

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Tuesday October 13, 2020

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Chris McGinty, assistant director

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

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

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 14 September 2020 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh.

Minutes of the 23 September Long-Range Planning Committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Redmond and a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting said there was nothing unusual to report for revenues and expenditures. She noted that as of September 30, the library had received \$1.7 million in tax revenue and recently received an addition \$2 million, which puts the library at about 90 percent of the total. She said that the financial report this month includes a detailed expense report compared to the previous year, which she intends to include on a quarterly basis. She said she is continuing to work on ways to make the report simpler and easier to read.

H. Narang asked which budget lines the expenses for Kanopy and Hoopla would come out of, and there was some discussion about whether the names of the budget lines needed to be adjusted to better describe library purchases.

M. Walsh asked if the 90 percent of taxes received was normal for this time of year. S. Whiting said that it was, and that the library is typically made whole in the spring. M. Redmond asked if it is the state's responsibility to make the library whole. G. Kirkpatrick and S. Whiting said they would look into the process and get back to the board about it.

S. Whiting said the draft of the audited financial statements had been received and would be ready to be presented to the board at the next meeting. She said the auditors were on site for three days and everything went smoothly.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there was an audit committee to review the draft before presenting it to the board. M. Redmond said the finance committee would be looking at the draft.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 September 2020 (Manual Disbursements \$59,910.44; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$95,882.22; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$183,923.69; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$339,716.35).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he was requesting approval to fill a full-time clerk position created by the internal promotion of a staffer to senior clerk. He noted that the senior clerk position had been vacant since a spring retirement, but with the library open once again, there was a need to have a senior clerk in charge of supervising and scheduling the pages.

PERSONNEL ACTION

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

- Library clerk, full-time, permanent, \$29,285/annual or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- K. Coffey is investigating a temporary seasonal solution to provide coverage from the elements during curbside pickup throughout the winter months. G. Kirkpatrick said the hope is that with the doors open, demand for curbside pickup will decrease.
- G. Kirkpatrick said he would like to purchase a small tractor-type vehicle to help with moving carts of books, pallet deliveries, snow removal and more. He said he expects to have some pricing quotes for the next meeting.

The board discussed the director's report stats for in-person browsing, which led to a larger discussion about the next steps in reopening. G. Kirkpatrick noted that the library's busiest day for browsing is Saturday, but the 15-person maximum has rarely been reached. He said that head count is likely self-limiting because without the computers and seating, there is nothing encouraging patrons to linger.

M. Walsh asked why having staff work on the weekend takes away from staffing levels on weekdays since the library is offering fewer services. G Kirkpatrick said staff levels are currently down as the library holds off on filling a number of open positions. He also noted that the addition of two new service points – a greeter at the door and curbside pickup – has also stretched existing staff. He said Saturday is already down to a skeleton crew, and to increase weekend hours, the library would have to start filling some of the open positions. M. Walsh asked if it would be possible to close a weekday in order to make more staff available to work weekends. G. Kirkpatrick said that he was trying to keep service hours consistent to avoid confusion. M. Kissinger said that at some point, the public will be expecting the library to be open on Sundays, and it could be time to hire the open positions needed to cover that. M. Redmond asked if one of the open positions could be defined as a weekend position and to look for people who want to work those hours. G. Kirkpatrick said he would have to see if there were any contract implications with that. C. Wijeyesinghe suggested the library continue to track where the staffing gaps and demand are and bring that data to the board. G. Kirkpatrick said the data was available and he and C. Stollar Peters would put something together.

L. Scoons asked whether it was time to start discussing what the goals were for curbside moving forward and recognizing that the service is likely here to stay. G. Kirkpatrick said the library had already been looking into curbside before the pandemic, but it was never as a primary circulation point as it is now. He said he is waiting to see if being open reduces the demand for curbside, but if demand remains strong, staffing will have to be considered. M. Walsh said she asked library architect Paul Mays to consider a curbside pickup area in his building schemes. M. Kissinger said the library will have to consider what curbside would look like in February and how to make it manageable and safe, whether by reducing the hours or closing it down when the weather is untenable. C. Brancatella said that as a mother of a young child, she supports keeping curbside open in some form, even if it means reducing the hours. The board discussed whether the widespread community support of curbside pickup meant the public would be willing to pay more for the service.

G. Kirkpatrick said it might be time to stop just making do and to start making steps toward normalizing the way the library thinks about providing services. H. Narang said he'd like to see a plan at the next meeting for staffing from now until March. C. Wijeyesinghe said the library needs to start thinking about the new normal and how to deliver curbside safely. M. Redmond said she hopes the library would consider the possibility of mid-week closures if it is determined that the community wants more weekend hours.

- On Columbus Day, the library was open for browsing and offered the Pop-Up Library and curbside pickup concurrently. G. Kirkpatrick noted that the Pop-Up and browsing crowds were not two separate groups.
- Outreach to the schools is continuing virtually.
- G. Kirkpatrick said he was proud of the overall circulation of September, which was at about 70 percent of last year's number even with the limited hours and access.

- An issue with the phone system has been resolved, but IT will continue to look at cloud-based phone systems as there are some very desirable aspects to them.
- M. Walsh asked if Library of Things items were requestable. The library has made them requestable to accommodate curbside services, and some items like VR goggles and binoculars have been removed from circulation for the time being.
- G. Kirkpatrick noted that he would be making a laptop purchase request to help move all full-time staff to the devices, which would help provide continuity of service in the event of another shutdown.
- He noted that the state had passed new minimum standards for the library, which he included at the end of his report.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said some the board split some of the additional construction grant money not used by other library systems among the UHLS libraries that did not receive full funding. She said this month the board would be discussing the budget.

NEW BUSINESS

Scheduling public meetings at the library

G. Kirkpatrick said the library is currently rolling out cancellations from month to month, but it is likely to be a long time before public meetings can be held at the library. He asked the board if they felt this was effective or if they would rather just push all cancellations out to a set date. M. Redmond said that everyone is living month to month right now, and the current way of handling cancellations is consistent with that. C. Brancatella said cancelling month to month appears more optimistic and hopeful than setting a date far in the future. M. Redmond asked if it would be a good time to open up reservations back up so that people could reserve a room as a placeholder and avoid a rush of reservations at once.

Kanopy renewal

G. Kirkpatrick presented an estimate of the cost to continue Kanopy based on usage statistics from the previous year. The streaming service is available to Bethlehem cardholders only and has seen good use since it has been offered.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously voted to continue the library's Kanopy subscription for a year at the estimated cost of \$19,200 with a cost cap of \$24,000.

Resolution – UHLS Volunteer of the Year

G. Kirkpatrick said Friends of the Library volunteer Polly Hartman had been named Upper Hudson Volunteer of the Year. At M. Kissinger's request, a board resolution was prepared recognizing this achievement. A framed and signed copy of the resolution will be presented to P. Hartman at a later date.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously voted to pass Resolution No. 2002 honoring Polly Hartman for her recognition as UHLS Volunteer of the Year for 2019.

Board meeting on BCN-TV

G. Kirkpatrick said that the virtual board meetings are currently on the library's YouTube channel, and now that staff is able to devote more time to scheduling programming on BCN-TV, the library could post the meetings there as well. The board agreed.

Fines and cash handling

G. Kirkpatrick noted that the date the board originally planned to re-institute fines is approaching November 1. He asked the board if that was still the intent and, if so, there would be some issues about cash handling that would need to be discussed.

Board members were in favor of bringing back fines in order to encourage the return of materials, but there was some discussion about when that would be in order to provide ample notice to patrons. G. Kirkpatrick noted that overdue notices have been going out even though fines are not accruing. He also said that once fines return, there will be some logistics to figure out regarding materials in quarantine for 96 hours, as well as whether the fines will accrue for the entire time an item was out or just from the date fines were reinstated. C. Brancatella proposed the natural deadline of January 1, and the board discussed what the potential lack of fine revenue would look like. S. Whiting noted that those losses can be made up by underspending in other budget lines. C. Brancatella said it has been an interesting and unexpected test case for the fine-free discussion the board has been having.

The board agreed that extending the fine moratorium through the end of the year seemed appropriate, but asked that the message to the public be very clear about what that would mean.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously voted to extend the library's moratorium on fines through December 31 2020.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick presented a quote for 10 new laptops and docking stations through state contract. He said he would like to migrate full-time staff to laptops for continuity in service and accessibility for staff.

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the purchase of 10 staff laptops and docking stations at a total cost of \$18,637.60.

M. Redmond asked whether the committee handling contract negotiations would be the same as before, and if not it would be a good time to start getting everything in place for that. She commended the previous committee's work on the negotiations.

OLD BUSINESS

Auto transcription for board meetings

Since the last board meeting, members had reviewed the automatically generated transcripts versus the manual ones and had reached a consensus.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously decided to accept the automatically generated meeting transcripts from YouTube as satisfying the requirements under the New York State Executive Order modifying Open Meeting Law.

Long range plan steering committee - update

H. Narang said the committee would be meeting this Friday without P. Mays. He has forwarded P. Mays' most recent schemes to the committee, along with a rough scope of likely costs.

MERV filters for HVAC

The filters have been installed. Trane will do an air quality test and provide a sticker for the door to assure the public.

Reopening phase discussion

Discussed during the director's report.

G. Kirkpatrick said that fulfilling the demand for more weekend hours would be where the library focuses next. M. Redmond asked if that would be before reintroducing public computers. G. Kirkpatrick said that computer use and study space would eventually have to be talked about as the weather cools and people aren't able to work outside the library, but expanding hours is the priority at this time.

Other old business

M. Kissinger encouraged the board to check out the Alexis de Toqueville's Democracy in America series later in the month. He noted that it is being presented by the same speaker who did the Hamilton's Federalist Papers program a few years ago.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business discussed at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:45pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president