

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (BOARD ROOM)
Monday June 9, 2025

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, public information specialist

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of operations
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Tracey McShane,
Susan Ungerman
Michelle Sanders
Daniel Sanders
Robert McDonnell
Dee Levy

President M. Kissinger called the budget presentation to order at 6:01pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

Two members of the public spoke during the public comment period. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by M. Walsh the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday May 12 regular board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report. She noted that the library will most likely be able to add to the fund balance at the end of the fiscal year.

- G. Sacco asked about the increase in revenue from the photocopier line. T. Choppy said that an additional photocopier was added recently and that both are well used.

- M. Kissinger said that actual interest earnings were well over the projected amount. S. Whiting says she tries to budget conservatively for interest revenue because a lot can happen over the year that can impact that number.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by M. Walsh the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 May 2025 (Checks disbursed in May 2025 based on pre-approval \$48,284.62; Checks disbursed in May 2025 relating to payroll \$317,927.67; Checks being submitted for approval \$123,304.04; CapProject Fund Checks \$0; Total: \$489,516.33).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said that in preparation for the next fiscal year, the only open position remaining on the report is the Librarian I that the board had already approved for backfill. Held positions will no longer be reported, and the library is considered to be at full staffing with what we have. G. Kirkpatrick said the board can review needs in the future if circulation patterns change. There were no personnel actions requested.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Biggs the dog returned to the library to follow up on the earlier treatment for bedbugs. He sniffed around and gave the library a clean bill of health. G. Kirkpatrick said he may increase the frequency of his visits in the next few months just for additional peace of mind. C. Brancatella thanked G. Kirkpatrick and staff for their quick handling of the incident and messaging to the public. She noted that bedbugs are a real possibility for libraries everywhere. G. Kirkpatrick said that the incident has given staff some additional insight into how bedbugs get into libraries and where to focus future staff training. M. Walsh noted that staff already had a process in place to deal with such an issue, and that preparation made a difference.
- G. Kirkpatrick noted the library's school outreach efforts.
- The library's Tonie collection has expanded and is quite popular with borrowers. M. Walsh asked if there were plans to buy more. G. Kirkpatrick said they would be looking at adding more in the new fiscal year. L. Scoons asked if other area libraries were circulating Tonies. P. Berardi said that he believes Bethlehem is the only one in the UHLS that is, but Saratoga has a collection as well. C. Brancatella noted that there is a similar product called a Yoto.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that HILL has become a committee of Friends and is working on a web presence.
- The library continues to investigate healthcare consortium options and is planning some upcoming meeting with union representatives to discuss it further.
- The board discussed numbers of website visitors. G. Kirkpatrick said those numbers can fluctuate wildly due to bot behavior.
- M. Kissinger touted the jump in library card signups over the past month. G. Kirkpatrick said that was likely due to increased outreach efforts.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons noted that the annual celebration would be held Wednesday, and it would be an opportunity to meet Chris Sagas, the new director of UHLS.

NEW BUSINESS

Request for reconsideration

M. Kissinger said the board is being asked to review a patron's appeal of G. Kirkpatrick's decision to not withdraw an image from the library's online collection of Spotlight newspapers.

G. Kirkpatrick said the library has received such requests in the past, but they generally focused on how crime was reported in the past. In all instances, the library boards at the time declined to make any changes. G. Kirkpatrick said that there is no legal guidance in this area, and the library would comply with any court order if it were to come to that. He asked the board to think about what circumstances in the future might make the board consider removing information from the Spotlight collection.

G. Sacco said the library does not own the information in the Spotlight and are hosting past issues as an archival database. Because of that, she said she does not support making any changes to it.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously upheld the director's decision to not remove an image from the library's Spotlight archive at a patron's request.

Long Range Plan

G. Kirkpatrick said that the current Long Range Plan is expiring this year, and he asked the board how they would like to proceed in developing a new plan.

C. Brancatella suggested that the document have one primary author and that board members review the draft and make suggestions in August, at which time the author will go through and make any necessary adjustments. G. Kirkpatrick suggested the board extend the current plan until the end of the year to allow the board time to work on a new one.

C. Brancatella suggested that the July agenda include further discussion about the process with an end goal of having it ready to vote on at the December meeting.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously vote to extend the current Long Rang Plan through the first board meeting in December 2025 to allow time to discuss and write a new one.

Investment Policy

S. Whiting said she had been looking into other allowable investment tools for the library. Metropolitan Commercial Bank offers a Deposit Placement Program that invests deposits across multiple banks at no greater than the limit for FDIC coverage. This is a permitted investment through NYS law, and S. Whiting said she thinks it is something the library should take advantage of while interest rates are still favorable. She requested an update to library policy in order to pursue this. The finance committee has discussed it and recommends the addition of this option to the policy.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously accepted revisions to the library's Investment Policy.

Construction manager proposal – boiler project

A proposal was not yet prepared as of the board meeting.

M/C Salaries

G. Kirkpatrick said that union salaries are dictated by the contract and are automatic, but Management Confidential must be approved by the board each fiscal year. The increases proposed are the same as those received by the union staff.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to approve the 2025-26 salary schedule for management confidential employees not covered by the union contract.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick said he had a request from a patron who was interested in a bench with a plaque to honor his spouse. He said the library does not currently have any space for an additional bench at this time and asked the board if they were interested in identify new areas where that might be possible. C. Brancatella said that it was a lovely idea, but there is a finite amount of space. She said it might be a good idea to come up with a standard memorial item that can be offered in perpetuity or a list of available opportunities, such as a bird bath or feeder. M. Kissinger said concert seating on the Green might be another option. M. Walsh said she really likes the memorial benches and there might be some additional space once the house on Borthwick is taken down. G. Kirkpatrick said the library is currently refurbishing a donated shelf from the old Adams Street location that will create a more robust and noticeable “Shelves of Support.” Some sort of seating for concerts. This is something the friends seem interested in fundraising for.

C. Brancatella suggested that the topic might be compelling enough to address in the Long Range Plan.

S. Patterson said, as secretary, she has received some emails asking about who is responsible for election enforcement and was wondering where to direct the inquiries. G. Kirkpatrick said that library elections are part of the school district and excluded from being under purview of county board election. Questions should go to the district’s chief election inspector.

L. DiBetta noted that some of the published candidate information varied and wondered if in the future there could be a way to standardize how we collect information. G. Kirkpatrick said the library does not edit or correct the information submitted by candidates. He said the information was originally gathered because there was no other place to read about the candidates. He asked the board if that was something the library even needed to continue doing. G. Sacco suggested adding a disclaimer to the information that it contains the candidates’ unedited responses.

C. Brancatella suggested that ensuring library neutrality in elections might be another aspect covered in the Long Range Plan discussion because library boards are now being asked to take positions on things they were never an issue before.

OLD BUSINESS

Nominating Committee – update

S. Patterson said the committee is in the process of putting together a slate for the July meeting.

Trustee training

G. Kirkpatrick said he investigated the details of an organization membership to ALA. It would cost \$600 per year and give the library the ability to purchase training for board. M. Walsh said the price gave her pause. G. Sacco said that some of the content available through ALA can not be found elsewhere, and she would like to try it out for a year. M. Walsh agreed that the content is excellent, but

the board only needs to fulfill a two-hour training each year. L. Scoons noted that trustee training is also available through UHLS.

G. Kirkpatrick noted that the board has a preference to do the required training collectively. L. Scoons said attending the NYLA conference counts as training hours. G. Sacco said that there aren't a lot of courses on offer at NYLA for trustees.

After further discussion, L. DiBetta said that it appeared that the board was in favor of moving forward with training through Upper Hudson for this year.

Building Committee – update

G. Kirkpatrick said he was in conversation with C.J. from Schoolhouse Construction about what a construction manager's role would entail for the upcoming boiler replacement project. He said he will come back with a couple of proposals.

Board engagement

The board discussed putting out a survey asking the public how they would prefer to interact with them.

M. Walsh said that past surveys have produced unreliable results and she wasn't sure what a new survey would accomplish. C. Brancatella agreed that surveys are imperfect, but could be useful to get some feedback. L. DiBetta said it was just a chance for the board to gather some information, and it wouldn't prevent them from interacting in other ways. S. Patterson said the board might as well send out the survey to just gather information and decide how to use that information, knowing the inherent flaws in the process.

M. Kissinger said that the board has tried a lot of ways to get public input, but they needed to think about getting in touch with people who aren't already engaged. L. Scoons said that it sounded like a good goal for the long-range plan.

The board discussed putting out regular updates in the library's e-news and Footnotes newsletter. Not every newsletter but a quarterly thing.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted to put a survey out to the public asking how they would prefer to interact with the board. S. Patterson, L. DiBetta, C. Brancatella, M. Kissinger and L. Scoons voted in favor. G. Sacco and M. Walsh were opposed.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

M. Kissinger thanked L. Scoons for her 10 years on the board and her work on the Upper Hudson board and shared a resolution recognizing her service. L. Scoons said it had been an honor to serve.

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board voted unanimously to pass a resolution of recognition in honor of L. Scoons who has served on the board for two terms of five years each.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public spoke during the public comment period. A recording of the meeting is available on YouTube.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously voted to enter into executive session at 7:53 to discuss the employment history of a particular individual.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to exit executive session at 8:44.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:45pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president