 (Checks disbursed in February 2026 based on pre-

approval \$114,496.96; Checks disbursed in February 2026 relating to payroll \$221,621.73; Checks being submitted for approval \$49,675.41; Total: \$385,794.10).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said there was a slight change and there was a second page position requested to be backfilled due to a recent resignation.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously voted to approve the following positions:

- Library page, part-time, permanent, 12.8 hours/week, \$16.00/hour or per contract
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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The board noted the director's report.

- The number of people using the library for study space is increasing.
- C. Brancatella noted that even with the decrease in magazine and general circulation, the door count continues to grow, meaning that people are finding other reasons to come into the library.
- M. Walsh asked if purchasing of new materials is decreasing with decreasing circulation. G. Kirkpatrick said there has been a shift in money to electronic items because that is where the demand is. He noted that those materials are more expensive. He said that the library keeps a close eye on wait times for new materials to see where the demand is.
- G. Sacco noted that a lot of formerly book-based research for students is now done online.
- C. Brancatella said the good thing about electronic wait times is that there are no late returns because it is returned automatically.
- S. Patterson noted that UHLS borrowers also have access to borrow online materials from three other library systems.
- There was high attendance at the youth break week programs.
- G. Kirkpatrick encouraged the board to check out the changes in the Children's Place as things were being moved around to create more space for imaginative play. The Friends of the Library have donated much of the cost for these improvements.

UHLS REPORT

M. Kissinger did not have anything to report at this time.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said she has been working with Mary Kinnaird to see if they could get some Friends-branded mugs to sell.

NEW BUSINESS

Spotlight archive request

The board discussed the request for the removal of an individual's name in an article from the Spotlight archives. G. Kirkpatrick said the board had reviewed this particular request before. He said that in the letter requesting the removal, the attorney noted the individual's age at the time was 17 and that the charges had been dismissed. The attorney also noted that The Spotlight had also unpublished the article from its own archives.

G. Kirkpatrick said that these types of requests will continue to come before the board, and although the law is very strongly worded that there is nothing to legally compel the library to redact its

archive, the board may want to consider how they would want to handle these requests moving forward because the nature of the Internet has made the archives more easily searchable.

G. Sacco said she would be in favor of a policy that makes the digital archive of The Spotlight in-library use only to balance access with these concerns while keeping the archive intact.

C. Brancatella said the board has a couple of things to discuss: 1.) The reconsideration of this individual's request, and 2.) How will the board handle these requests moving forward.

L. DiBetta said she would want further discussion about any general policy that would remove access digitally because of the barriers it would create, even for people in the community.

S. Patterson asked if it would be possible to lock access behind a library card. G. Kirkpatrick said it is technically possible but he wasn't sure if it was feasibly possible with the library's resources.

M. Walsh said that in this particular case, she felt different once she learned that The Spotlight had removed it from their archives. She said she does not have a problem removing it from the library's searchable digital archives.

M. Walsh made a MOTION to redact the article including the mention of a minor related to a crime entirely. There was no SECOND.

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by M. Walsh the board voted to remove the name of the minor from the archived article in question. J. Adams, M. Walsh, L. DiBetta and S. Patterson voted in favor. C. Brancatella, M. Kissinger and G. Sacco were opposed.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted to develop a policy regarding requests to modify the archives. G. Sacco, J. Adams, M. Walsh, L. DiBetta and S. Patterson voted in favor. M. Kissinger and C. Brancatella were opposed.

The board discussed how this type of policy might be put in action and whether it is part of the Collection Development Policy. M. Walsh said she suspects that such requests would still have to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, regardless of a new policy.

C. Brancatella made a MOTION to amend the motion that just passed and not create a new a new policy but to review the Collection Development Policy to determine whether it is necessary or feasible to add guidelines regarding requests for changes to the library's archives. L. DiBetta SECONDED. The board voted unanimously in favor.

Other new business

There was no other new business discussed.

OLD BUSINESS

2026-27 draft budget

S. Whiting said the budget was discussed at the last meeting, and there was one small change to the state aid line that resulted in a reduction in the amount that would be required from the fund balance.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the 2026-27 library budget as written for public presentation. The budget proposes a levy of \$4,899,451, an increase of 3.98%, coming in under the New York State tax cap.

Boiler project update

G. Kirkpatrick shared the progress of the boiler project and said the replacement would be taking place in the coming week.

Borthwick/communications – update

C. Brancatella said the board will hold a March 30 informational presentation to the public about potential uses of the Borthwick property. She shared the discussion of the Communications Committee about how to best present that information to the public. She noted that the tagline is Greenspace for Growth.

C. Brancatella said the anticipation is that demolition will take place mid-summer.

Director evaluation – update

S. Patterson said that it is in progress and should be ready in the next couple of weeks.

Other old business

M. Kissinger encouraged board members to share any thoughts on the Long Range Plan. C. Brancatella said she the committee hopes to have a draft ready by the end of the year.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:21pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president