

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday August 10, 2020

PRESENT: Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Caroline Brancatella

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

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

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

LONG RANGE PLAN PRESENTATION

Library architect P. Mays outlined where things are in the planning process and what the next steps are. He noted that the board has been given a variety of layout schemes – from those with extensive interventions to ones that work within the library’s existing footprint. He said that at the next Long Range Plan Committee meeting, they would be looking at coming up with a hybrid of the preferred concepts from all the schemes. Once those ideas were solidified, there would be a graphic presentation to the full board. P. Mays said he and L. Hayes hope to wrap up the master plan around October and start looking at the next step.

The board asked if the analysis of the Borthwick property would be ready for review. P. Mays said that it had been completed and would be amended to the overall master plan. He said the main takeaway is that the property may be useful in the short term as storage but that the land is more valuable than the structure. He noted that demolition is something that is eligible for state construction grants.

P. Mays signed off the meeting at 6:12pm.

REMAINING AUTHORIZATIONS

G. Kirkpatrick noted that the authorizations now include the board treasurer, along with the director and the business manager, as bonded for \$1 million.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the revised board authorizations for 2020-21 as presented.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation.

The board continued the Long Rang Plan discussion. There was some discussion about where the planning process stood and how to move forward without a cost estimate for some of the schemes. L. Scoons said she thought P. Mays' time estimates put them ahead of where she felt they were. G. Kirkpatrick said any decision being made was for a long-range planning concept for the building, not an actual project. C. Wijeyesinghe said she would like to be able to get a tour of the library spaces so she can better conceptualize the elements in the various schemes. G. Kirkpatrick said it could be done on a Saturday in a safe and socially distant way. The board expressed interest in doing so.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 13 July 2020 board meeting and the 15 July 2020 Long-Range Planning Committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh.

FINANCIAL REPORT

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the library expected any issues with state aid due to the pandemic. G. Kirkpatrick said he has been told to expect the amount to be about 20 percent less than the approximately \$24,000 that was budgeted and that there could be some delays. He noted that the impact was greater for the library system than Bethlehem individually.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2020 (Manual Disbursements for July \$37,495.04; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable for July \$127,541.96; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries for July \$183,350.95; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks for July \$0; Total: \$348,387.95).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said the actions requested were changing the hourly salary of the board treasurer to \$50, which is what the previous treasurer made and replacing an open page position. M. Redmond said the financial committee has concluded interviews for the board treasurer and would like to offer a candidate the position, contingent upon a background check.

PERSONNEL ACTION

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved a new hire for the following vacancies, pending Civil Service approval:

- District library treasurer, part-time, permanent, up to 12 hours/week at \$50/hour
- Library page, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week at \$11.80/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Between curbside pickup, the Pop-Up Library and Book Bundles, last month was the first time physical circulation exceeded electronic circulation since the library closed in March. The Pop-Up Library now has set hours through the end of August, and the library is making note of new circulation patterns that are emerging from these services.
- Electronic materials had been dominating recent purchasing while the library was closed, but now that physical checkouts are happening, staff will seek to balance the need for new physical materials while maintain spending on electronic items.
- A curbside checkout graph illustrates how the service became more efficient as it went on.
- G. Kirkpatrick included some additional numbers of Hoopla, and said it is his recommendation that the library continue to offer the service beyond the expiration of the Upper Hudson group purchase. He said the numbers show it is very popular with BPL patrons and there would be outcry from the public if it were taken away.
- The library saw a huge month to month increase in the use of e-materials during the pandemic.
- Electric use has been lower this summer even though it has been a hot year. M. Redmond asked if those numbers factored in that the library is not open as much. G. Kirkpatrick said the settings have been tweaked to bring in as much outside air as possible, which means the humidity is higher, something the library is mitigating with dehumidifiers.
- H. Narang noted that circulation of DVDs has dropped off. G. Kirkpatrick said part of the reason is that it is more of a browseable collection. He noted that there are DVDs and binge boxes available at the Pop-Up Library. The board asked if DVDs requests could be made available through Book Bundles.
- H. Narang asked if there was some way that automatic overdue notices could be modified to note that there will be a delay before check in. G. Kirkpatrick said staff was looking into it, but notices go out systemwide, and with so many libraries operating in different ways, it is hard to have a uniform message.
- L. Scoons asked how quickly new materials were getting into circulation. G. Kirkpatrick said a lot of publishing has been kicked out to fall, but staffers have been busy processing the backlog of items that arrived while the library was closed. New materials go to fulfill BPL patron holds first. Book requests have remained steady compared to last year.
- H. Narang asked if there have been plans regarding how to maintain curbside services going into the cooler months. G. Kirkpatrick said staff have been looking at a tent and other modifications to the area.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said the board did not meet in August but the service committee did. She said they have nine applications for grants with the total amount to spend at around \$400,000.

NEW BUSINESS

Board committees

M. Kissinger encouraged the board to review the committee roster and see if there are other areas where members would like to serve. He said the time commitment is really up to the committee members. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if anyone else would be willing to serve on the personnel committee as it would be helpful to her as a new board member. The board noted that the committee memberships could be updated with a vote at any time.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the following board committees for 2020-21:

Standing Committees in the bylaws:

Building Committee – H. Narang, C. Wijeyesinghe
Finance Committee – M. Redmond, M. Kissinger
Personnel Committee – C. Wijeyesinghe
Nominating – as needed

Committees authorized each year:

Policy Committee – C. Brancatella, M. Kissinger, C. Wijeyesinghe
Long Range Plan Committee – H. Narang, M. Kissinger, L. Scoons, M. Walsh
Collections Committee – M. Kissinger, H. Narang

To authorize at need:

Negotiation Committee – L. Scoons, C. Brancatella

Fines

M. Kissinger said that at some point the library will have to turn fines back on, but he wanted to give people a lot of notice and set a target date. The board discussed what a reasonable target date would be and settled on November 1. They also talked about how to manage how the 72-96-hour quarantine period could affect the assessment of fines. G. Kirkpatrick said library staff was working on coming up with a procedure. He said having an actual date that fines will start back up will be reassuring to patrons, some of whom have expressed that they could be caught off guard by the fines switching back on.

M. Redmond asked that the topic of fines remains on the agenda each month so the board can revisit where they stand.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously voted to extend the no-fines provision through November 1.

Emergency authorizations

G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to extend the emergency resolution passed in June allowing the director/assistant directors to adjust as-needed some policies that could be affected by the need to respond to the current pandemic, such as waiving fines, adding mask-wearing to the patron conduct policy, etc.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond and a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously agreed to give the library director discretion in suspending library operations and to adapt the following policies as needed: Collection Development Policy, Borrowing Policy, Patron Conduct Policy, Programming Policy, and the Displays and Exhibit Policy through the COVID-19 emergency to expire at the September board meeting.

WiFi at Bethlehem Town Hall

The board was presented with a quote for the installation of the necessary infrastructure to provide Free Library WiFi to the Town Hall playground area. It would be a one-time cost as the ongoing signal will be coming from the library. Board members indicated they would be interested in the town sharing the cost. G. Kirkpatrick said free WiFi throughout town was a library mission and incredibly popular with the community.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved spending \$5,925 with Adirondack Cabling Inc. to install the necessary wiring to provide WiFi at the Bethlehem Town Hall park.

Other new business

There was no other new business discussed at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Long range plan steering committee - update

Discussed earlier.

MERV filters for HVAC

Discussed in the director's report.

Reopening phase discussion

G. Kirkpatrick presented an outline for plans to reopen to browsing, but said the board would have to weigh in on whether they felt the two-team staffing system should continue as is or if both teams be combined to add services. He said that once that was decided, there was a pretty clear path forward in planning to resume in-person browsing in the library.

The board discussed which services they felt were most important to resume. G. Kirkpatrick said there was a need for both the in-person browsing option, as well as computer use. Because computer use would be very staff intensive and bring patrons in for longer periods of time, the board agreed to phase in in-person browsing first with established limits.

G. Kirkpatrick noted that combining the teams would not necessarily mean everyone would be working at the building at any given time, and there was planning to be done in order to maintain adequate distancing, but additional staff would allow the library to expand the existing services, which are currently very labor intensive.

The board discussed what in-person browsing and staffing would look like. G. Kirkpatrick said there would be no chairs or areas to congregate, and the library would limit the number of people inside at any given time. The board wanted to make sure that the public was notified well in advance that the in-person experience would not be what they were used to in pre-pandemic times.

The board recognized that it is impossible to predict whether opening the library will decrease the demand for curbside service, but G. Kirkpatrick said staff would be watching the numbers closely to see any new patterns of use.

M. Redmond and M. Kissinger said they were strongly in favor of adding some Saturday service hours.

M. Kissinger said that there may be circumstances where the building would need to shut down once it has reopened, and it would need to be communicated to the public that this is a possibility.

The board discussed the timing of a reopening plan, and G. Kirkpatrick said he could start putting a strategy together right away. The board agreed to extend the director's emergency authorization power until the September meeting so that, if needed, re-opening plans could be implemented before that time.

Holidays and closings 2021 Board Meeting dates

The new holidays and closings calendar includes the addition of Juneteenth as a day the library is closed.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the 2021 holidays and closings and board meetings schedule.

M. Redmond asked if the library would be a polling place in November. G. Kirkpatrick said the library hadn't been asked yet, and he would look into it.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board adjourned to executive session at 8:44pm to discuss the employment history of a specific individual.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned executive session at 8:59pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 9pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president