

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Monday November 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 (virtual), recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Chris McGinty, assistant director
Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Tanya Choppy (virtual), accounts clerk
Rachel Reynolds (virtual), auditor with Marvin and Co.
Anne Moore, Borthwick Avenue resident

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

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. Moore told the board she had received her November/December Footnotes and found it lacked any information about a potential building project. She said she felt strongly that the board should let the public know what they are considering and what the costs are.

PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT

R. Reynolds, an auditor with Marvin and Co., presented the findings from the library's 2020-2021 audit. She noted the library received an unmodified opinion, which is the best opinion one can get. Auditors found no internal control deficiencies.

She said the findings included a required disclosure that the COVID-19 pandemic is still considered a contingency, as its true effects are as yet still unknown.

There was no management letter or additional comments, as any comments from the previous year had been implemented.

S. Whiting asked whether the big drop in our net pension liability from the previous year was related to actuarial calculations. R. Reynolds said it was and that those calculations are out of the library's control and have a lot to do with the market.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe and a SECOND by H, Narang, the board unanimously accepted the results of the 2020-21 audit present by Marvin and Co.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 12 October 2021 board meeting and the 25 October 2021 ad hoc fines committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by M. Redmond.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her treasurer's report. C. Wijeyesinghe asked about the \$1.5 million increase in the TD bank accounts. S. Whiting said that was due to the tax revenue received. She noted that some of it was put into the money market account to receive a little more interest.

M. Redmond thanked S. Whiting, T. Choppy and G. Kirkpatrick for everything they have done throughout the year to keep the financial picture organized and in good shape.

On a MOTION by M. Redmond with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 October 2021 (Manual Disbursements \$36,881.79; Cash Disbursements/Accounts Payable \$69,101.39; Trust & Agency Disbursements/Salaries \$189,082.34; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$295,065.52).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board reviewed the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he was asking to fill a part-time page position.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved new hires for the following vacancies, pending Civil Service approval:

- Library Page, part-time, permanent, 12.8 hours/week, \$12.50/hour or per contract

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick told the board he has received some feedback from community groups that meet at the library about scheduling upcoming meetings. Some of these groups are unable to get their usual times because those days have been blocked out by librarians who are hoping to hold indoor programs in the future. G. Kirkpatrick said that groups had been able to book rooms out 14 months in advance, but that was changed recently due to the pandemic and the new calendar software. M. Redmond asked if the tension would resolve with the end of the pandemic. G. Kirkpatrick said the issue has existed for some time but was most likely exacerbated by the pandemic. He said the demand for public meeting space has always competed with the programs the library is trying to provide for the public. M. Redmond asked if library programs were prioritized over longtime community group use. G. Kirkpatrick said library programs are given a priority but staff try to be sensitive to the community groups that are also trying to put their own programs in place. M. Redmond asked what direction the staff has been given when booking space. G. Kirkpatrick said that staff have always been able to hold rooms before the calendar is open to the public. M. Walsh noted that the policy before the pandemic has always been that library programs took precedence so the priority hasn't changed. C. Brancatella said that if the library were to give priority to a group that had been booking the same day every year for decades, then others in

the community wouldn't have the opportunity. M. Redmond asked if the library has blocked out a room and then not held a program. G. Kirkpatrick said that has happened when program plans have fallen through. C. Wijeyesinghe asked who the public could contact if they had any questions or concerns. G. Kirkpatrick said they could email the calendar coordinator.

- The hallway exhibit spaces are slowly moving through the pandemic-related backlog, and once that happens the spaces will be bookable through the same calendar software used for reserving rooms.
- Trunk or Treat was a very successful collaboration with the town, bringing in 1,200 participants. C. Wijeyesinghe thanked the members of the Friends who helped out at the event, as well as the Halloween Storywalk. C. Brancatella said her family enjoyed the programs and treats. G. Kirkpatrick said those activities were examples of the successful kinds of collaborations the library is able to have with the Town of Bethlehem.
- Overall circulation is approaching pre-pandemic levels, but the door count remains about half of what it once was. Afternoons used to be much busier at the library with tutors and other activity, but now the busier times tend to be in the mornings.
- Downloadable materials are still seeing a lot of use.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that about 12% of circulation is being done through curbside pickup, a level that has remained steady for some time and seems to indicate how the service will be used post-pandemic.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said the meeting would be taking place later in the week. She said most of the discussion would probably focus on the central library budget approval.

NEW BUSINESS

New York State retirement invoice

G. Kirkpatrick said there is a small discount if the retirement invoice is paid before Dec. 15.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board unanimously approved payment of the New York State retirement invoice in the amount of \$316,827.

Staff Development Day

The library did not hold a Staff Development Day in 2020 but will be holding a hybrid one this December with virtual training and boxed lunches. G. Kirkpatrick said the morning speaker would discuss microaggressions and implicit bias. There would also be a state of the library address as well as mandatory yearly training and a mental health presentation by EAP in the afternoon. The library will be closed the entire day. C. Brancatella said that in the past the board has provided treats for the event to demonstrate their appreciation and asked if there might be something the board wants to do this year. G. Kirkpatrick said that board members are welcome to attend any of the day's sessions.

Other new business

No other new business.

OLD BUSINESS

Long range plan/process update

H. Narang had suggested administration prioritize the bigger ticket items on the services draft so the committee could focus on those topics. G. Kirkpatrick said he would schedule the next committee meeting.

Building committee/process update

The board discussed what the process for the next construction project should be and whether the library wanted to put out an RFP for designs or sit down with a couple of interested parties. M. Redmond said that the board learned from the HVAC project that they might want to bring in the construction and the design side so there can be a conversation about what works from the very beginning. They talked about the potential benefits of using a design/build firm, as well as when a construction manager should get involved.

The board noted that while the long range building planning process provided schemes but not actual designs, it helped the board frame the discussion for what they'd like to see. G. Kirkpatrick said that part of the interviewing process for the architect should include questions about how they would communicate with and engage the public.

C. Brancatella noted that the board has not yet presented a plan to the public because there was not yet a plan or costs to present. The library was still in the process of going over some conceptual ideas.

Other old business

M. Redmond asked how the expense of a debt service bond would relate to the 2% tax cap. G. Kirkpatrick said that if the library were to seek a bond, the board would have to vote with a super majority to put it out to the public, where it would then need to be approved by a simple majority vote.

FUTURE BUSINESS

Fines

An ad hoc committee met to discuss fines and review some of the data prepared by C. Stollar Peters. H. Narang asked if the committee was waiting for additional data before making a recommendation. C. Wijeyesinghe said the group just wanted a little more time to think about all of the data. C. Brancatella mentioned a presentation about the importance of childhood literacy and how fines affect lower income families. The ad hoc committee plans to meet again for further discussion.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by H. Narang with a SECOND by M. Redmond, the board adjourned to executive session at 7:14pm to discuss the employment history of a particular individual.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board adjourned executive session at 7:28pm; no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:29pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president