

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday May 10, 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 5:58pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

No public participation. Comments go to the long range plan meeting about prelim expenses

BUDGET PRESENTATION

S. Whiting presented the 2021-22 budget and noted that the levy portion had a zero percent increase. She said the plan includes support for continued curbside pickup moving forward. M. Walsh said she was happy the library was presenting a budget that did not increase the tax levy. In response to a question from M. Kissinger, S. Whiting said the 2021-22 budget does not include any reduction in personnel. M. Redmond said she felt the budget format was clear and consistent with what has been done in previous years. C. Wijeyesinghe said that, as a new board member, she valued the discussions she was a part of as the budget was being put together. M. Kissinger extended thanks to those involved with the budget process.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 12 April 2021 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report of revenue and expenses and noted the library continues to underspend in most categories. She projected that the library will end the year at roughly 8% under budget, or about \$350,000 in savings.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the library was under budget due to COVID or if this was typical. S. Whiting said it was consistent with past years where the biggest savings tends to be in the salaries line because it is a difficult number to budget and account for turnover etc. She noted there were some lines overspent, such as cleaning supplies, due to COVID, but they were balanced out by savings in other areas, such as in-person programs. G. Kirkpatrick added that a number of unfilled positions on the personnel report was due to reduced hours during the pandemic.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked the board to consider for future discussion a conversation about setting aside funds for future capital projects in a separate fund like the school district does.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 April 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$28,675.22; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$58,760.86; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$192,819.65; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$280,255.73).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said he is seeking permission to fill a part-time librarian position that opened up when the staffer was hired full time.

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

- Librarian I, part-time, permanent, 7.67 hours/week, \$27.31/hour or per contract.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- The timeline for the removal of the diseased tree on the Delaware Avenue side of the building is still up in the air as removal services work through a backlog. M. Redmond asked if the library had received a professional second opinion about whether or not the tree could be saved. G. Kirkpatrick said an arborist examined it last year and recommended it come down.
- "The Civil War: A Military History" program with Giacomo Calabria was recorded and the video is being prepared for broadcast on the library's YouTube channel and BCN-TV.
- G. Kirkpatrick noted that April is the first month to start showing circulation gains compared to the previous year when the library was closed due to the pandemic and the only materials circulating were digital. He also noted that there was a big gain in interlibrary loans. He said that the number of holds are decreasing as more people take advantage of in-person library hours.
- There was a modest decreases in e-book use compared to the previous year, but e-audiobook use continues to climb as users permanently shift away from CDs.

- Streaming video use has dropped somewhat compared to last April, when many were under stay-at-home orders. M. Walsh asked if the decreasing number of uses for Hoopla and Kanopy are still enough to justify the cost of subscribing to the services. G. Kirkpatrick said that those services are pay per use, so keeping them makes sense since the library is not paying for nonusers.
- L. Scoons ask what kind of questions the library was getting through the new chat feature and how they were managed. G. Kirkpatrick said they were getting some reference questions, but also many general questions. He noted that it added another point of service for librarians, but so far the service has been manageable. The software came bundled with the curbside text option. G. Kirkpatrick said the library would continue to evaluate its success.
- C. Wijeyesinghe said she noticed that some of the return sheds had been moved and asked if that was because quarantine times had been eliminated. G. Kirkpatrick said that was the case, but the library would continue to use the sheds for returns so that items could be checked in as a batch as opposed to being done throughout the day. He noted that it might be a good time to talk about replacing the outdoor bookdrop, which is old, bulky and difficult to work with.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked how librarians work with the schools to promote the summer reading program. C. McGinty said that librarians regularly visit the schools in the district and are busy sharing information about the program. New flyers are being printed up for distribution to all students as backpack mail.

UPPER HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM REPORT

L. Scoons said the UHLS services committee would be looking at program nominations shortly. She said they had received 16 applications. A small amount of additional 2020 grant money had come back to UHLS and was distributed among the libraries that had not received full grant funding. She noted that the virtual awards celebration would take place in June.

NEW BUSINESS

Conflict of interest policy

M. Kissinger said the policy committee had reviewed the proposed Conflict of Interest policy. G. Kirkpatrick said that the draft was a rewrite of the original done by the library attorney based on guidance from the comptroller. C. Brancatella noted there is a state law requiring a series of provision to be included. G. Kirkpatrick said the policy is very thorough, and it may include some parts that do not directly apply to the library.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the update to the library's Conflict of Interest policy.

Updates to phased reopening plan

G. Kirkpatrick said the library is currently in phase 4 of the reopening plan, and his recommended changes to the plan would better reflect what that and phase 5 look like in practice in light of additional available guidance. M. Redmond asked how staff felt about the changes to the cleaning protocols. G. Kirkpatrick said that it is nice to additional guidance regarding surface transmission, but maintenance had been adhering to strict cleaning protocols even before the pandemic so little has changed there. He also noted that the library's efforts to increase airflow and filtration have proven to be key under new COVID-related recommendations.

C. Wijeyesinghe applauded the maintenance staff and encouraged staffers to remain mindful of cleaning and not pull back beyond what they think is prudent.

M. Walsh asked when the library would be phasing in seating. G. Kirkpatrick said additional seating would be going in shortly, but it would not be sufficient for students wanting to study for the AP exams. He noted that additional tables had been placed outside and under the stage tent, but the library currently couldn't accommodate the number of students it usually gets this time of year. He noted that he doesn't want to limit the time people spend in the library.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she had heard from some community groups asking when they would be able to reserve a public use room at the library. G. Kirkpatrick said that issue can get more complicated because of the current social distancing requirement of 6 feet between individuals. He estimated that would mean only 10 people at a time could meet in the community room, and he is looking forward to further guidance on this issue. He also noted that many of those public rooms are being used as office space to keep staffers appropriately distanced.

The board discussed the different distancing requirements for schools versus other spaces. M. Walsh said parents recently received letter from district saying they would be maintaining the 6-foot requirement through the end of the year.

M. Redmond asked if there had been any public comments at this point in the meeting. G. Kirkpatrick said nothing had been received.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously approved the proposed updates to the library's phased reopening plan.

Updates to emergency patron conduct policy

Changes to the policy included removing the provision that people must sanitize their gloves, and once again allowing children 9 and older inside the library without an adult. Additional provisions would give the library flexibility in requiring masks and other precautions when holding outdoor programs. While patrons and staff are not required to wear masks outside on library property, the policy allows the library to require it when they are gathered for an event.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously approved the updated Emergency Patron Conduct policy.

Library fines

G. Kirkpatrick said that the current pandemic response plan mentions reinstating fines a month after reopening. He said that because he considers the library's current status to be open, he is bringing it before the board in order to give patrons ample notification. He also noted that he would like to have time to get the point of sale software up and running. M. Redmond proposed reinstating fines beginning July 1 to coordinate with the new fiscal year. The board agreed and asked to begin publicity notifying patrons that fines were returning.

Juneteenth

G. Kirkpatrick noted that this would be the first year the library would be officially observing the holiday. He said his intent is to let part-time staff make up the hours if they choose. Because it falls on a Saturday, full timers that would normally work that day would work on Friday as in a

normal week and be given a comp day. M. Redmond asked if this would set a precedent when it comes time for negotiations. G. Kirkpatrick said it was unlikely. The board agreed to G. Kirkpatrick's staffing plan.

Other new business

There was no other new business.

OLD BUSINESS

Pandemic response plan

The state-required pandemic response plan outlines how the library would respond to future pandemics.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the library's pandemic response plan.

Long range plan steering committee – update

H. Narang said there wasn't an update on the building plan, but a meeting has been scheduled for later in the month. G. Kirkpatrick said that he, C. Stollar Peters and C. McGinty had reworked the services plan draft. C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the plan was likely to go before the full board for review and discussion and asked for additional lead time in order to review all of the materials. G. Kirkpatrick said that he would expect something within 3 months but drafts of documents can be reviewed as they come in.

Other old business

M. Redmond asked if there had been any movement toward replacing the boiler. H. Narang said that the facilities master plan may require changes to the boiler room space in order to accommodate curbside pickup, so it made sense to hold off on replacing the boiler and renovating the room until those plans were in. He said that there isn't a concern of being trapped without a boiler if it fails because the mechanics who did the most recent work on it said replacement parts are available. M. Redmond said she did not want to be in a position where the boiler could potentially fail and wanted to make sure that the board was committed to including the boiler replacement and room renovations in any plans to update that space. She also asked G. Kirkpatrick to verify with the mechanics that replacement parts would be available in an emergency.

M. Redmond said that she and S. Whiting were reviewing the Investment Policy and were looking to meet with the finance committee before the June meeting.

FUTURE BUSINESS

C. Wijeyesinghe asked that if the board were to begin a discussion about going fine free in the future they come up with a framework for the discussion that includes a history of what has been talked about previously. G. Kirkpatrick said that C. Stollar Peters has a lot of data available to share. H. Narang said he felt it would be a good time to revisit the topic. G. Kirkpatrick said it could be discussed as a component of the Long Range Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:16pm to discuss contact negotiations pursuant to Article Fourteen of the Civil Service Law

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned executive session at 7:36pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:37pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president