

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday January 9, 2023

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang (virtual)
Sarah Patterson
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
John Edwards, Sage Engineering (virtual)
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw Architects (virtual)
Brooke Williams, Ashley McGraw Architects (virtual)
DeAnna Hine, Ashley McGraw Architects (virtual)
Natalie Redmore, Ashley McGraw Architects (virtual)
Ed Keplinger, Keplinger Freeman Associates (virtual)

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION ON BUILDING FEASIBILITY STUDY

S. Angarano said Ashley McGraw Architects had created an updated presentation based on board feedback from their last meeting.

B. Williams reviewed the goals and priorities for the discussion and said they would be introducing two hybrid designs that she hoped the board would be able to narrow down to a single idea they would like to pursue further. She reiterated the project purpose statement:

To position the Bethlehem Public Library as a community resource that is accessible to all, offering modern programming in a mindful environment that's nestled within the fabric of the community. Designed in a way that's welcoming, simple to navigate, modern, and adaptable to a variety of programs, both inside the library and throughout the site. Optimizing the library so that both patrons and staff have cohesive environments to suit their evolving needs, and to support the next generation of collaboration, discovery, and learning.

B. Williams said it was important to note that the diagrams presented were still only representational, and that further views and a 3D perspective would be forthcoming as they moved forward in the process. C. Wijeyesinghe said that it was her understanding that the board's goal was to have the library remain open during any potential construction process and to be mindful of the staging and messaging to the public.

B. Williams said that the architects had narrowed down the design options to two, but were able to incorporate some of the positive feedback from the other options as well. With the Activate Borthwick option, people liked the entrance visibility but worried about traffic confusion and congestion.

N. Redmore said the hybrid option moves the maintenance and delivery area to the back of the building with a dedicated service entrance. The number of parking spaces would increase from 117 to 150, with good access to both community and library space.

B. Williams said the Split the Middle hybrid does the best job addressing the distance from the building to parking while adding additional space for the collection and moving the book pickup traffic away from the main entrance.

N. Redmore said this version still has sightlines from Borthwick and building entrances on either side of the addition. B. Williams said this option included the removal of the mezzanine.

E. Keplinger explained the traffic flow of the Split the Middle hybrid and noted that the book dropoff/pickup area is serviced by a roundabout, which also includes an option to drop off patrons at the entrance. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there would be opportunities for green space and landscaping throughout the parking area. E. Keplinger said there would be. C. Wijeyesinghe also asked if the Split the Middle design could be accomplished without removing the mezzanine. N. Redmore said there were options to remove or keep the mezzanine in both scenarios.

M. Walsh said she liked the Split the Middle hybrid but was hoping to see more public space as that was something mentioned in community surveys. L. Scoons asked if it would be possible to extend the addition toward the Green for more space. B. Williams said that auditorium space for both options would be similar once the interior is configured. C. Wijeyesinghe said she was concerned about creating a space that was too big that could not be accommodated with parking, creating conflict with the neighbors. B. Williams said the public space is being envisioned as more of a multi-use environment and not one big auditorium. C. Brancatella said she loves the idea of a traffic circle but knows that it can be kind of divisive in this community. G. Kirkpatrick and L. Scoons said they liked the idea of simplifying the parking lot with one entry and exit point.

B. Williams noted that the entrance is closer to the parking lot in both options, but they also both eliminate the long interior walk currently through the lobby to the library proper.

M. Kissinger said he liked the Split the Middle hybrid but asked the architects what the downsides were. M. Walsh noted the cost of removing the mezzanine could be a downside. B. Williams said the mezzanine removal would primarily address the interior experience, but the architects could look at options where it remains. The board agreed that the Split the Middle hybrid design is the one they would like to focus on refining but "cost would be a driving factor," according to M. Kissinger. G. Kirkpatrick said he felt the concept best addresses the entrance's proximity to the parking lot.

M. Kissinger asked when cost estimates would be introduced to the discussion. B. Williams said the next step is refining the chosen options with more details and 3D views, followed by a cost analysis. She said the final review could potentially take place at the board's February 13 meeting. Board members said they would like to see the designs the Friday before the meeting to have time to look them over. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if it would be a good time to gather feedback from immediate neighbors to the library. M. Kissinger said that it should be done when there is something more final to present.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 12 December 2022 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Walsh.

Minutes of the 15 December 2022 building project committee meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

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

- S. Whiting clarified a couple of questions from C. Wijeyesinghe about items on the bill schedule, including the monthly transfer of \$300,000 from the money market account. S. Whiting said the library keeps the funds in the money market account until it is time to pay bills because the interest earnings are higher. The JP Morgan Chase payment represents charges to the new credit cards that the library received, with some of those being recurring monthly services.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 December 2022 (Checks disbursed in December 2022 based on pre-approval \$35,088.65; Checks disbursed in December 2022 relating to payroll \$208,405.52; Checks being submitted for approval \$79,144.54; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$14,966.50; Total: \$337,605.21).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick asked the board to approve moving four hours from an unfilled clerk position to an existing position. His second request was to allow him to hire a full-time librarian *or* library assistant to fill an open position in Public Services. L. Scoons asked if the intent was to canvas for a Librarian I first. G. Kirkpatrick said those letters have already gone out and the library is specifically looking for someone child-focused.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously approved new hires/changes for the following positions:

- Librarian I, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$55,529/annual or per contract
 - OR Library Assistant, full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$39,604/annual or per contract
- Library Clerk, part-time, 15.67 hours/week, \$14.45/hour or per contract

UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons reminded the board about their upcoming racial equity training through UHLS.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Circulation has reached near pre-pandemic levels, and now the library is starting to see increases in the door count as people grow more comfortable in public spaces and more programs are offered.
- M. Walsh said she enjoyed hearing about the harpist that came to play for a Little Sunday Music despite challenging weather that caused the library to close an hour earlier than normal that day.
- The library attended First Night Bethlehem and handed out book coupons. Due to an increasing presence at community events, the library is looking into branded EZ-ups to more prominently identify our presence at these events.
- P. Berardi prepared some data on return rates following the library's switch to a fine-free model. The numbers indicate that return rates are actually above pre-pandemic levels. G. Kirkpatrick said that automatic renewal may also play a part, as both were instituted around the same time. M. Walsh thanked him for providing the data.
- M. Walsh asked if attending NYLA programs would count toward their trustee training requirements in the future because they are always very interesting. G. Kirkpatrick said they do, and that the next couple of upcoming conferences would be taking place in Saratoga Springs.
- Advocacy Day is on February 28. G. Kirkpatrick is not sure if it will be in person or virtual but will update the board when he knows.

NEW BUSINESS

Unite Against Book Bans –organizational partnership

L. Scoons said UHLS is encouraging its member libraries to join the Unite Against Book Bans pledge. Individual trustees can sign on as well. The statement includes the following five principles:

- Books are tools for understanding complex issues.
- Young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's books.
- Parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children.
- Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what to read.
- Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues.

M. Walsh said she wanted to be sure that the library was only weighing in on things that affect this organization and not other libraries. S. Patterson asked if signing the pledge would commit the library to anything specific. L. Scoons noted that it is just a statement and not a policy or plan of action. M. Kissinger and C. Brancatella said they are in favor of supporting library ideas but would draw the line at making statements about topics outside the library realm.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously agreed to sign the library on as organizational partners in Unite Against Book Bans.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Notary services – update

G. Kirkpatrick presented some information he had collected about the costs and logistics of providing notary services on evenings and weekends. He noted that Upper Hudson will reimburse the cost of attending the class provided through Hudson Valley Community College. He asked staff if they would be interested in becoming a notary, and 15 people responded enthusiastically. He said he felt that would be enough people to provide notary coverage for extended hours. The library currently has only one person on staff who can provide notary services. He said yearly costs would include \$140 per notary for liability insurance coverage of \$100,000, an amount recommended by both the insurance agent and the library's lawyer.

G. Kirkpatrick said the library typically completes about 12 notarizations per month, during 9-5 hours when the individual is available, but the benefit to the public would be to have it available on nights and/or weekends. He noted that it is an expensive service and asked the board if they wanted to pursue it further.

M. Walsh said she was disappointed in the insurance costs, but loves the idea of providing free public notary services. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if coverage could be completed with 5-10 staffers. C. Brancatella asked if it was something that could be provided on only on Saturdays. G. Kirkpatrick said that the challenge is the rotational scheduling nature of weekend staff. M. Kissinger said they needed to look into it further and asked G. Kirkpatrick to see what minimum staffing levels would be needed to provide the desired coverage.

Donations/naming rights

G. Kirkpatrick said he is in the process of discussing with other libraries the policies they have in place regarding room naming rights and putting together the information. He noted that Guilderland has an extensive naming policy in place but did not get any outside interest. M. Walsh asked if the board could see a chart on what other libraries are doing. C. Brancatella asked if it was something to be reviewed by the library attorney as well.

Negotiations – update

G. Kirkpatrick said the union would be meeting with their members and representatives shortly to try to get something scheduled. C. Wijeyesinghe asked when the board becomes more active in the negotiations. C. Brancatella said the negotiating committee would come to the board when there is a negotiated contract and also throughout the process on bigger items and parameters. The board is expected to discuss some of the details in executive sessions in the coming months beginning in February. C. Brancatella said the committee is focusing on efficiencies in the process.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board adjourned to executive session at 8:04pm to discuss the employment performance of a specific individual.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board adjourned executive session at 8:57pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 8:58pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president