

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING (VIRTUAL)
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
May 11, 2020

PRESENT: Mark Kissinger – arrived 6:17pm
Harmeet Narang
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Brian Sweeney
Michelle Walsh
Caroline Brancatella

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator

*All present via Zoom broadcast live on YouTube and the library website.

President M. Redmond called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

M. Redmond asked board members to introduce themselves to the public. There were no public participation comments submitted at this time.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 20 April 2020 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by B. Sweeney with a SECOND by C. Brancatella.

FINANCIAL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick presented the Treasurer's report.

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by B. Sweeney, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 April 2020 (Manual Disbursements \$63,662.72; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries for April \$193,413.58; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable for May \$70,321.92; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks for April \$0.00.)

H. Narang asked about the \$136,000 difference from this time last year and asked if the library was on track. T. Choppy said the library received a little bit more in property taxes this year, but expenses are about the same.

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said the library treasurer position is under actions requested following the resignation of R. Khalife. M. Kissinger asked if it was a position that was essential to fill in the next two months in terms of compliance. G. Kirkpatrick said the treasurer provided another set of eyes on the financials, but in response to a question from M. Redmond, T. Choppy said that day-to-day bookkeeping and payroll duties would continue unaffected. T. Choppy also noted that it would be very difficult to train or bring a new treasurer up to speed while remote working. The board agreed that they would move forward with posting for the position, with the caveat that a start date may be some time in the future.

M. Kissinger asked G. Kirkpatrick if there might be a way for the library to take advantage of the talent pool this summer of new college graduates with tech-savvy skills. G. Kirkpatrick said he would look into the feasibility regarding civil service classifications.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick pointed to some of the new digital statistics the library is now collecting. He noted that YouTube saw a huge jump in use as it became a platform to broadcast meetings and provide video programming.
- He noted that virtual reference help by phone, e-mail and social media has been steady. M. Kissinger asked what kinds of questions people were asking. G. Kirkpatrick said a lot of it involved providing tech help to people who were new to e-books and digital materials, as well as account help.
- G. Kirkpatrick said he doesn't expect the library's efforts to engage with the public virtually to drop off even once the doors are open as in-person public programs will most likely not be part of the first phases of re-opening.
- He said audiobook use has been flat, owing to the fact that many people use them on their commutes, which are not happening as much during the PAUSE order.
- He said staff continue to work hard to provide services to the public under current conditions and plan how the reopening can be accomplished in a safe way.
- G. Kirkpatrick noted that the effectiveness of the e-mail newsletter implemented by K. Roberts can be seen in the jump in Hoopla users following the initial campaign. L. Scoons said the more than 50% open rate was very good.
- M. Redmond said the board was very appreciative of the creativity of the staff during this difficult time.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said the next scheduled meeting was that Wednesday. She said they would be busy reviewing the annual awards submissions, and would be starting the conversation about construction grant applications and guidelines.

NEW BUSINESS

Lynda.com subscription proposal

G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to approve a year's subscription to Lynda.com a training and workforce development website. He noted that it would serve the library's goal of providing job re-training and skills development critical for job seekers. He also said it would be a valuable staff training tool as well. Public Services staff have tested this service as well as similar services and have found Lynda.com to be superior. It would be accessible to only Bethlehem cardholders, but they would have unlimited access to the training videos with the subscription price.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger and a SECOND by M. Walsh the board unanimously approved the purchase of a Lynda.com online training courses one-year subscription for \$7,000.

Budget 2020-21/election process update

G. Kirkpatrick told the board that the school district would be sending out an absentee ballot that includes the library's budget and trustees vote. M. Redmond said she fully supports L. Scoons' bid for re-election based on her work on the board during the previous five years.

Budget letter

The board said they were happy with the tone of the updated budget letter. G. Kirkpatrick said that while the library isn't required to put a levy request before the public every year, it is something our voters like. K. Roberts said that a virtual Meet the Candidates night would be help Wednesday, May 27, at 6pm. A mailer featuring the budget and the candidates would go out shortly after the list of candidates becomes available.

Primary voting

G. Kirkpatrick said that Albany County typically contracts with the library to use it as a polling place, and they had reached out about whether the library would be available for the June primaries. M. Kissinger said he had some concerns about moving forward as a primary place with so many unknowns as far as where the library would be at with its phased reopening. G. Kirkpatrick said that if the library were to be a polling place, he would close it for library business on that day for safety. M. Redmond asked if the board thought the public would want the library to serve as a polling place. M. Kissinger said he that with a limited opening, he would rather the library be open for library business.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger and a SECOND by L. Scoons to board unanimously agreed to decline entering into a contract with the county to be a primary polling place.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick told the board that Hoopla use has been robust, especially among Bethlehem patrons, and the amount of money Upper Hudson had set aside to keep the service going for six month would likely run out in June. G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to approve additional funding of \$5,700 for the service to keep it going through September, at which time they could re-evaluate the service, which has been very popular with users so far. The libraries in Upper Hudson were being asked to contribute an amount proportionate with their use. B. Sweeney

asked what kind of impact that would have on the materials line of the current budget. G. Kirkpatrick said that while e-materials spending was up, there have been savings in the programs and physical materials lines due to the library closure.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger and a SECOND by B. Sweeney, the board unanimously approved contributing an additional \$5,700 to fund the continuation of Hoopla services through the Upper Hudson Library System.

OLD BUSINESS

Phased reopening plan

UHLS plan

Libraries in NYS reopening phases

G. Kirkpatrick said the library continues to work on a phase reopening plan in conjunction with Upper Hudson, the goal of which is to create a unified reopening. He noted that when staff are able to return, they will work in three different teams on rotation to build in redundancy and promote social distancing. A lot of thought has gone into managing the intake of materials once the bookdrops open back up. Even with staggered due dates, it is expected that most people will want to drop off their old materials right away. The meeting rooms will be used as a staging area for returned materials.

H. Narang asked about the checkout of items from the Library of Things. G. Kirkpatrick said that is something that is still being discussed as far as how to circulate those items safely and provide access to technology for people who do not have it.

G. Kirkpatrick said the library is still unsure what phase of the governor's phased reopening plan libraries fall under. He said library groups are advocating that curbside pickup is more of a retail function and can be managed in a safe way, even though programming and use of the library as a gathering space is more likely to fall under phase 4.

Long range plan steering committee

H. Narang said then steering committee met and had a lot of good discussions about what they liked and didn't like with some of the layout schemes presented by P. Mays. He said most committee members found the removal of the Children's Place from the main library to be sub-optimal.

He said he would be compiling those thoughts in an email to share with the board and P. Mays.

HVAC update

G. Kirkpatrick said a check would be coming from DASNY soon representing the remainder of the unspent project funds. He was following up the the Division of Library Development to get the last 10 percent of the construction grant. M. Redmond asked if they could prepare a final accounting of the costs and expenditures for the Financial Committee to review at a future date.

G. Kirkpatrick said K. Coffey would be talking with Trane officials to figure out how to get maximum outside airflow into the building. Although this is not typically optimal, it is a preferred solution to promote health and safety during the pandemic.

Other old business

M. Redmond asked at which stage were the union negotiations. G. Kirkpatrick said they were very early in the process and he had met with the contract negotiation committee and attorney.

FUTURE BUSINESS

Background checks

No further discussion at this time.

Plaza feasibility – to be included in the long-range plan

No further discussion at this time.

Policy updates/schedule

No further discussion at this time.

Resource sharing

No further discussion at this time.

Fines and fees

No further discussion at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:30pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Redmond, board president