

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday March 8, 2021

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 5:59pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

M. Kissinger said that the board would need to reaffirm L. Scoons role as a trustee on the UHLS board if she was interested in continuing. L. Scoons said that she would be pleased to maintain her role as UHLS trustee.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board voted to reaffirm L. Scoons as a trustee on the UHLS board.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 8 February 2021 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh.

Minutes of the 5 March 2021 Long Range Plan Committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report and noted the library is still tracking under budget by about 6 percent. She said the library has received some donations recently totaling around \$9,000. She also said the financial report has been expanded to easily show the calculation of percentages. Board members said they liked the new format.

L. Scoons asked if there was a plan for the donations. G. Kirkpatrick said that a large portion of the amount came in support of continuing curbside pickup. He said the library has been planning to continue that service post-pandemic and had been moving in that direction – including adding it to the Long Range Plan. He said they are looking at ways to how to use that donated money to appropriately support that mission. M. Redmond asked if the donated money had come with any restrictions. G. Kirkpatrick said it was unentailed but he felt an obligation to use it as intended. He noted that many new expenditures have been related to the service, including signage and the new texting service. M. Kissinger said it would be nice to be able to demonstrate how the money was used. G. Kirkpatrick said it was the plan to recognize the gifts in a more formal way the following month.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 28 February 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$25,027.60; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$60,303.62; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$185,580.69; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$270,911.91).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick asked for permission to backfill a part-time clerk position that became vacant when the employee moved into an available full-time position.

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:

- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 15 hours/week, \$13.89/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said he hopes the board is enjoying the colorful pictures that he includes in the director's report but to let him know if they are distracting.
- The Kindness Matters project has really resonated with the community. G. Kirkpatrick said the library has received a number of unsolicited positive comments. He said the program is wrapping up, but staffers are still including some treats in the book and media bundles as inventory allows.
- This year's Seed Library is set to launch shortly with a new online form that lets you choose seeds for curbside pickup.
- The library is starting to learn more about what people want in an online program, such as crafting programs that allow people to pick up kits and then get together virtually for instruction. He also noted that there are some valuable lessons learned that could be useful post-pandemic, such as the number of people that can be accommodated for a virtual cooking demo, which would be more limited if it were in-person only.

- The new texting pickup system is working well with about 28 percent of pickups initiated via text. Circulation staff has been busy working out the process for responding to the texts.
- Turning billing back on while still forgoing fines has been a major trigger to get people to return books. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there was an amount that triggered the bill. G. Kirkpatrick said it was not an amount but a timeframe; the third overdue notice is a bill for the full retail price of the item.
- M. Redmond said that there was discussion when the HVAC system was installed about K. Coffey receiving additional training to support long-term maintenance. She said she wanted to reiterate her support for such training. M. Kissinger said he supported additional staffers being trained as well.
- L. Scoons asked if there had been many complaints about digital audiobooks that are only available through the paid service Audible versus OverDrive. G. Kirkpatrick said that he knows that some titles are not available on OverDrive because of publisher/author agreements, but he hasn't heard a lot of complaints.
- M. Walsh asked if UHLS was going to reduce its recommended quarantine time. G. Kirkpatrick said the Directors Association had met and were recommending a 48-hour quarantine. He said they would be talking about that more later on when discussing re-opening plans.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said there is a plan to do UHLS annual celebration virtually on Wednesday, June 9. She said they were going to look at awards for creative pandemic programs, and Bethlehem library should have a lot of contenders. She said that it sounds like the 20 percent cut from the 2020 budget will be paid.

Library Advocacy Day went well, with G. Kirkpatrick and M. Kissinger attending. G. Kirkpatrick said he talked about the library's WiFi in public places and its expansion to create awareness about how the library is serving the community during the pandemic.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed budget

S. Whiting said that the draft budget presented to the board was in the format that it goes out to the public in. She noted it had additional public disclosures and a zero percent increase. There is additional fund balance information at the bottom.

M. Redmond asked if there could be additional wording after the revenue lines that explain the projected decreases in fines and interest income. K. Roberts said that elements of the graphic could be moved to another part of the publication to accommodate the additional explanations. She also said the budget letter could include additional explanations.

M. Walsh asked if there should be adjustments made under income from gifts considering the donations that were recently received. S. Whiting said it was a conservative estimate based on past years. G. Kirkpatrick said that the library is not allowed to fundraise but received a larger than usual number of donations this year because of the pandemic. H. Narang, M. Kissinger and M. Walsh said they would like to see a line in the budget letter thanking donors for their generosity.

H. Narang asked if the notation indicating the 0.006 percent decrease was necessary. S. Whiting said it was a calculation made to balance out the income in order to present a 0 percent tax levy increase and that the notation was not necessary for the final draft.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked what would happen to the budget if the board made a decision to go fine free during the budget year. S. Whiting said there would likely be enough give in other lines, including the contingency line, to make up the difference.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the 2021-22 draft budget as written for public presentation. The budget proposes a levy of \$4,172,563, an increase of 0%.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the official list of trustee candidate would be available. K. Roberts said that the petitions are due to the clerk the third week in April, and after that the official candidate list becomes available, at which time she works quickly to get the profiles assembled and made available to the public.

Phased reopening plan discussion

G. Kirkpatrick said the phased reopening plan of the library is tied to a couple of things: when library employees are eligible to get vaccinated and the continuing decline of infection rates. He noted that some neighbor libraries have begun the reopening process and said that after discussing it with M. Walsh and M. Kissinger, he is recommending the library aim to reopen March 22 with a limit of 10 browsers at a time. He said the infection rate is not as low as it was in September, but it was lower that when the library closed in December and he believed reopening could be implemented in a safe way. He said the March 22 target would give the library some time to prepare some of the internal spaces that have been used to help staff maintain social distance while at work, as well as see if a new phase of vaccine eligibility would include library staff.

G. Kirkpatrick reiterated that the Director's Association have approved a 48-hour quarantine for items, and the library is planning to move in that direction.

M. Redmond said she supported G. Kirkpatrick's plan for reopening. She asked if there could be signage to indicate that masks are allowed regardless of vaccination status and outlining the types of masks allowed.

C. Brancatella asked if there are plans to move some of the summer programming outside. G. Kirkpatrick said that was the plan, and the library had been in talks with its town partners about what types of spaces might be available. He noted that one positive of this pandemic time has been the increased collaboration with our community partners and other libraries.

UHLS board representative

L. Scoons was reaffirmed as UHLS board representative earlier in the meeting.

Other new business

There was no other new business.

OLD BUSINESS

Long range plan steering committee - update

H. Narang said the committee met with library architect Paul Mays the previous week and reviewed the latest round of sketches. He said they were narrowing in on three areas of change: a large space for programs, an accommodation for curbside pickup and parking lot improvements, and reconstruction of the entrance area with a combined circulation and information desk. P. Mays is currently putting together some cost estimates so the committee can think about phasing.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the sketches and estimates would come before the full board. H. Narang said he was thinking it would be the first board meeting after the estimates were received.

NYS annual report

The board reviewed the New York State annual report numbers. G. Kirkpatrick noted that they covered the fiscal year ending in June 2020 so they did not provide a full picture of pandemic effects, and next year's numbers might paint a broader picture. He also said that because of the pandemic closure in the spring, it was the first time the library did not meet the minimum hours requirement, something libraries will not be penalized for this year.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe and a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously voted to accept the information in the annual state report as accurate for filing.

Other old business

M. Redmond said the Finance Committee should meet later in the month to talk about the fund balance and how should be set aside for future emergencies and what could be available for projects.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there were any new policies for the Policy Committee to review. G. Kirkpatrick said that new 2021 standards require that policies are reviewed a minimum of very five years. He said he is getting that process set up currently.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no discussion of future business.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:07pm to discuss contact negotiations pursuant to Article Fourteen of the Civil Service Law

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board adjourned executive session at 7:50pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:51pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president