

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)
Monday September 9, 2024

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Laura DiBetta
Mark Kissinger (virtual)
Sarah Patterson
Gail Sacco
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
Sharon Whiting, library treasurer

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Chris Obrien, CSEA Local 6015 president

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

M. Walsh had a question about the protocol for signing off on the minutes. K. Roberts said it was her understanding that the board president officially signed off on the document whether he or she was present at the meeting or not.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday August 12 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting said that with the library already 2 months into the fiscal year, expenses are tracking similar to the previous year. The auditors are finishing up their field work and she expects to have a report to review prior to the November meeting, when it will be presented. She said she doesn't expect anything unusual.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 August 2024 (Checks disbursed in August 2024 based on pre-approval \$86,666.08; Checks disbursed in August 2024 relating to payroll \$203,846.78; Checks being submitted for approval \$55,337.44; CapProject Fund Checks \$38,275.11; Total: \$384,125.41).

PERSONNEL REPORT

S. Patterson said the personnel committee had heard feedback from supervisors and librarians about the 16-hour Library Assistant position that G. Kirkpatrick had recommended eliminating in order to make the hiring of a Librarian III more budget neutral. She said the committee reviewed the library budget and feels confident that it could absorb those additional staff hours.

M. Walsh said that one of the arguments she had heard in favor of retaining the position is that it would increase the flexibility of staff. She said that continues to be an issue, one option would be to decrease outreach in schools or around town.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

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

- Library Assistant, part-time, permanent, 16 hours/week, \$23.65/hour or per contract

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- The vision boards that had been located in the lobby received a lot of feedback about the building project from teens and others. G. Kirkpatrick said the idea was proposed by a Public Services librarian.
- G. Kirkpatrick said librarians were trying to encourage caretakers and children to neaten up the play areas when they were done. G. Sacco asked how often the toys were cleaned. She said she didn't understand why this would be a concern as staff should be picking up what's left out. She said she doesn't believe staff should be approaching library visitors, who may have a fussy child in tow, and directing them to clean up. L. DiBetta asked if there could be signage or something in the e-news to encourage leaving the library better than they found it. K. Roberts said there was a large poster near the fish tank and a smaller one on the stacks.
- When discussing the library's outreach efforts, G. Kirkpatrick noted that it was an expensive service in terms of staff time, but generally results in hundreds of interactions with people in the community.
- G. Kirkpatrick invited board member to participate in upcoming Halloween events, including Trunk or Treat at Elm Avenue Park, a Halloween Story Walk, and trick or treat at the library.
- M. Walsh asked if there was a contact she should get in touch with if she wanted to volunteer for the Friends book sale. G. Kirkpatrick directed her to their website.
- M. Kissinger asked if the library was still in discussion with HILL to co-sponsor their programs. G. Kirkpatrick said the Friends and HILL representative have had ongoing conversations.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said the UHLS service committee has met and reviewed construction grants. There were 10 awards, and half of those were for roof projects. She said \$1.3 million in grants were awarded.

NEW BUSINESS

Purchasing policy

G. Kirkpatrick and S. Whiting had requested a change to purchasing limits to the purchasing limits. The library's attorney has reviewed the policy and found it in order. M. Walsh said the purchase amount had not been updated for many year and the Finance Committee was recommending this update to better reflect current prices. G. Sacco noted a grammatical issue in the policy. L. DiBetta noted that the ranges should be adjusted so there wouldn't be overlap.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to accept the updated Purchasing Policy allowing purchases up to \$14,999 to be made at the discretion of the director.

BCSD property MOU

G. Kirkpatrick brought the MOU related to the property transfer with the school district back before the board for consideration. He said it had been reviewed by the board and the attorney. G. Sacco said she still had some questions and believed it needed further discussion at the board level. M. Kissinger agreed. G. Kissinger said he would set up a meeting with the attorney to discuss it further. G. Sacco said the library is an independent local municipal government entity and the school district does not have authority over it. The board agreed to continue the discussion before a vote.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Building project update/Project timeline

G. Kirkpatrick said that since the building project estimate came in higher than the board's desired price, it was sent back to architects for a change in design that would bring it within the budget the board had set. He said the architects are working with the construction manager, and the Building Committee will meet next week to discuss their options. He said a redesigned project to meet the desired budget will include substantial changes, such as shrinking front-of-house areas.

G. Kirkpatrick said that the construction manager has said that just tackling the essential updates, like asbestos removal, boiler room updates, parking lot improvements and other code necessities would likely come in at around \$20-\$25 million because of the age of the building.

M. Walsh asked about the project discussion timeline. G. Kirkpatrick said that if the goal was to move forward with the vote in December, then the board would have to move quickly.

C. Brancatella said that if the library were to just do what is structurally necessary, it would come to about two-thirds of the full project amount. L. DiBetta said it was a health and safety issue. G. Kirkpatrick said that while the asbestos is not an imminent danger, it is preventing the library from doing any projects that would disturb the area. He said the roof is aging, the parking lot needs to be milled and resurfaced, and the boiler has to be replaced and the room moved up to code. M. Walsh said they will continue the discussion at the Building Committee meeting on Sept. 16.

Meeting room policy

C. Brancatella thanked staff for helping to implement the new policy and thanked the public for getting to know it. She said it was a big change and the board is committed to reviewing its effectiveness every quarter. She said the board had received some comments about it from the staff about the technical challenges. She asked the board whether they wanted to pursue any structural changes to the policy such as collapsing the types of users into a single cardholder checkout or technical changes such as wording changes or tweaks to the calendar software.

M. Kissinger said he was in favor of any needed technical changes to the process but nothing structural at this time. S. Patterson said the board should wait before making any big changes as it has been only three months. She said she is hearing that one big challenge is the acknowledgement form that indicates a person has read the policy and watched the training video. G. Kirkpatrick said that other challenges include groups not knowing how to find their non-profit number or simply not existing as a non-profit. He noted that some groups, including local Girl Scouts troops, share a non-profit number so they run into an issue with the one booking a month provision. S. Patterson said it doesn't appear the finding the forms online is a problem

The board wanted to reiterate to staff that they have read and consider their comments. G. Kirkpatrick said that staff has been doing a lot to make sure the needs of patrons are being met. L. DiBetta agreed to wait another three months before considering any major changes but noted the board would need to revisit those concerns eventually.

G. Kirkpatrick said prior to the policy revision, the library did not define what a non-profit group was, so figuring out the non-profit status has been additional work. The purpose of the revision was to remove the discretion and provide a clear definition of whether a group is or isn't a non-profit.

G. Sacco asked about the library's liability if a group hold an event where someone is injured.

L. Scoons said she agreed that she would like to have more experience under the belt before making significant changes in any direction. G. Kirkpatrick said there are some things current software can't accommodate and has to be done manually. S. Patterson said a lot of groups are repeats, so hopefully subsequent reservations will be easier. C. Brancatella said that letting the play out will identify more things that can be improved. The board agreed to leave the policy as it stands and revisit in the next quarter.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

L. DiBetta gave a brief update on what the ad hoc Building Education Committee has been working on.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:58pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president