MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday September 14, 2026

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Chris McGinty, assistant director/Public Services
Tanya Choppy, business manager
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Nan Rabinow, Delmar Progress Club
Mary Service
Claire Crawford

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

One member of the public addressed the board. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by J. Adams with a SECOND by K. McNamara, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday August 10 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report.

- She noted that the audit went smoothly.
- G. Sacco asked about the timeline for receiving tax revenue from the school district. T. Choppy said almost all of it is received by mid-October. For the remainder – the unpaid taxes – the school district disperses that once the state has made them whole sometime in early spring.
- M. Kissinger asked about the checks on the bill schedule made out to individuals. T. Choppy said those were for performers/events held over the summer.

- L. DiBetta noted that some of the expenses lines are already at 75% with the library only a couple of months in the fiscal year. S. Whiting said that those expenses, audit and insurance, are a one-time fee for the whole year.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 August 2026 (Checks disbursed in August 2026 based on pre-approval $103,245.49; Checks disbursed in August 2026 relating to payroll $226,052.24; Checks being submitted for approval $98,397.29; Checks being submitted for approval – Capital Project Fund $1,999.57; Total: $429,694.59).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he is requesting to fill a recently vacated page position, and noted it is not unusual to have pages leave at the end of summer. G. Sacco asked about the hours. G. Kirkpatrick said they are primarily afternoon, evening and weekend hours.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by K. McNamara, the board unanimously voted to approve the following positions:

- Library page, part-time, permanent, 10.1 hours/week, $16.00/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The board noted the director's report.

- Circulation numbers haven't been this high since July 2019.
- Reciprocal lending with other systems through the Libby app has been streamlined to now search for a title in other library systems automatically. Those RLA stats have already doubled in the past month since it has been implemented so more people are benefitting from the service without having to manually opt in. G. Sacco asked if the ability for reciprocal patrons to borrow from the Upper Hudson collection is having an impact on our borrowers. G. Kirkpatrick said that it only involves titles that are available when the search is made and it doesn't allow outside borrowers to put a hold on popular titles.
- The retro library card design has been popular with a number of print-on-demand requests.
- Conversation clubs have been popular with some requests for an evening session. Staff are looking into whether this is feasible.
- Mah Jongg continues to be popular as groups are independently forming after participants learn to play. J. Adams said it is a great service to the community.
- A lot of the summer programs had to be held inside because of unpredictable weather.
- Erin Meyer completed the Senior Planet Train the Trainer program AARP program and is now certified to offer a wide array of training one-on-one and groups.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that a lot of staff time and effort went into the Summer Reading Challenge. G. Sacco said she thought the prizes were better this year but the finish rate was not great. G. Kirkpatrick noted that there was a drop off from sign up to completion. He said he had some parents say the challenge was too easy and others who felt the opposite. G. Sacco suggested that the library consider logging reading minutes so children could pick books that interest them instead of something that just falls into a category. She also noted that the Summer Reading software was confusing and hard to use. G. Kirkpatrick said that some libraries are moving back to paper tracking for that reason.
- C. Brancatella noted that the high door count last month didn't include the very successful Community Day, which they would discuss in more detail at the next meeting.

UHLS REPORT

G. Sacco said she is on the services committee. She said there will be a meeting to discuss cooperative lending of print books, in addition to ebooks, with other library systems. She said UHLS Director Chris Sagaas is being very cautious about what might be agreed to. Upper Hudson is also looking into the feasibility of forming a health care consortium.

She noted that some area libraries have received money from their Assembly representatives and noted that might be something to pursue for future projects.

G. Kirkpatrick said the health care consortium discussions are in the very early stages but noted there are some models for it around the state. C. Brancatella said it is good to be realistic about the timeframe as the approval process could take years.

FRIENDS REPORT

J. Adams said that C. McGinty had presented a wish list to the Friends, and she will update the board on the discussions. She reminded everyone about the upcoming book sale and donation day and noted that volunteers were still need for Thursday and Saturday.

The Friends have also approved the purchase of 12-by-24-foot shed for the Borthwick lot.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Day report/survey

G. Kirkpatrick said the survey combined in-house responses with ones that were received via a link that went out in the e-news. He said that the results were not unexpected, but it was good to get public comments.

- For the first time, the website ranked higher than the Footnotes newsletter as the place people received their library news.
- G. Sacco noted that most of responses were from people who live in Delmar so that could explain the higher ranking for the location and other items.
- The teen space received the most lukewarm ranking of all the areas.
- Helpfulness of staff was highly rated.
- G. Sacco suggested taking a deeper dive into the collection diversity topic.
- C. Brancatella said there was some good information in the survey but it is important to remember that the results are from people who responded to the survey and not necessarily the community at large.
- L. DiBetta said the children surveys are fantastic, with heart-warming comments and some really good ideas.

Parking lot paving

G. Kirkpatrick noted that parking lot paving was the third item on the board's building priorities list and something they should be thinking about as the Borthwick property demolition wraps up. He noted it would involve milling, paving and filling the sinkhole in Lot 1. The general layout of the lot would remain the same. He said the project should be pretty straightforward but potentially expensive. L. DiBetta asked if they could explore the installation of EV car charges as part of the project.

Story Hour Room and Studio

G. Kirkpatrick said that use of the studio space is extremely limited, and it has been serving as storage for book sale items since May. He was recommending that it be closed permanently and converted to storage space. He also said he would be looking at making the story hour room bookable to

the community as meeting rooms are in high demand and the story times have outgrown that room anyway.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick said that the erratic behavior of an individual who frequently comes into the library has become increasingly aggressive and edged into harassment. This individual has been banned for a period of time previously. G. Kirkpatrick requested a new ban for 18 months. G. Sacco asked how a ban was enforced. G. Kirkpatrick said that if the individual comes onto library property, law enforcement would be called. L. DiBetta asked if the police were prepared to handle someone with this individual's issues. G. Kirkpatrick said they are familiar with this person. He said he has a contact address and would be notifying this person of the board's decision. C. Brancatella said that it is not a decision made lightly, but every effort has been made to resolve this ongoing issue.

> On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by J. Adams, the board unanimously voted to ban Tessy Nedy from the library for 18 months due to repeated violations of the harassment and patron conduct policies.

OLD BUSINESS

59 Borthwick demolition project update

Water and sewer at the property have both been capped. Contractors needed to remove one panel of sidewalk, but the concrete pad has since been poured back in to meet town specifications. We are still waiting on National Grid to schedule a time for gas shutoff. All utilities must be capped before a building permit can be issued.

Recording policy – discussion/staff reaction

G. Kirkpatrick said that he had talked to staff about the recording policy discussion. The general consensus of staff was that a blanket policy would be harder to enforce. They were concerned about the time it would take to enforce and the negative perception that it would create. He said he will continue to talking with the attorney to determine the library's obligation in protecting the confidentiality of library records. He noted that the library has to protect people's rights to privacy, but it has to be enforceable.

C. Brancatella noted the restrictive draft from the attorney and said the board is trying to find a happy medium that is less nuanced for staff to enforce but would allow innocuous recordings. L. DiBetta asked if it was something that could be added to the patron conduct policy. M. Kissinger asked what sort of expectation of privacy is there in a public library. L. DiBetta said that she wants to be able to tell someone they need to stop recording her or her family if they are uncomfortable. G. Sacco said that if a person doesn't want their child filmed, then they are responsible for finding a space where it isn't happening. C. Brancatella noted that any policy regarding recording is going to be slightly imperfect, but the goal is to have something that protects patrons and can be enforced by staff.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

S. Patterson said the board should consider the request made by the Progress Club during public comment that they be allowed to book out ahead of time meeting space at a regular monthly time. C. Brancatella said that what they are asking for is an exception to the policy. G. Kirkpatrick said that the times they are looking at are when the library is holding children's story times. J. Adams asked if they

were an affiliated entity. G. Kirkpatrick said the only library affiliated group is the Friends of the Library. C. Brancatella said that the questions they were looking at were: 1. Does the board want to make an exception to the policy and what sort of precedence does that set? 2. Do we discuss what's involved with making them an affiliated group? And 3. Does the policy need to be changed?

M. Kissinger said it is time to review the meeting room policy anyway. C. Brancatella said that the board can continue to discuss it as an agenda line at the October meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:46pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
C. Brancatella, board president