

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES INFORMATION ONLY MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)  
Monday August 14, 2023

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella  
Sarah Patterson (remote)  
Lisa Scoons  
Charmaine Wijeyesinghe  
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer  
  
Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director (remote)  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Michelle Walsh  
Mark Kissinger

GUESTS: Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary  
Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services  
Chris McGinty, assistant director  
Susanne Angarano, Ashley McGraw Architects (remote)  
Laura Cooper  
John McCarthy  
Mary Service

C. Wijeyesinghe noted that the evening's meeting was informational only as the board did not have a quorum in the room. She said a meeting with a quorum had been held August 9 to allow the board to vote on financial matters. She asked those present to introduce themselves for the benefit of the public.

#### PUBLIC PARTICPATION

Laura Cooper introduced herself as a Bethlehem resident since 1989 with moderate to profound hearing loss. She requested the installation of hearing loops as part of any upcoming renovation project. She said hearing loops have enhanced her experience where available and deliver vastly improved sound quality directly to an individual's hearing device. She recommended a portable loop for the public meeting rooms and loops for the library's service desks. She noted that there may be grants available to help cover the cost. She shared the following web link:  
[www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/hat/hearing-loop-technology](http://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/hat/hearing-loop-technology)

C. Wijeyesinghe said it was something the board would probably be discussing with architects moving forward.

#### ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

S. Anganaro provided an update of recent discussions with staff and community. She said the preliminary design is the same one presented at the community sessions. She noted that some community participants emphasized the need for accessibility and many described the library as a resource for the community, as well as a place to gather with multi-generational learning opportunities. Others were unclear about the term "port in the storm," which is part of the guiding principles.

G. Kirkpatrick said the intent was not to position the library as a first responder in an emergency but to be part of the initial recovery phase by providing library services like WiFi and computer access or a place to charge their devices and access recovery resources. Board members present agreed that the phrase “port in the storm” did not clearly convey that concept. C. Wijeyesinghe asked to flag that topic for further discussion.

S. Anganaro said that when design talks first started, they were looking at a large meeting space that could accommodate approximately 400 people, but that number seems to have coalesced somewhere around 250, but it was never definitively settled. L. Scoons said she didn’t think an actual number needed to be part of the guiding principles statement.

S. Anganaro said her team was still compiling all of the data from the community, but many who responded felt the library is still a place for books even as new priorities emerge. More than 300 people filled out the survey.

S. Anganaro outlined the five major “whys” of the project noting that the community sessions revealed a need to revisit these issues with the public in ongoing community conversations.

S. Anganaro said she was hoping the board could make a decision about the size of the community room space so that the design can move forward. The library currently has around 2,200 square feet of community room space available. Option one for the addition would provide around 3,600 square feet and could be configured into a small, medium or large space. The second option is larger with 5,400 square feet and adds an additional medium space. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there would be any additional rooms with the first option over what the library currently has. S. Anganaro said there would be a gain of space but not of the number of rooms. G. Kirkpatrick said he has polled the trustees for their preference and is still waiting for a couple of responses. S. Anganaro said that decision is the corner stone to moving forward with the project. C. Wijeyesinghe said that while she initially supported the small option, she has changed her opinion and would support the larger one. She said her concerns were initially about cost and that she didn’t want the library to be the only agency in town to shoulder the burden of providing community space.

S. Anganaro provided an updated cost estimate that factors in construction contingencies. The current estimate is \$28.2 million, but would probably increase by \$1 million if the library were to go with the larger meeting space. She noted that the 8 percent contingency is on the high end due to escalating construction costs and said they are trying to account for the unknowns with that estimate. C. Brancatella said that the point of the contingency was to avoid going over budget, but there is always a possibility of coming under. C. Wijeyesinghe also noted that the project cost amount is not necessarily the amount of the bond. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the schematic design is complete in October and the board has decided how much they wanted to bond, would it be possible for the bond to go to vote before May 2024. S. Anganaro said that it could be possible, but there would be a lot of logistics involved in making that decision. L. Scoons said the library should also be prepared to apply for construction grants when the timing is right. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if there were other pools of money the library might be eligible for.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### *Treasurer's update*

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

- S. Whiting said that while the audited numbers aren't in, it looks like the library will have a surplus well over \$400,000. She said some of that is due to being able to take advantage of interest rates, as well as coming in under budget on salaries and some supplies.
- S. Whiting has created an adjusted budget for the coming year that will feature the contractual changes in salaries. She said the net effect is around \$44,000.
- C. Brancatella said that the changes reflect a five-year contract that increases salaries, the library's health-care contributions, and equitable part-time pay and does not affect other budget money spent on resources.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- It has been a busy month with Summer Reading numbers close to pre-pandemic times.
- Beth has been visiting ESY classrooms this summer. This expanded outreach is a first for the library this time of year.
- Although the library's collection expansion has been driven by digital items, the number of physical holdings has also grown.
- Door count continues to increase. G. Kirkpatrick said he is waiting to see it reach 20,000 in a month, which will be a first post-pandemic.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the volunteer coordinator is working with C. McGinty as she reworks the process. G. Kirkpatrick said that position is currently open, so C. McGinty is doing it on her own until it can be filled.

## UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said the board does not meet in August, but very soon the services committee she is on will meet to start looking at construction grant proposals.

## NEW BUSINESS

### *Committee appointments*

M. Kissinger had proposed an updated list of board committees. L. Scoons said she would like to have a fuller discussion with the entire board present. The board agreed to table the discussion until September.

### *Automated materials handling/RFID presentation*

P. Berardi made a brief presentation about RFID systems and said that the time to discuss it is now with the impending building project. He said the goal of such a system is to provide a simplified and accurate checkout experience for both patrons and staff. He said he is currently talking with vendors and gathering costs, which include the software interface, checkout stations and an automated handling machine, which would be the bulk of the price.

L. Scoons said that the last time the board looked at an RFID system, there weren't that many libraries locally used them. She asked which ones are using it now and what kinds of issues are they having. She also noted that the concept has not been popular with the public in the past because it looks like an organization is trying to get rid of staff. P. Berardi said that Guilderland just installed an RFID system with their building project. Nearby, the Crandall, Saratoga and Schenectady libraries use it. He said it is not meant to take away from patron experience or interaction with staff but to add options for those who want them.

L. Scoons, referring to the pickup lockers in the closing slide asked if this was technology that could be used to reach people in underserved areas of the town. G. Kirkpatrick said a pickup locker could be done even without RFID technology. The question would be location and cost.

G. Kirkpatrick recommended that those who want to take a closer look at the technology should take a tour of what they have in Guilderland, which P. Berardi helped implement.

#### *T-shirt marketing proposal*

G. Kirkpatrick said the library would like to provide a branded T-shirt to staff and trustees that can be worn in-house and at outreach events to help make the library more recognizable out and about. He asked if that is something the board would support. Approximate startup cost would be \$1,500 with additional T-shirts about \$20 per staffer. S. Patterson and C. Brancatella expressed support and asked if the library might even be able to sell them as library "merch" to supporters. C. Wijeyesinghe proposed that the library choose from one design for staff and one that would be made available to the public.

#### *Public Services reorganization proposal*

G. Kirkpatrick presented a proposed change to the library's organizational chart that would simplify the chain of command by designating a department head to lead public services and freeing up C. McGinty to help with the additional tasks created by the building project. He said the board would be able to vote on it at the September meeting, but he wanted to get the information out in front of them. This change would result in an ongoing structural increase of about \$17,000/year to reclassify a Librarian II to III and Library Clerk I to Library Assistant. C. Wijeyesinghe said that G. Kirkpatrick and the personnel committee have discussed the proposal extensively and the committee supports the reorganization as presented.

#### *Year-end statistics presentation*

The board and G. Kirkpatrick agreed to table the presentation until September.

#### *Other new business*

There was no new business at this time

#### OLD BUSINESS

#### *Geotechnical survey – update*

The drilling has been completed, and the workers found a lot of wet clay and sand. A final report is in the works. G. Kirkpatrick noted that they were very respectful of patrons and staff as they conducted their business.

### *Plaza entry – update*

The town board and library have both approved the MOU to share services to pave the library plaza. Work would likely begin the end of September or beginning of October. Maintenance staff will remove brick, and the town will use blacktop to fill in those spaces. G. Kirkpatrick said he was thankful for the town's advice and willingness to take on the project. L. Scoons asked how confident he was that the timing of when the brick are pulled up lines up with when the asphalt is put in. G. Kirkpatrick said he has been very clear in communication with the town that the timing is critical. Board members said the messaging to patrons should be very clear that it is about safety.

### *Policy Committee update*

- Gifts, Memorials, Bequests, and Naming Opportunities Policy – preview  
C. Wijeyesinghe thanked G. Kirkpatrick and J. Crawford for helping to get the copy ready to be presented. She said that it is not a first read of the policy, which has yet to reach draft form. She said she has flagged some areas where board feedback was needed before moving forward. She said she hopes board members will read it and be ready to come with ideas for a more significant discussion in September.

G. Kirkpatrick said that the library used to hold a series that was sponsored by a family in memory of their loved one. He said he has been approached about restarting the series. In the past, such requests were handled as a one-off thing.

C. Brancatella said she thought the policy was to just cover room naming. She said she was uncomfortable with the idea of sponsoring a specific event or materials.

### *Other old business*

There was no other old business at this time.

## FUTURE BUSINESS

### *Director evaluation timeline and process*

C. Wijeyesinghe urged the board to check out the time-frame and materials included in the packet and see if they would still fit. The board would discuss further in September under New Business. She said that she was looking for someone to take over as chair of the personnel committee.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president