

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday August 8, 2022

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary (remote)

EXCUSED: Caroline Brancatella
Sara Patterson

GUESTS: Chris McGinty, assistant director
Catherine Stollar Peters, assistant director
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 11 July 2022 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, with H. Narang abstaining.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

The board noted S. Whiting's treasurer's report. Additional items:

- L. Scoons asked if health insurance was billed in advance of the month. T. McShane said it was likely both billing cycles fell in the same bill schedule because of timing.
- S. Whiting said auditors will return in September to complete the audit following their preliminary work in August.
- S. Whiting said that under warrants, there are some checks issued that say "See Detailed Report" under purchase order number. The accounting system changed the way the report is printed out. "See Detailed Report" means several purchases were paid under that individual check.
- G. Kirkpatrick explained which vendors typically show up on the bill schedule as regular expenses.

- M. Walsh asked why the Upper Hudson payment would have a “See Detailed Report” notation. S. Whiting said the payments aren’t just for membership expenses but also include costs for other digital services managed through Upper Hudson, such as Kanopy.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2022 (Checks disbursed in July 2022 based on pre-approval \$87,467.56; Checks disbursed in July 2022 relating to payroll \$190,151.45; Checks being submitted for approval \$53,695.35; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$0; Total: \$331,314.36).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick provided the board with an amended job status report that included the salary for the confidential secretary position, as well as a request to backfill a vacancy to be left by C. Stollar Peters as either an Assistant Director or Librarian III. Neither of those jobs has an established list, so G. Kirkpatrick said he would like the flexibility to fill it provisionally in a way that best serves the library. The board noted that C. Stollar Peter’s departure is a big loss for the library and wished her well.

C. Wijeyesinghe said she was pleased to see the two new positions approved in the 2022-23 budget moving forward.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by H. Narang, the board unanimously approved new hires/changes for the following positions:

- Confidential secretary, full-time, permanent, \$44,000/annual or per contract.
- Librarian III OR Assistant Library Director, full-time, permanent, \$68,743/annual OR \$78,287/annual or per contract

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said the library has been lucky to be able to host a lot of the children’s programming outside over the summer. Looking toward fall, those programs will be moving inside to the Community Room with limits on attendance and additional sessions to accommodate demand. Early literacy programs are a top priority so the Community Room will be less available for public use during this time. G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to pass on any comments they may hear about this from the public.
- L. Scoons asked if the library would be continuing virtual programs for adults, as well as recorded versions of those events to provide increased access. G. Kirkpatrick said the Author Talks are an example of that kind of programming.
- The Board Room is available to the public, but it is not as desirable because it is smaller. The fire code limit for the Board Room is 38, but 20-25 is a more comfortable number with furniture.

- L. Scoons asked if there has been a request to use the outside stage and tent. G. Kirkpatrick said there have been some requests, and people are welcome to use it if there isn't a program going on. It is not a bookable space at this time. He noted that when looking at future plans for that outdoor space, it is important that it includes some type of covering. He said that people have been using it all summer long.
- The reopening phases of the pandemic response plan are complete. G. Kirkpatrick said there may be some ups and downs in the future, but overall things seem to be leveling out.
- Most people are not booking the 3D printer to use but rather to learn more about the technology. G. Kirkpatrick said the library would use some of the Krakower-Storch Technology Fund to purchase a Makerbot replacement. M. Walsh asked how long it might take to get the new one in. G. Kirkpatrick said he didn't believe it would be a long wait as they seemed to have some in stock. The cost will be about \$3,500 for the version the library is looking at. H. Narang asked if the library would be purchasing a 3D scanner. G. Kirkpatrick said he would look into it, but past scanners were not user-friendly.
- Summer programs have brought a greater return of people to the library in many months.
- The Thursdays in the Park collaboration with the town has been a very successful intergovernmental partnership.
- The Friends book sale is coming up in September. It will be only one day but with extended hours.
- M. Walsh asked if the library was tracking hold times because she said it felt like some of her holds were taking longer than usual. G. Kirkpatrick said overall circulation is higher right now. C. Stollar Peters said a lot of new and re-orders are not coming in as quickly.
- The retooled Collection Development Policy attempts to address an uptick nationwide in collection challenges by the public. The policy, which will go to the policy committee in the coming days, borrows heavily from language provided by Upper Hudson.
- Circulation is up another 9.5% over last year, approaching pre-pandemic numbers. Door count is up 15% over last year. Computer and WiFi use is up as well.
- There was an increase in gas use last month because of a boiler issue that has since been addressed.
- H. Narang asked if there was a possible reason for the decrease in Young Adult fiction circulation. C. McGinty said it might be because some of those typical readers are moving to electronic formats, including their phones.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked for an update on the effort to find additional collaborators to provide WiFi within the town. G. Kirkpatrick said Five Rivers has approached the library once again about providing WiFi to the outdoor classroom area. The library had previously gotten a quote that included the cost of trenching the cable and found the cost excessive. New staff at Five Rivers said they would look into whether they could cover the work or the costs. M. Kissinger asked if there were other places they could expand WiFi. G. Kirkpatrick said that the demand could potentially drop in the

future as unlimited cellphone plans become more common. He said he welcomed suggestions from the public and the board for where additional WiFi locations would be appreciated. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if that was something that could be put out in library publicity. G. Kirkpatrick said that there have been suggestions to put it in at the ballfields, but trenching costs make it prohibitively expensive. M. Kissinger said maybe it was something the library could work with the school on.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said there is no August UHLS board meeting, but the Service Committee is waiting for dates for the construction grant awards. She said she is happy to share any information about the process with her fellow board members. She said she is amazed at what some people put in for grant proposals – from little projects to giant ones. G. Kirkpatrick said that libraries that are not a part of a school district are able to move quickly on their projects.

NEW BUSINESS

Bylaws

C. Wijeyesinghe said that the policy committee had collected feedback on the bylaws from fellow board members and in consultation with G. Kirkpatrick and had come up with a recommendation for the board to discuss. She said there are some changes that are minor edits and others that are more significant that the board can discuss in the first read-through and revisit in September for a vote.

H. Narang asked if the citizenship requirement was mandated by the state. M. Kissinger said that it was.

M. Walsh asked about the officers and election of officers sections of the document. One would allow the board the flexibility to create officer positions while the other said board members could only vote for one person if two are interested in the same position. She said those statements appeared to cancel each other out.

The policy committee said that the language could be clarified. M. Kissinger noted that while there could be multiple vice presidents, there could be only one president, so there could, for example, be more than one person interested in the presidency, which would necessitate a vote.

M. Kissinger said that the board would need to first decide how many officers it would like to seat for a given year. Then the nominating committee would make its recommendations, but additional amendments could also be made from the floor at that time. L. Scoons said they should add some language to the bylaws requiring the board to vote on the number of officer positions they would like to seat that year before the nominating committee makes a recommendation.

C. Wijeyesinghe said that she wanted to clarify something mentioned at the last meeting after the election had already taken place. She said there was a discussion at that time about the possibility of making updates to the slate in September after the bylaws have been approved.

M. Kissinger noted that the bylaws cannot be voted on at the same meeting they are proposed. C. Wijeyesinghe said that this meeting would be considered the first reading of the proposed changes. She also said that the policy committee wanted to remove the 15-minute public participation timeframe and not be limited to agenda items so that people did not feel constrained. The board retains the authority to limit the time an individual could speak. L. Scoons said that there was language added that also allows people to submit written comments.

M. Walsh asked if remote board participants are still allowed to vote. G. Kirkpatrick said that they are as per the videoconferencing policy that was recently passed.

H. Narang asked if G. Kirkpatrick could look more into the citizenship requirement.

C. Wijeyesinghe said the bylaws note that it should be reviewed every three years. M. Kissinger said he would recommend that the board just put it on the calendar as it doesn't need to be part of the bylaws. G. Kirkpatrick said that state law already requires the review period.

Board retreat

C. Wijeyesinghe said the board had a retreat last year and will be having additional training in January and February. She asked if there was any interest in a "tune up" retreat given the potential building projects coming up. She said she thinks it is a useful thing for group dynamics. She suggested something for the months of September or October.

G. Kirkpatrick said there will be a board activity of some sort with the architect once the contract is signed.

M. Walsh said that she understands the positive intent of a retreat but feels the upcoming months will be very busy with the Upper Hudson training and building discussions. She said the board should take into account the time constraints of its volunteer members.

M. Kissinger asked when the board activity with the architect would be taking place. G. Kirkpatrick said he expected it to be in October once the contract is signed. M. Kissinger asked if November would be a better month for a retreat. S. Whiting reminded the board that November is when the audit presentation takes place.

The board agreed to circle back to this discussion.

Personnel records digitization

G. Kirkpatrick said the library periodically sends out its paper personnel files to be digitized as they grow and take up space. In response to a question from C. Wijeyesinghe, C. Stollar Peters said that some personnel records need to be kept for 55 years.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved the proposal from InStream to digitize the library's personnel files at a cost of \$5,350.

Other new business

M. Kissinger said the board had agreed to revisit the need to close on Friday evenings for the month of September. G. Kirkpatrick said he was pleased to report that a new librarian had been hired to work Friday nights, so the library would be able to resume normal Friday hours in September.

L. Scoons asked if the library had gotten any feedback about the Friday night closing. She noted that she has been in on Friday evenings in the summer and it is pretty quiet. G. Kirkpatrick said there might be a future discussion about Friday nights, which have traditionally the lowest door counts, but he was hesitant to have it during COVID times. He said many area libraries are already closed Friday nights. M. Kissinger said he thinks it could be part of an even bigger discussion about hours.

L. Scoons asked why curbside patrons were not part of the door count. G. Kirkpatrick said the library does periodic surveys to see what the usage is, but the state does not recognize curbside users as part of a door count.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the best time to begin that discussion about hours would be. G. Kirkpatrick said he would want to have it at the beginning of the fiscal year.

OLD BUSINESS

Board meeting schedule for 2023

G. Kirkpatrick said that there was still a question about the April board meeting and potentially moving it a week later to avoid a conflict. M. Walsh said that the board has moved it in the past, and it was appreciated by those with children in school. It also conflicts with Passover.

The board unanimously agreed to move the April meeting from the 10th to the 17th.

Building committee report

At the last board meeting, the board authorized the library to enter into agreement with Ashley McGraw architects. That contract has been sent to the library's contracts attorney, who has made some notes regarding the contract's boilerplate language. H. Narang will also have an opportunity to review the contract.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the conflict of interest regarding G. Kirkpatrick's family member had been resolved. G. Kirkpatrick said that anytime he is talking about the contract, M. Kissinger is copied on all communications.

Other old business

G. Kirkpatrick provided the board with a review of the Long-Range Services plan and where the library is on its implementation.

FUTURE BUSINESS

C. Wijeyesinghe mentioned the director's evaluation and said the personnel committee should meet in order to get the process moving forward. G. Kirkpatrick said that because there are four people on the committee, it is a quorum and subject to open meetings law requirements and public notice requirements.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked where the board left off on the discussion of a retreat. M. Kissinger said they should continue thinking about it, and once the contract with the architect is final, the timeline will become more apparent. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if it could be put under old business for the next meeting with the potential for the retreat to take place in October.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A patron sent an email praising staff for their service.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 7:32pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president