

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday August 21, 2017

PRESENT: Joyce Becker
Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Caroline Brancatella

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Brian Sweeney

GUESTS: Tracey McShane, Personnel Administrator
Tanya Choppy, Accounts Clerk
Catherine Stollar Peters, Head of Tech Services, Circulation
Jeremy Johannesen, Executive Director of NYLA, Friends President
Catherine Brenner, CSEA president
Natalie McDonough, Manager, Programs and Community Outreach
Janice Irwin, BCN-TV Studio Manager
Judi Kehoe, BCSD chief business and financial officer
John Clarkson, Bethlehem town supervisor
Michael Cohen, Town of Bethlehem comptroller
Rabbi Nachman Simon, Bethlehem Chabad
Ali Hibbs, Spotlight reporter
Mark Gronich, City of Albany PEG Access Oversight Board
Andrew Reilly
Frank DeSorbo
Eileen Howe Bird
Mary DeTurris Poust
Joe Lombardo
Mary Richmond
Dan Wilcox
Haim Ben-Eliezer
Trudy Quaif
Gary Fish
Linda Graf
Joyce Tompkins
Guillermo Martinez
Michael Fuhrman

President M. Redmond called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW TRUSTEE

The board welcomed C. Brancatella to the board to fill the seat vacated by Paula Rice through the end of June 2018.

OATH OF OFFICE

Board President Mary Redmond administered the oath of office to C. Brancatella.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

M. Redmond advised those in attendance that the board would be holding a public participation period after the director's presentation on proposed BCN-TV studio changes.

MINUTES

M. Redmond asked that the minutes describing the board treasurer discussion under new business reflect that there is no specific job description yet for the position.

Minutes of the 10 July 2017 board meeting were unanimously approved on a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by J. Becker with the change noted above.

FINANCIAL REPORT

On a MOTION C. Brancatella with a SECOND by M. Kissinger, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2017 (Manual Disbursements for July \$16,608.57; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable for August \$96,714.17; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries for July \$179,321.57; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks for July \$0; Total: \$292,644.31).

M. Redmond asked that future reports include a note indicating any follow up taken on checks that have been outstanding for longer than a month.

BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION REPORT

The board noted Bank Reconciliations for July 1-31, 2017.

MANUAL INVOICES

None

RESOLUTIONS

None

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report.

PERSONNEL ACTION

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved new hires for the following vacancy, pending Civil Service approval:

- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week at \$13.19/hour or per contract.
- Librarian 1, full-time, permanent, \$50,668 annual/or per contract.

And hold the following positions without filling them at this time:

- Sr. library clerk, full-time, permanent, 15 hours/week at \$15.75/hour or per contract. (Previously approved at the July 2017 meeting)
- Television production assistant, part-time, permanent, \$13.19/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Although there was some concern that the hand dryer in the men's bathroom would be loud and disruptive to programs in the Community Room, which has proved to not be the case.
- Finding the space for the Nano exhibit in the Children's Place has been worthwhile. The exhibit has been very popular with kids.
- The library had a small gathering of people viewing the eclipse on the green, and the library was able to share some glasses that were on hand with people who wanted to see it.
- The new scanners can read barcodes from a patron's cellphone – an important upgrade following the debut of the UHLS app.
- The low loss rate of DVDs not in security cases means there should be some savings down the road as the library moves away from KwikCases.
- The Shelves of Support display in the library recognizes those who make substantial gifts to the library.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons noted that there was no meeting in August.

BCN-TV PRESENTATION

G. Kirkpatrick shared a PowerPoint presentation with a proposal for changes to the BCN-TV studio space and public access channel. (Document attached.)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Following the presentation, M. Redmond reminded those planning to speak of the 3-minute time limit outlined in the library's Public Participation policy.

The following people spoke:

- Trudy Quaif: Asked the board to keep current studio services. (Letter attached.)
- Mary Richmond: Told the board she believed BCN-TV was an important platform for the community.
- Joe Lombardo: Said BCN-TV was a free speech outlet for many and the library should consider ways to make the station a better resource if it is being underutilized.
- Dan Wilcox: Said the studio provided a creative outlet for poets and other artists in the community.

- Frank Desorbo: Mentioned that BCN-TV has been a nice resource for Patriot Flight and veterans in general. Was in favor of improving equipment but asked that broadcast ability be retained. Asked if media file delivered in a broadcast-ready format would streamline process.
- Mark Gronich: Told the board to investigate ways to partner with other communities to jointly operate a PEG channel.
- Joyce Tompkins: Said she was opposed to getting rid of the BCN-TV broadcast and that a lot of people, especially the elderly, get their information from it.
- Eileen Howe Bird: Spoke in favor of the new technology but said the station provides a forum for the organization To Life to share breast cancer resources. She asked where residents would be able to watch the public access offerings if the station were to go.
- John Clarkson: Thanked the board for considering participation in First Night Bethlehem as a tween/teen venue. Said that the town broadcasts meetings on its website, but some people do still watch it on BCN-TV. He told the board he understood the need to balance financial issues with an organization's mission. Added that Comptroller Michael Cohen would be available as an informational resource.
- Judie Kehoe: Noted that the school district produces its own meetings with some people viewing them on BCN-TV. Urged the board to identify all alternatives before making a decision.
- Guillernmo Martinez: Said he resisted the move by cable companies 10 years ago to stop public access. Asked the board to look for additional revenue rather than dismantle the station.
- Michael Fuhrman: Told the board it would be a mistake to do away with the service provided by BCN-TV.
- Michael Cohen: Clarified that the \$600,000+ in franchise fees from the cable company go to offset town residents' property taxes and are separate from the PEG money, which is approximately \$22,000-\$24,000 per year and can be used for cable access equipment purchases.
- Rabbi Nachman Simon: Spoke in support of the station. Said it offers a good way to get out there and air differences and educate people.
- Linda Graff: Said the station helps church organizations get the word out when there is little money for advertising. Was in support of continuing current studio services.
- Mary DeTurris Poust: Said she knows that people are viewing mass on public access channels because the Roman Catholic Diocese gets calls when it is dropped from other stations.

Responding to a question about program scheduling, G. Kirkpatrick said there is still a significant amount of staff time involved in setting up the programs for broadcast as it is not an automatic process.

Some in the audience asked if the county would be willing to take over the public access channel.

The board thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

First Night participation

The Town of Bethlehem has requested that the library serve as a First Night venue for teens and tweens and be open from 7-10 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 31. G. Kirkpatrick said that the total cost to the library to participate has not changed significantly from last year's estimate of approximately \$2,000. J. Becker asked if there would be staff willing to work, and G. Kirkpatrick said there were enough potential volunteers last year. The board noted that the biggest stumbling block would be lack of volunteers in maintenance, especially if there were snow removal issues. J. Clarkson said the town may be willing to help with plowing/snow removal. M. Redmond asked G. Kirkpatrick to see if staffers would be willing to work that night, and the board said they would be willing to move forward as a First Night venue if there was enough staff participation.

NYLA conference attendance

The board reviewed two conference proposals. One would send 11 staffers to the NYLA conference in Saratoga Springs at a cost of \$2,051. The other would provide continuing education for T. McShane through a six-week Building Transformation Leadership with Confidence seminar at a cost of \$399.

On a MOTION by J. Becker and a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously accepted the NYLA conference attendance proposal for \$2,051.

On a MOTION by J. Becker and a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to fund the Building Transformation Leadership with Confidence seminar for \$399.

Snow plowing

The board reviewed the bids from vendors. G. Kirkpatrick noted that Pangburn Landscaping provided plowing services last winter, and maintenance staff was very happy with the results. Snow removal is a separate service as it is charged on an as-needed basis. The quote was for parking lots only. H. Narang asked if it would be possible to get a quote that included initial sidewalk plowing. The board agreed it was something to look into but to go ahead with choosing a quote at this time.

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by L. Scoons the board unanimously accepted the 2017-18 snowplowing services quote from Pangburn Landscaping for \$5,800.

59 Borthwick property

G. Kirkpatrick noted that the property sale has been finalized and utilities have been transferred to the library. The property will be part of the discussion of capital needs in the fall. M. Redmond asked if the library would have any responsibility for taxes accrued before 59 Borthwick became part of the library's property. G. Kirkpatrick said he would touch base with Judi Kehoe to see if he could get that question answered.

Other new business

None

OLD BUSINESS

Fire alarm and security project update

G. Kirkpatrick said the project is still waiting to be assigned for SED.

HVAC project update/NYS Construction Grant

The NYS construction grant application is due Sept. 1, so G. Kirkpatrick will be busy compiling the application materials through the end of the month. Our contractor's estimate will be ready by Aug. 24, so the turnaround will be quick. The library could see up to 50% of the project returned through grant money, but any amount would be a significant help.

Pavement repair update/ Parking lot sealing and restriping update

The BOCES contractor has given the library a bid for sealing and restriping, but one of their repair subcontractors has already given a bid. As procurement responsibilities move to other staffers, this will be a good project to get them up to speed.

Board treasurer

The board continued to discuss the position and responsibilities of the board treasurer as required by state law. M. Redmond said she was leaning toward a paid position, rather than volunteer and would like to see someone with a CPA background. M. Kissinger said the board could consider creating an exempt position. H. Narang said that the board should start putting together a job description for the position, and while he liked the idea of a CPA, the cost could be prohibitive.

Other old business

- J. Becker asked the board to think about what the next steps would be in the discussion about BCN-TV. The board discussed scheduling a public hearing, with the notice being posted on the station itself. M. Kissinger suggested putting together a FAQs document to answer questions to clear up any misconceptions. The board also asked that J. Irwin be asked to research other software or equipment that could potentially streamline scheduling of broadcast-ready shows. In response to a question by C. Brancatella, the board noted that the public can also get in touch with the board through email, letter and can call the director. M. Redmond said people should know the library has listened to the public input and is still looking at options.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that this summer was the second time Bethlehem has served as the No. 1 stop on the NYLA library tour.
- With the library being down one full-time librarian, the program schedule might be a little lighter until a new one is hired and up to speed.
- The popularity of the solar eclipse glasses was unexpected, but the library now knows what to expect in anticipation of the 2024 event. One patron was unhappy that there was not enough space for one of the eclipse lectures

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

On a MOTION by J. Becker with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Redmond, board president

A/V MAKERSPACE AND STUDIO REDESIGN

GOALS

Create an audiovisual makerspace/tinkerspace in the library

Enhance technology learning opportunities for citizens of all ages

Make the studio space available for public use during all hours the library is open

Provide equipment, training, and space for users to create and distribute A/V content

Enhance video content on the library's website and increase the number of library programs available via the web and other digital media

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Insufficient staffing levels to maintain current services offered by the studio – even before recent resignation

Insufficient capital funds to update critically outdated equipment in the studio

Inability to use PEG funds for maintenance and repair leads to large amounts of time spent by staff maintaining older equipment

Equipment and software support needs are outside the expertise and scope of the IT department to maintain appropriately

Studio is not ideal for office space – small cramped area requiring public to walk through staff work space

RECOMMENDATIONS

Begin transformation of studio space this fall and early winter

Transition current producers to new equipment as it comes online

Continue to use the BCN-TV channels to cablecast the Community Bulletin Board and board meetings from the Town of Bethlehem and the Bethlehem Central School District

Eliminate the 15 hour/week studio assistant position – currently vacant

NEXT STEPS

Seek further input from stakeholders

Separate studio recording space from staff office space

Retool equipment and software in the studio to allow for user A/V production, including recording, post-production, self-publishing, and distribution

Create a user equipment certification program similar to the existing 3D printer certification program

Move existing cable connections, cablecasting equipment, and office to a staff area within the library

Transition and train producers currently using studio space in the use of the new recording equipment and software

August 21, 2017

To: The Bethlehem Library Board of Trustees

My name is Trudy Quaif. I have hosted 45 tv shows, produced by the public access studio here in the Bethlehem library, over the past 4 years. I am a member of Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace and the name of the show is "Peace Now!". I have interviewed more than 40 individual activists from the community, and talked with each of them about local and national issues that they are concerned about. These shows have been broadcast in Albany, Schenectady and Burlington, Vermont, as well as here in Bethlehem.

I appreciate the Bethlehem Library for providing this access to the public media, during a time when, on a national level, we are slowly losing our democracy, and the average person has very little input into the major media. The tv studio, and the people who work in the studio, have provided a wonderful service to our community. The studio manager, Janice Irwin, is very professional and has done an excellent job of producing the shows.

It is no secret that telecommunications corporations would like to reduce the funding that they provide as part of the public rights-of-way -agreements. These corporations have proposed changes in federal regulations that would result in the loss of funding for local programming, and facilities, and the loss of local control. Clearly, the public would lose, if these laws are changed.

I am very sorry to hear that the Bethlehem Public Library has voluntarily chosen to close the public access tv studio. The result of this decision will be that the general public has less access to the media, and less opportunity to use the library facilities. I appreciate that the Bethlehem Library has chosen to continue to maintain the tv studio until now, and use the franchise revenues to provide public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access operations. There is no other mechanism in place to ensure that the interests of the community are represented among cable channels. I would encourage you to continue to use as much of the franchise fees as possible, to continue to fund PEG access at the highest level possible.

Having the tv station in Bethlehem has enhanced our community by giving a voice to members of our community and this strengthens our democracy. We are living in a time when the mass media cannot be counted on to provide a free and independent voice to the people. Public access is vitally important to maintaining our democratic freedom. Why is the Bethlehem Library choosing to discontinue this service, even though the funding from the cable companies is still available? It is clear that once the tv studio has been closed, there will be no turning back, and the library will provide one less service to the community.

Public libraries have always been there for the public, giving us access to knowledge, community, and ultimately, pursuit of interests, that are beyond the reach of commercial and political pressure. Libraries have played a critical role, in facilitating democracy and free speech. The decision to close the studio, is a decision to close an important avenue to freedom of speech.

Thank you for the many services that the Bethlehem Library provides to our community. I ask you now, to reconsider the decision to close the public access tv studio. This is the wrong time to close the door on public access tv in the Town of Bethlehem.

Respectfully,

Trudy Quaif
9 Westphal Drive
Delmar, NY