

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)  
Monday August 12, 2024

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella  
Laura DiBetta (virtual)  
Sarah Patterson  
Gail Sacco (virtual and in person)  
Lisa Scoons  
Michelle Walsh

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Mark Kissinger  
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services  
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk  
Marc Gronich  
Chris O'Brien, CSEA Local 6015 president  
Mary Dugan  
Shannon McLaughlin  
Rachael Ciancarelli  
Beth Puskas  
Robert Weatherby  
Luke Bowen  
Sarah Romeo  
Alex Desourdy  
Lauren Kozilski  
Mary Service  
Robert McDonnell

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

TRUSTEE OATH OF OFFICE

M. Walsh administered the oath of office to trustee-elect L. DiBetta.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

One member of the public and a library staff member/union representative addressed the board.  
A recording of the meeting and the public comment period is available on the library's YouTube channel.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday July 15 regular board meeting.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Thursday August 1 special board meeting.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### *Treasurer's update*

M. Walsh shared notes provided by S. Whiting that noted an anticipated budget surplus of \$408,000. Auditors had completed preliminary work and a \$500,000 CD that came due in August was not rolled over at this time in order to cover operational expenses.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 July 2024 (Checks disbursed in July 2024 based on pre-approval \$46,497.38; Checks disbursed in July 2024 relating to payroll \$205,423.65; Checks being submitted for approval \$50,067.60; CapProject Fund Checks \$2,800.00; Total: \$304,788.63).

## PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said he was requesting three actions to fill the following positions: a part-time Librarian I and a part-time Library Clerk, both backfill, and the creation of a Librarian III department head to support the reorganization of public services into youth and adult services. He proposed that the library remove the open full-time and part-time Library Assistant positions to help make this change budget neutral. He noted that the additional Librarian III position was originally eliminated during the financial crisis as a cost-saving measure.

C. Brancatella said she heard no objection to the creation of Librarian III position during the public comment period, but she did note some staff hesitation about the elimination of the part-time Library Assistant position.

G. Kirkpatrick said that a desk time analysis showed that at no point were librarians spending more than 50% percent of their time on the desk, which falls in line with the industry standard.

M. Walsh asked if the personnel committee had heard from library employees. She said that the board does not often hear from staff, and because of the large representation of staff at the meeting, her gut was telling her she needed more information. She noted that, in the public comment period, staff had said their leave time has been affected because there aren't enough people to cover the desk. G. Kirkpatrick said public services is also down a full-time position, which has also had an impact.

S. Patterson said that when it was discussed among the personnel committee, they talked about how to make the change budget neutral. She asked if the unfilled clerk positions might be used to cover the salary difference and keep the part-time Library Assistant. G. Kirkpatrick said it can be done, but he is reluctant to lose those open clerk positions in case circulation bounces back further. S. Patterson said the personnel committee was trying to keep the circulation and public service money in separate baskets when coming up with the proposal.

In answer to a question from L. Scoons, G. Kirkpatrick said the Library Assistant positions were both open due to resignations. S. Patterson said the idea to separate the department into adult and children's services had been under discussion before those resignations.

G. Sacco noted that a Librarian III puts in desk time as well. She asked if the board could approve the addition of the Librarian III while continuing to discuss the open part-time Library Assistant position.

S. Patterson asked about the 50% desk time cutoff. G. Kirkpatrick said that things tend to fall off when people spend more than 50% of their time on the service desk, but he doesn't think keeping it just under that amount would be asking too much.

C. Brancatella asked if there were any negatives to holding off discussion of the Librarian III position until the next meeting. G. Kirkpatrick said he was eager to get the position filled to assist the current department head with the workload.

G. Sacco said that she sees two issues: one is how the Librarian III position would be funded and is a budget issue, and the second is the organizational structure of splitting public services into two departments. She said that if the board wants to split the department, then both department heads should be the same level. She suggested the board approve the Librarian III and set aside time to discuss the part-time Library Assistant position further.

G. Sacco said that the board should look at both staff concerns and the impact on budget.

C. Brancatella asked that staffers make their concerns heard to the personnel committee before the next meeting.

## PERSONNEL ACTIONS

On a MOTION by Gail Sacco with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to approve the following positions:

- Librarian I, part-time, permanent, 9 hours/week, \$36.65/hour or per contract
- Library Clerk, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week, \$18.19/hour or per contract
- Librarian III (Department Head), full-time, permanent, 35 hours/week, \$74,706/annual or per contract

## PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The chart showing the reorganization of the public services department was noted during the personnel discussion.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- G. Kirkpatrick said that the building bond vote date has been moved to early December, but a new date hasn't been locked down. He said the library will continue its outreach to let the public know of the change.
- Large print books are growing in circulation. G. Kirkpatrick said that he continues to look at the size of the growing collection when considering shelf space in a potential building project.
- M. Walsh said she is still hearing from people that their wait times for holds have been longer since the library went fine free. She said her book group will often use large print copies if that's what's available.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that about one-third of the library's circulation is electronic, which is more expensive to maintain. Even though the library spends a considerable amount on extra copies, he is unsure how much would have to be spent to make a considerable drop in wait times.

- G. Sacco noted a recent article in the Times Union about Albany Public Library’s expansion of its foreign language book collection and asked if there were any collaborations with Bethlehem in the works. G. Kirkpatrick said the library has, in the past, partnered with a local group to provide more titles in Chinese, but the collection didn’t gain any traction. He said he sees a lot of potential for foreign language titles in the electronic collection.
- M. Walsh asked if the library has had to turn away any people from popular programs. G. Kirkpatrick said that a recent reptile program reached capacity, but a second session was able to accommodate the rest. He did note that the Evenings on the Green and larger outdoor programs are harder to host indoors. M. Walsh said it would be nice to have an indoor space large enough for such instances.

#### UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said the Upper Hudson Board did not meet this month.

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### *Committee appointments and re-authorizations*

G. Kirkpatrick said the ad hoc committee appointments need to be authorized every year. M. Walsh said that she would like to be included on the nominating committee for the coming year.

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board voted unanimously to accept the following ad hoc committee appointments for the 2024-25 fiscal year:

- Building project education committee  
*L. DiBetta, L. Scoons, Gail*
- Policy committee  
*Lisa, Caroline, Gail*

##### **The standing committees:**

- Nominating committee  
*Sarah, Caroline, Michelle*
- Building committee  
*all trustees*
- Personnel committee  
*Sarah, Gail*
- Finance committee  
*Michelle, Laura*

##### *Other new business*

G. Kirkpatrick asked to send seven staffers to the NYLA conference this year in Syracuse at a maximum cost of \$7,659.

G. Sacco asked if there was a NYLA trustee day. G. Kirkpatrick said that he would suggest attending on a Saturday since has a more organizational focus that day. L. Scoons said that she went last year, and while there wasn’t anything specific for trustees, she was able to pick and choose which sessions to attend. M. Walsh asked if it was already included in the budget. It is part of the “Professional fees, dues and conferences” budget line.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board voted unanimously to approve the attendance of seven employees at the NYLA conference at a maximum cost of \$7,659.

## OLD BUSINESS

### *Length of trustee terms discussion*

G. Kirkpatrick said in his discussion with the attorney, he was told that a four-year term was not an option. He said it is possible to lobby for a change in the law, but right now only three and five-year terms are allowed. L. Scoons said she would still support a three-year term to help attract new board candidates who might be deterred by a five-year term. She noted that other area libraries are considering similar changes.

L. Scoons made a MOTION to reduce the length of a trustee's term from five to three years moving forward. L. DiBetta SECONDED. L. Scoons and L. DiBetta voted in favor of the motion. C. Brancatella, S. Patterson, G. Sacco and M. Walsh voted against. The motion did not pass.

### *Finance committee report*

M. Walsh said the committee had been discussing raising the director's purchasing authorization from \$5,000 to \$15,000 to deal with rising costs and inflation. It is now up for the policy committee to discuss as the purchasing policy is due for review. G. Kirkpatrick said the policy committee will also be looking at an updated employee manual.

### *Building project update/ proposed timeline/ proposed date change*

G. Kirkpatrick said the building committee recently met to discuss the cost of the building project, which came in over the \$36 million cap that had been established. The board has directed Architects Ashley McGraw to modify the design to fall within the expected cost. He said the size of the large meeting room could be in play, and with it the need for telescoping seating. He noted that this delay will kick back the timing of the vote, and it will no longer be held in early October. He said the new vote date is now expected to be sometime in early December.

L. Scoons asked if messaging about the change has begun. G. Kirkpatrick said this meeting was the first public notification of the change. G. Sacco said she believes it is important to let the public know the board is being responsible caretakers of their money by insisting the project cost matches what they said it would be.

L. DiBetta said she and K. Roberts have met to discuss some messaging specifics. She said the goal is to be ready to go as soon as we have date and dollar.

G. Sacco asked if the school district would be handling the vote. G. Kirkpatrick said it was likely, and the vote would probably take place at the library.

### *Meeting room policy – comments and process*

C. Brancatella noted that the board made a commitment to review the meeting room policy every quarter, and the first scheduled review was coming up in September. She said the board would be seeking comments about its implementation and asked K. Roberts to post on the library's marketing channels that they would be seeking feedback prior to the September 9 meeting.

### *Other old business*

There was no other old business at this time.

#### FUTURE BUSINESS

G. Sacco said she would like to recognize staff and the amount of work that goes into summer programming.

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A library staff member/union representative addressed the board. A recording of the meeting and the public comment period is available on the library's YouTube channel.

#### ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:14pm.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president