

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday February 13, 2023

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Sarah Patterson
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Harmeet Narang

GUESTS: Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Phil Berardi, head of Circulation and Technical Services
Lisa Wennberg, Keplinger Freeman Associates
Ed Keplinger, Keplinger Freeman Associates
John Edwards, Sage Engineering
Brooke Williams, Ashley McGraw Architects
DeAnna Hine, Ashley McGraw Architects
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw Architects
Natalie Redmore, Ashley McGraw Architects

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 5:55pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION ON BUILDING FEASIBILITY STUDY

The board received the architects' slides the previous Friday. B. Williams started the presentation by reviewing the goals, priorities and purpose for project. She then presented some of the design refinements for the Split the Middle Hybrid option that the board was interested in exploring. This option would open up 168 parking spaces and feature a curbside pickup window, as well as public entrances on both sides of a community space addition. The site would have one entry point with a two-way traffic flow and visibility from Borthwick Avenue. A covered pavilion would be able to house equipment for outdoor events. M. Kissinger asked where the green space was located as much of the rendering featured a hardscape patio for the outdoor space. B. Williams said that the smaller green space behind the pavilion could host events for up to 100 guests. M. Walsh said she was surprised to see so much patio space rather than green

space, and she wasn't sure there was a need for a covered pavilion with the addition of the community space inside the library. G. Kirkpatrick said that the library needs some type of outdoor covered area for programs. B. Williams and S. Angarano said that if having more green space is the direction the board wants to go in, that could be addressed moving forward.

N. Redmore described the interior spaces in the drawings. She said the entrance would feature a multipurpose large meeting space, as well as other community gathering areas and seating. There would be a staff area at the book pickup window, as well as one near the maintenance and receiving area. The elevator to the mezzanine would be moved into the staff only area. A central "collaboration zone" would feature moveable furniture to accommodate different uses. She noted that the drawings featured furniture and wall placements but none of it was set in stone.

Additional notes:

- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the Children's Space, which was shown near the entrance of the building, had increased in size. N. Redmore said it was a slight increase by about 800-1,000 square feet.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the elevator needs to be moved as she knows it can be costly. S. Angarano noted that it would not need to be a commercial elevator if it is a staff-only lift and moving it would eliminate public confusion about what might be upstairs. C. Wijeyesinghe said she would like to see the costs involved with moving it.
- The mezzanine support bars would remain and 2,300 square feet of staff space would remain in the mezzanine.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there were more small study rooms in the design concept. B. Williams pointed out the areas where there are additional study rooms and noted that staff-only meeting areas would free up the public spaces for the public.
- L. Scoons asked about additional meeting space. B. Williams said there were two meeting rooms in the addition, one that could hold 2-4 people and another that could hold 8-10 people. The community room could be divided into two sound-proof spaces that could accommodate groups up to 100, depending on configuration. The combined space could fit up to approximately 300 people.
- M. Walsh said she wasn't seeing any medium-sized spaces like the board room. B. Williams said the interior concepts could be reconfigured to allow for that type of space.
- B. Williams presented examples of retractable seating, stage design and a Sky Fold room divider for the large community space. She also presented different types of configurations for the room. She asked the board to think about which of those options they'd like to look into more. G. Kirkpatrick said the library was definitely interested in something that could divide the large space as needed.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the new entrance shortens the walk to the entrance of the library and by how much. B. Williams said it is around 15 feet from an ADA parking space to the front door, with the access short on the Community Room side.
- L. Scoons asked where the transformer would be relocated. B. Williams said it was outside the maintenance area. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if it could realistically remain where it is.
- B. Williams said the exterior would get a more modern refresh with warm wood tones and windows that would let in the natural light
- S. Angarano presented a rough budget estimate and said that as they go further into the design they can get a better idea of actual costs and can make decisions about what to keep or what to leave out. The estimated budget was based on the assumption of an all-at-once construction beginning within the next two years.

- S. Whiting asked if the estimate included landscaping costs, and S. Angarano said it did.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked what the process would be to look at reducing the costs. S. Angarano said her recommendations would be to continue developing the design into more detail to compare the value versus the costs, but they could also rethink the design without the additional information. C. Wijeyesinghe said she felt comfortable with the first option as the architects have given the board a lot of flexibility. M. Kissinger agreed that moving forward with developing the current scheme was a good option.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if trustees would have to cut items from the project if costs rose between the time a potential bond is approved and implementation. S. Angarano said the architects would work with the board to stay within the budget.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked about the exterior glass from a safety standpoint. C. Brancatella said she had the same thought. The architects said they would take those concerns into consideration.
- S. Angarano said the next step in the process would be to close out this conceptual design phase and have a conversation about moving forward.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 9 January 2023 board meeting were approved unanimously on a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

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

- With the renewal of a 4-month CD and favorable interest rates, the library will be earning interest on interest. C. Wijeyesinghe thanked S. Whiting and the financial committee for their work.
- S. Whiting said the fund balance has been growing over the past year and some of it can be used on any potential project. Any such money would be moved into the capital projects fund to keep track of spending.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 January 2023 (Checks disbursed in January 2023 based on pre-approval \$55,416.52; Checks disbursed in January 2023 relating to payroll \$187,723.98; Checks being submitted for approval \$87,059.69; CapProject Fund/Hand-Drawn Checks \$6,437.53; Total: \$336,637.72).

PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick reported that the library had recently filled a full-time Library Assistant position and two full-time Librarian 1 positions, as well as a part-time clerk position. He said the library was approaching full staffing for the first time in years. There were no personnel actions requested at this time.

UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said Advocacy Day would take place Feb. 28, with a meeting at 9:15am with the Assembly and 3:30 p.m. with the Senate. She had a schedule and maps that she offered to share. She also noted that the executive budget included cuts to library aid and construction aid, but there is still a chance it could be replaced by the legislature. The UHLS Library Expedition will be returning this spring and summer.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said that the first few weeks of the year have started to feel more like pre-COVID times as far as the number of people using the building. Use of meeting rooms and study rooms has picked up, and a recent program was filled to capacity resulting in people being turned away.
- M. Walsh said it was her impression that a vibrant and inviting Children's Place was part of the Long Range Plan, and she noticed that the architects' rendering kept it nearly the same size as the current one. G. Kirkpatrick said that now was the time for the library to make clear its ideas and priorities regarding those spaces.
- An upcoming Via Aquarium event is expected to be popular. G. Kirkpatrick said that events are announced first in Footnotes so that Bethlehem patrons have a first shot at registering.
- Physical material checkouts are up. L. Scoons asked why electronic checkouts weren't broken out in the state report. G. Kirkpatrick said they are still working through how to categorize digital collections.
- The stats show that physical use of the building returning.

NEW BUSINESS

Draft 2023-24 library budget

S. Whiting noted the 2023-2024 budget draft didn't include any significant changes from last year. She believes the calculated turnover allowance for salaries remains accurate, and no new positions have been created. The budget line for accounting will decrease by about \$10,000 because that amount represented a one-time cost for last year's purchase of new accounting software. M. Kissinger asked why the budget line for library materials is down from last year. S. Whiting said it represents a number that is closer to what is actually being spent. She said it is still around 12 percent of the budget, which compares favorably to other libraries in the area. G. Kirkpatrick said that 12 percent is based on Pennsylvania standards as there are currently no other regional or national standards. C. Wijeyesinghe asked G. Kirkpatrick if he would be spending all of it. He said, yes, that was the intent.

The proposed levy is an increase of 1.97 percent. It could increase by as much as \$81,530 and still remain under the tax cap. M. Kissinger encouraged the board to look over the draft and be ready to vote on it at the March meeting.

Volunteer policy

G. Kirkpatrick said a volunteer policy has been drafted as part of the library's effort to relaunch volunteering. C. Wijeyesinghe said that board members could give it a first read and vote on it at the next meeting.

Trane invoice

G. Kirkpatrick said the library needs new compressor on rooftop unit 3 before the air-conditioning season kicks in. The compressor that is no longer working is five years old.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved an invoice from Trane in the amount of \$6,837 for the replacement of the RTU 3 Compressor.

Plaza entry

The board received a letter recently about the dangers icing on the plaza entrance poses to the public. The board was asked if there was any interim mitigation that could be done in advance of any potential building project. G. Kirkpatrick said the weather in January created some particularly challenging situations. He has reached out to the landscape architects working with Ashley McGraw to get a conceptual price to bring back to the board. L. Scoons said she noticed on a recent trip that the plaza became extremely icy in just the time it took her to retrieve her books. M. Walsh noted that there is a budget line for capital expenditures and contingencies. C. Brancatella said the expense would likely be less than a lawsuit were someone to get hurt.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Notary services – update

G. Kirkpatrick presented a streamlined version of his earlier notary proposal, with 11 people providing notary services. He said that it wouldn't bring availability to 100 percent, but coverage would be pretty good. He said the board did not need to make any final decisions just yet but that he would be taking advantage of Upper Hudson's offer to cover the costs of training and exam fees for those individuals.

Donations/naming rights

G. Kirkpatrick asked the board if they were interested in considering naming rights at the library. This line of discussion had been brought about by a question from a member of the public. If it was something they were interested in allowing, a policy and some parameters would need to be drafted. M. Walsh asked to clarify that a set policy was not the current discussion, that the board could consider just the point of accepting or not accepting the idea of Naming Rights and actual policy could be hammered out at a later date. C. Brancatella asked if it was something that could be addressed later as any type of building project could potentially change the existing room configuration. G. Kirkpatrick said it wasn't necessary to go into detail at this time but just decide whether it is something they want to do, and it might be something good to have in place if there were to be a construction project. C. Brancatella, L. Scoons, and C. Wijeyesinghe all said they were unsure how they felt about allowing it but were open to learning more. The board said they would like to hear more about existing policies at other libraries and have a decision in place by fall.

Negotiations – update

The union's attorney and those for the library are beginning to schedule time for the discussion. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there were any implications for the budget. G. Kirkpatrick said it may impact the way the budget is spent but it wouldn't change it as it is set in March.

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 C. Brancatella, the board adjourned to executive session at 8:17pm to discuss contact negotiations pursuant to Article Fourteen of the Civil Service Law

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board adjourned executive session at 9:04pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board adjourned the regular meeting at 9:05pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president