

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday April 12, 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
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator

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

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

Although not received as part of public participation, G. Kirkpatrick said he had gotten an e-mail from a visitor saying that they believed their face-covering was CDC compliant but was not allowed inside the library. G. Kirkpatrick said he responded by noting that the library uses CDC guidelines but has additional mask policies in place that err on the side of caution. The board noted the visitor comment for the record.

TREASURER'S OATH OF OFFICE

M. Kissinger virtually administered the oath of office to S. Whiting.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 8 March 2021 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by M. Redmond.

Minutes of the 19 March 2021 Long Range Plan Committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report of revenue and expenses and noted that the library is currently tracking about 7% under budget. She also noted this month's packet included a detailed report of expenditures through March 31.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked for clarification about why the PILOT income line exceeded 100 percent. S. Whiting said that the budgeted number is an estimate made at the time the budget is put together and before the actual amount is received. C. Wijeyesinghe also asked about the miscellaneous expenses line, which was over what had been budgeted. S. Whiting said many of those expenses were COVID-related, including the four sheds used as book drops, the monthly fee for a storage pod to hold library furniture, and credit card processing software.

S. Whiting said that she and T. Choppy met with the new relationship manager at TD Bank. One of the items discussed was whether the library's letter of credit for \$8 million with the Bank of Pittsburgh could or should be reduced. M. Redmond and M. Walsh had additional questions, and S. Whiting said she would follow up and share what she finds out at the following meeting. T. Choppy said the letter of credit is renewed in July so there is time for further discussion. Also discussed was the opportunity to reduce fees by closing an inactive account and receiving statements electronically. The bank noted that the library's current interest rate had been reduced to 0.15% effective April 1.

H. Narang noted that the real property tax income was at 97% in the report. T. Choppy said that the library has since received a check that now brings it within 30 cents of the total.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 March 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$71,443.92; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$76,731.33; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$188,453.82; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$336,629.07).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said he is seeking permission to fill two positions that are opening due to retirements. M. Kissinger asked what the library did for retiring employees. G. Kirkpatrick said it was handled by the individual departments.

G. Kirkpatrick said the Librarian II civil service test has not yet been issued, so it could be some time before it can be filled. His plan is to fill the previously approved full-time Librarian I opening first in order to maintain coverage until a candidate list for Librarian II becomes available. He said the temporary part-time Librarian I positions would remain in place until the library was ready to fill the Librarian II spot.

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:

- Librarian II, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$61,968/annual or per contract.
- Librarian I, part-time, permanent, 9 hours/week, \$27.31/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- The meeting with the town about nature-based gardening was productive and presented some opportunities for collaboration. G. Kirkpatrick said that many people use the library and Town Hall grounds like a park, and it would be nice to encourage that while showcasing native plants and good gardening practices.
- More than 2,000 seed packets have been requested, far exceeding previous years. M. Walsh asked how the Seed Library was funded. G. Kirkpatrick said it costs relatively little to run, and that money comes out of the budget. He noted it is very popular with the community, especially as people become more home-focused because of the pandemic.
- The library continues to digitize historical records so people can access them remotely, which is something that kicked off with the digitization of *The Spotlight*. G. Kirkpatrick said that part of the library's mission is to be a keeper of the community's collective cultural heritage.
- The e-mail newsletter has been instrumental in allowing the library to offer off-cycle programming and still reach a sizeable audience.
- In a recent week, the library had 55% of checkouts happening in person, with 45% through curbside. The goal is to have more people checking out in person as they feel it is safe to do so.
- The Friends of the Library will be using a custom stamp to brand the paper bags used for curbside pickup. This is cheaper than having them custom-printed and is a good task for volunteers who want to help out.
- March was the first month to provide year-over-year pandemic circulation data, with circulation up compared to March 2020. Use of most e-materials continue to increase, except for e-video, which saw a big bump in the early days of the pandemic with the introduction of Hoopla and is now leveling out.
- E-audiobook use continues to grow, as books on CD become slowly obsolete.
- The annual report to the community was presented in a chart form, which was well-received by the community.
- L. Scoons asked if statistics were available from the e-newsletter vendor. K. Roberts said the dashboard provides a lot of data about opens and click-throughs. She said that when it was launched about a year ago, the open rate was about 45% but has leveled out at about 30% with approximately 10,000 subscribers and only one or two unsubscribes a week.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked about book quarantine periods and said she had noticed a chlorine-like smell on some items she has checked out. G. Kirkpatrick said that most materials go through a mandatory quarantine period, but items that are picked up inside the library and put on a re-shelving cart are sprayed with a chlorine ionizer before being put back. M. Walsh noted that other libraries had already lifted quarantine and asked where Bethlehem was in that process. G. Kirkpatrick said the Directors Association would likely be voting soon to lift the quarantine on all materials. Bethlehem currently quarantines items for 48 hours but would be moving to 24 shortly.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said UHLS has learned of additional 2020 construction grant money of about \$26,000 becoming available that will allow them to bring 6-8 more projects up to full eligible funding. The annual program awards applications will be going out shortly. The 2021 state budget includes \$34 million for building grants, which means about \$1.9 million for Upper Hudson libraries. L. Scoons said they are looking forward to seeing some great proposals. C. Wijeyesinghe said L. Scoons had put her in touch with Mary Fellows at Upper Hudson to provide some insight on diversity and social justice issues, and she was able to share information about consultants, written materials and timeline ideas.

NEW BUSINESS

Pandemic response plan

G. Kirkpatrick said he was seeking board approval on the state-mandated pandemic response plan draft. M. Kissinger asked about the section regarding housing accommodations. G. Kirkpatrick said that was unlikely to be an issue at the library but was a component of the plan required by the state. Some board members asked if they could have more time to review the plan before voting on it at the May meeting. A draft of the plan remains on the library website.

NYS budget update

M. Redmond asked if the library would be able to have its boiler replacement project ready in time for a 2021 construction grant application. G. Kirkpatrick said he has made some inquiries to find out how to move forward with an RFP for the design. He said the elements required for the grant are to have an SED-approved design in place, as well as a cost estimate. H. Narang said it was the board's goal to interview other engineering firms to grow the potential number of people the library could work with. M. Kissinger said he would like to be able to get a 2021 grant application in for the boiler project. G. Kirkpatrick said it was a small enough project that it would not need to be bonded.

Other new business

There was no other new business.

OLD BUSINESS

Long range plan steering committee - update

H. Narang said the committee met with P. Mays March 19 and saw some estimates for different design concept phases. P. Mays is now in the process of taking the feedback from that meeting to put together a final package to present to the board. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there might be opportunities to meet in person to view and discuss the plan, perhaps using the community room to afford plenty of space for social distancing. G. Kirkpatrick said there were some limitations based on the ability to allow for public attendance, but he would look into it. C. Wijeyesinghe said she hoped that there would be room for discussion about the plan once it comes to the full board. G. Kirkpatrick said there would, and he noted that what is being discussed in the committee is a long-range planning building concept based on public feedback and not a final design, cost or timeline.

Other old business

G. Kirkpatrick noted that he and C. Stollar Peters and C. McGinty would be meeting to update the long-range services plan draft with so many things having changed since it was first put together.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no discussion of future business.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:02pm to discuss contact negotiations pursuant to Article Fourteen of the Civil Service Law

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board adjourned executive session at 7:26pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:27pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president