

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)  
Monday April 15, 2024

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Laura DiBetta  
GUESTS: Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary  
Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services  
Chris McGinty, assistant director  
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk  
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator  
Hazel Landa  
Leslie Hudson  
Jim Hudson  
Trudi Quaif  
John Bodoroski  
Mary Service  
Joe Lombardo  
Pippa Bartolotti  
Robert McDonald  
Candace Lider  
David Van Deusen  
Melinda Costello  
Meredith Savitt

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

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Eight attendees 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 C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday March 13 regular board meeting.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Wednesday April 10 building committee meeting.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### *Treasurer's update*

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

- S. Whiting said library material spending tends to pick up in the fourth quarter.
- M. Walsh asked if a vote was needed to use the money in the H Fund to pay the architects' fees. S. Whiting said that the board had authorized the transfer of money to the H Fund in a vote a couple of months ago to use for expenses related to building planning purposes.
- C. Wijeyesinghe asked about a charge from Otis Elevator Co. in the amount of \$3,100.44. G. Kirkpatrick said that it was for routine maintenance of the elevator to the mezzanine.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 March 2024 (Checks disbursed in March 2024 based on pre-approval \$43,644.88; Checks disbursed in March 2024 relating to payroll \$198,105.73; Checks being submitted for approval \$86,253.97; CapProject Fund Checks \$176,899.11; Total: \$504,903.69).

## PERSONNEL REPORT

G. Kirkpatrick said he was requesting to backfill one position. He noted that it was open after an internal move.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board unanimously voted to approve the following position:

- Library clerk, part-time, permanent, 11.67 hours/week, \$16.26/hour or per contract.

## ELECTION OFFICIAL

G. Kirkpatrick said the library was required to have an election official for the October bond vote. He said former school district treasurer Judith Kehoe has provided the library with a proposal to fill that role. She has acted as an election official at the school district for years. C. Wijeyesinghe said she has worked with J. Kehoe in that capacity in the past and spoke very highly of her. She suggested that the board take her up on the offer to speak with them at the board meeting following the vote. G. Kirkpatrick said that J. Kehoe's proposal also includes an hourly fee so that the library can consult with her as the need arises. M. Walsh said the board welcomes her expertise.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously voted to approve the appointment of Judith Kehoe as the Chief Election Inspector/Chairperson for the capital project vote on Oct. 1, 2024 at the rate of \$100 per hour for all pre-and-post referendum work and a flat fee of \$2,500 for the day of the election.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- The Meet the Architects sessions went very well, and the graphics remain on display in the lobby. People are continuing to provide feedback through interactive sticky notes. G. Kirkpatrick said staff would keep track of the comments in a document that would be shared with the board.

- J. Crawford has been working with school district officials to stay on top of rule changes regarding early voting.
- There was an impromptu eclipse viewing party on the library plaza with some clouds making an appearance. G. Kirkpatrick praised C. McGinty's work to procure and distribute viewers to all of the students in the school district. M. Walsh said she has heard a lot of positive feedback about the distribution of viewers to children. S. Patterson said she was happy to not have to worry about where she would get viewers for her own children. M. Walsh asked how long the used glasses would be collected at the Information Desk. G. Kirkpatrick said the collection receptacle will be up for about a month.
- The library is the first in the Upper Hudson system to use the print-on-demand museum pass service, and so far it has been very well received. About half of the library's passes are available in this format.
- In-person library use has been slower to bounce back than circulation, but in February, the library had its first 20,000 door count.
- Although the library didn't have power the day of the town's Eggstravaganza, L. Kozilski was able to participate with some outreach goodies. People mentioned that they were pleased to have something to do other than be stuck inside with no power after the big storm.
- G. Kirkpatrick said that attendance at early literacy programs continues to increase and it is something to keep in mind as the library considers meeting room use. Story times are now so well-attended that they have to take place in the Community Room, meaning that room is not available for public bookings during that time. M. Walsh asked if people were being turned away because of capacity. G. Kirkpatrick said that at a recent Elephant and Piggie story time, librarians turned away about 30 people. He said that is typically seen with big children's programs featuring musicians, animals and other special performances.
- There has been a big increase in program attendance and outreach numbers. In February, the library saw its first, very slight, decrease in circulation, a difference of about 15 items.
- G. Kirkpatrick said he was most impressed by a Safety by Design presentation at the recent ALA conference. He said it was interesting because the focus of safety in public libraries is less about "hardening" the building and more about creating ample sightlines and exists to help people be better aware of their surroundings. He said that the current library design does not even allow librarians to see adequately into the hallways from the Information Desk. G. Kirkpatrick said that these safety concepts are part of the design discussion with Ashley McGraw architects.
- M. Walsh said she was happy to see the variety of events that ALA attendees went to.
- C. Wijeyesinghe said she appreciated the staff taking the time to provide summaries of their experiences at the ALA conference.

#### UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said that while this is usually a quiet time for the Upper Hudson board, they have been busier than usual discussing the implications of the Schenectady library's decision to leave its systems. Schenectady is now hoping to join UHLS. L. Scoons said there are still a lot of questions to be answered about the process, as it has never really happened before. She said the UHLS board is also beginning the process of reviewing program awards and construction grants.

## NEW BUSINESS

### *Construction manager – board evaluation team members*

G. Kirkpatrick said the board should be receiving submissions soon for the position. He asked if there were board members who would like to be included on the evaluation team. S. Whiting said the plan would be to have two board members, along with S. Whiting and G. Kirkpatrick, to review the applications and narrow them down to about three. The team would prepare summary documents for review and bring in potentially three for interviews before making a recommendation to the full board. The timeline for this process was discussed, but G. Kirkpatrick said that it would be unlikely that it would be complete before the May meeting, as the deadline for applications has been extended. C. Wijeyesinghe suggested the library reach out to the school district to inquire about any useful tools or questions they have used in the past when interviewing for a construction manager. C. Wijeyesinghe and M. Kissinger agreed to be part of the evaluation team.

### *Property consolidation*

G. Kirkpatrick said the library and the school district had reached a conceptual agreement about the ownership of the four parcels that make up the library property. He said that for purposes of the project, it was agreed that it would fall under school district ownership. He said the resolution would be coming before the school and library boards for a vote shortly. C. Wijeyesinghe said it might be beneficial to know when it would come before the school board so that library trustees could attend and hear the discussion.

### *Old lost/billed items*

Lost and billed items are not enforceable after seven years, but the accounts those items are attached to cannot be deleted while those items are still attached. G. Kirkpatrick said that Upper Hudson has the ability to purge those items from the accounts and recommended the library purge any billed items over seven years old and under \$150. This would allow the library to expunge those accounts. C. Wijeyesinghe asked if those lost items are replaced. G. Kirkpatrick said that if they are an in-demand item, they have already been replaced. M. Walsh asked about the total amount in billed charges for these items. G. Kirkpatrick said that it was about \$19,000 and noted that it was money that the library would not be able to recover. He said that moving forward, he would like to expunge lost/billed items over seven years old on a yearly basis.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously agreed to allow the library to purge 1,1019 accounts with lost/billed items attached to them that are over seven years old and under \$150 in the total amount of \$19,406.72, averaging \$2,400 per year.

### *Other new business*

G. Kirkpatrick presented a proposal for ductless split replacement unit in IT office. He said the original was installed during last HVAC update and repaired several times since without any success. The price to replace the unit is \$9,450. He said the unit is necessary in the IT office because the equipment and servers generate a lot of heat, especially during long weekends when the HVAC system is dialed down. M. Walsh asked if this unit would carry over to any new construction. G. Kirkpatrick said that it likely would not but he felt it was necessary to address the additional heat load produced by the IT equipment.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved the bid from Crisafulli Bros. for the replacement of the ductless split unit in the IT office in the amount of \$9,450.

## OLD BUSINESS

### *Patron Point software proposal*

G. Kirkpatrick said that K. Roberts and P. Berardi presented a Patron Point proposal to the board a couple of months ago, and P. Berardi was able to secure an extension to a \$1,500 discount on implementation and setup. S. Whiting had noted in the 2024-25 budget where the expense would be covered. The software would streamline the library's marketing and patron onboarding efforts. M. Kissinger asked what the all-in costs would be. The library would pay \$15,085 for the first year, including setup fees, and \$11,585 in the second and third years. Text message marketing transactions would cost 1-cent per send and verification services would be 30 cents each. P. Berardi said that the verification service would allow patrons to sign up for or renew their cards and be verified instantly. Regular library email reminders would have more opportunities for engagement with read-alike suggestions and more. C. Wijeyesinghe asked what the fee was for the current service. The library does not currently use a patron engagement service, but the yearly fee for the e-newsletter service would no longer be needed after migration of the existing 10,000 subscribers to the new software. L. Scoons asked if patrons would have the option to opt out. P. Berardi said that most of the services are opt in.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to approve the implementation of Patron Point software at the cost of \$15,085 for the first year, including setup fees, and \$11,585 in the second and third years.

### *Public Meeting policy*

C. Brancatella presented a working draft of the policy and said its purpose was three-fold: to take the discussion the policy committee has had over that past couple of months and combine it with the framework the attorneys have provided for categories of use; to clarify and define the language regarding the four different categories of use; and to collect and work in trustee comments for a final draft. She thanked trustees for the quick turnaround of their comments and said she hopes to compile a master list of the comments and how they were addressed. She said that every comment is being considered but not every one will have an action. She said she hopes to have the next iteration of the working draft to the board a week before the May meeting. C. Wijeyesinghe reiterated that for this policy, the entire board would be acting as the policy committee.

C. Brancatella wanted to note that the library can either offer rooms to the public or not at all, and the First Amendment protects both options. She said it is the consensus among board members that they want to continue public use of the rooms and are committed to coming up with a policy that would allow that and address the safety of the staff and patrons. She said a number of comments centered on how the policy would work with 501(c)(3) groups as well as the question of director discretion. She also noted that any meeting room policy would go to the attorney for a thorough review.

M. Kissinger thanked C. Brancatella for all the work she has done to prepare the working draft and encouraged the public to share their input as well.

L. Scoons asked G. Kirkpatrick how the meeting room bookings have been going since they were reopened under the current policy. G. Kirkpatrick said there is some confusion about capacity of

rooms but people are happy to have access again. He said the existing policy is not perfect but it is good enough for now.

#### *Naming Opportunities policy – 2<sup>nd</sup> read*

C. Wijeyesinghe said the policy was discussed at the last meeting and this would be the second read. C. Brancatella said some small edits have been made to the final version. M. Walsh said she had reservations about the provision that allows the board to terminate a designation for any reason. She asked for an example of when that could happen. C. Brancatella suggested that a room named after someone like Geoffrey Epstein could be cause for revision. G. Kirkpatrick noted that if a named space is renovated and no longer serves its original purpose, it might be cause to change the designation. C. Wijeyesinghe said that any proposed name change would have to come before the board to be discussed and voted on so the public would be able to weigh in. S. Patterson and L. Scoons both noted that the policy would make it clear that is a possibility so potential donors would know beforehand.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board adopted the Naming Opportunities policy as presented in a draft. Voting in favor was C. Brancatella, S. Patterson, L. Scoons and C. Wijeyesinghe. M. Walsh abstained.

#### *Building project*

- *Referendum vote update*

G. Kirkpatrick said the library continues to prepare for the October building referendum. C. Wijeyesinghe reiterated her desire to have board members go to the President's Council in May rather than wait until September. S. Patterson said she believed their last meeting before the summer was at the end of the month. C. Wijeyesinghe also suggested that board members attend Chamber meetings over the month to talk about the project. C. Brancatella said they should also be at the farmers market regularly. G. Kirkpatrick said he was ready to support any of the endeavors but library staff are limited to providing information only. C. Wijeyesinghe said that board members could follow up the information with their own advocacy for support.

#### *Bulletin board policy – discussion*

G. Kirkpatrick said the policy committee is looking into an interpretation about the bulletin board and what is an allowable use under the library's own solicitation guidelines and what constitutes commercial activity. He said the goal was to make the policies consistent with one another. M. Walsh said that she has for years used the bulletin board to educate herself on what's going on in the area and would like to see it stick around in its current form. C. Wijeyesinghe suggested the policy committee meet within the month.

#### *Other old business*

There was no other old business at this time.

#### FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed.

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two people addressed the board. A recording of the meeting and the public comment period is available on the library's YouTube channel.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 7:40pm to discuss matters involving proposed, pending or current litigation.

On a MOTION by C. Wijeyesinghe with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board voted unanimously to immediately adjourn executive session at 8:50pm.

## ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:51pm.

Prepared by  
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by  
M. Kissinger, board president

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## Board actions

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