

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday August 10, 2026 (DRAFT)

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED: Laura DiBetta
Mark Kissinger

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Chris McGinty, assistant director/Public Services
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Mary Service
Claire Crawford
Bruce Phillips

President C. Brancatella called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One person submitted a comment online, which was read by G. Kirkpatrick. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday July 13 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report.

- Expenses are on par with last year at this time with the exception of a few July expenses that were not paid until August. The auditors will be at the library to finish up field work, and we expect to have financial statements for the November board meeting.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2026 (Checks disbursed in July 2026 based on pre-approval \$51,520.85; Checks disbursed in July 2026 relating to payroll \$230,150.69; Checks

being submitted for approval \$115,831.73; Checks being submitted for approval – Capital Project Fund \$7,498.30; Total: \$405,001.57).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. There were no personnel requests.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The board noted the director's report.

- G. Kirkpatrick said he would be sharing a proposal later in the meeting for the replacement of the fan motors in two of the library's four rooftop heating units.
- He said the library's curated book bundle service, which was started during the pandemic, is a way for book lovers to get out of a "reading rut" and a good chance for readers advisory.
- He noted the good attendance at the library's America 250 programs and said the Friends would be hosting a visit to Fort Ticonderoga in October on the 250th anniversary of a major battle to hold the line at the fort.
- Youth services programs have had really high attendance this summer. G. Sacco asked about registration numbers for the Summer Reading Challenge. G. Kirkpatrick said he would get those and noted that it is an increase over last year.
- J. Adams asked if there has been any discussion with the middle and high school about students being able to practice their foreign language skills at the library's Conversation Clubs. G. Kirkpatrick said that it might be good to reach back out to them for a reminder.
- K. McNamara said she enjoyed watching the kids taking part in the scavenger hunt collaborating and working together.
- Checkout numbers are very close to what they were pre-pandemic, and the increases are all on the back of the digital collection. Door count has also been increasing.
- G. Sacco asked if it was possible to do a short survey to ask patrons what brought them into the library, maybe even as a quick pop up on the catalog computers. G. Kirkpatrick said staff have already been discussing such a survey, and he would check to see if a screen pop-up was something that could be done.
- C. Brancatella said that e-book users could help cut down on wait times for others by returning their selections early when done reading or suspending a hold if they aren't ready to start them right away. G. Kirkpatrick said that some changes were coming to Overdrive that will make the borrowing from the other libraries that are part of the reciprocal lending agreement even easier. He also noted there was no waiting with Hoopla.

UHLS REPORT

G. Sacco said she has received the UHLS handbook and the next meeting will be held in September.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said there was no meeting to report on.

NEW BUSINESS

Long Range Plan Committee update

C. Brancatella thanked the committee for all their work. She noted that the previous long range plan had been extended and will expire at the end of the year. She said the committee would be presenting the plan in two phases. The first phase presented to the board outlines subject areas they hope to address in the coming years. The second phase will include action items that

correspond to each of those subject areas. She noted the committee would be presenting one or two subject areas action items per meeting.

G. Sacco said that the model for this kind of structure comes from the Massachusetts Library Association. C. Brancatella said committee members read a number of long range plans from other libraries throughout the region. J. Adams said she was glad to see that making the library a “third space” and outreach were both included as goals. C. Brancatella said the action items have been drafted, but board members could still weigh in with suggestions. The action items will go to library staff to review whether they can feasibly be accomplished. G. Sacco said the final plan will cover the next three years.

On a MOTION by K. McNamara with a SECOND by G. Sacco, the board unanimously voted to Accept the first phase of the 2027-2030 long range plan, which is an outline of subject areas they would like to address.

C. Brancatella said that the plan addresses building maintenance and other building needs to better provide service to patrons. She said based on feedback from the community received through an exit survey at the 2024 bond vote, the ceiling of what the public would potentially support is around \$10 million. She asked the board if they were interested in discussing another bond proposal to meet the long range plan goals. Board members said they were in favor of the discussion. G. Sacco noted that some of the work done by previous architects and engineers would still be applicable. C. Brancatella said that the discussion would be part of the agenda moving forward. She added that improvement of the children’s area and addition of a teen room and more study rooms are focus areas based on feedback from the public. G. Sacco said that any significant structural needs should be addressed. S. Patterson added that a more accessible entrance could also be part of the discussion.

Rooftop unit motor replacement

G. Kirkpatrick said the maintenance crew heard a high-pitched sound coming from two of the rooftop heating units and that is how they learned the fan motors are failing. The units were installed in 2018 and have experienced some wear so he would like to have them replaced now so they don’t fail during the winter. Because of the location of the units, Trane Services has come up with a solution that does not require an expensive crane assist. Workers will use a lift to get the motors onto the roof and a specialized roof cart to transport them. G. Sacco asked that the library get assurance from Trane that if the roof is damaged during transport, they would be responsible.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by G. Sacco, the board unanimously agreed to allow G. Kirkpatrick to enter into a contract with Trane Services for the replacement of two fan motors in the amount of \$17,390.

Continuing education proposals

G. Kirkpatrick shared conference attendance proposals for NYLA and the Library Marketing and Communications Conference.

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to authorize expenses associated with NYLA and LMCC attendance.

Other new business

There was no other new business discussed.

OLD BUSINESS

Boiler project update

G. Kirkpatrick said the boiler project is officially completed. C. Brancatella noted that it was the No. 1 priority on their building maintenance list, and it came in below budget.

59 Borthwick demolition project update

G. Kirkpatrick said he would be meeting with a town representative the following day for a quick inspection of the house as part of the building permit application. He said the electricity and gas will be turned off shortly, followed by abatement of the asbestos siding. The Delmar Fire Department has reached out about using the building for entry training before demolition and the contractor has said that can take place after the asbestos abatement. J. Adams said that was another great example of the library providing education opportunities for the community. C. Brancatella said the communications committee will meet near the end of August once a project timeline has been established to discuss how to get information about the project out to the public.

Recording policy – draft and discussion

S. Patterson said the draft before the board to review was based on a template provided by the library's attorney and is a substantial reworking of the current policy that was based on the assumption that staff couldn't prevent people from filming in the library. The attorney has advised that recording can be prohibited and the library has an obligation to protect people's privacy in library space.

C. Brancatella said that while the library may be legally allowed to prohibit some types of recordings, board members should think about whether it can feasibly be consistently enforced from an operational standpoint.

G. Kirkpatrick noted the complications under the drafted policy that come with the use of Zoom calls and other streaming activities that take place in the library, as well as patrons taking pictures of their family or friends inside the library. He said the goal is to find a way to allow what would be considered "reasonable recording" while still protecting patron privacy.

G. Sacco said that an important component would be how any restrictions to recording is communicated. S. Patterson said that the attorney also provided templates for language to use in signage and when interacting with patrons.

K. McNamara said she was concerned about the operational aspect regarding enforcement and noted that it could be unwelcoming and lead to a level of alienation among some library users. She also said she would want people to be able to take a Zoom meeting at the library.

S. Patterson asked how the board would like to proceed with the draft as she is hearing the board's concerns.

C. Brancatella said that the cleaner approach is to prohibit recording, but she had reservations because she fears it could dissuade groups like tween and teens and others using the library as a "third space." She suggested that before the next board meeting, the policy committee meet with the attorney and discuss some broader categories, as well as asking staff about how it could feasibly be enforced.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president

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