

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)
Tuesday June 4, 2024

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director

EXCUSED:

GUESTS: None

President M. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 6pm.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

SEQR process update

M. Kissinger asked that the board hear the SEQR process update before voting on the attorney engagement letter.

G. Kirkpatrick said there has been a meeting between the architects, landscape engineers and attorney Bob Scofield with Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna to talk about the SEQR process and what type it would be. The process is likely to be considered an unclassified SEQR process, which will begin as soon as an engagement with the attorney is finalized. Other government entities with a relation to the property will be notified that the library intends to act as lead agency for the SEQR review. G. Kirkpatrick said that he was told that all pertinent public notification will be done at least a month before the October bond vote. He said notifications would run in both The Spotlight and The Times Union, the library's papers of record.

G. Kirkpatrick said that although the special meeting that evening was initially called to discuss the property transfer to the school district that would consolidate all of the separate parcels, the attorneys from Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna recommended that the property consolidation take place after the environmental quality review is complete. This is so that there would be no appearance of trying to avoid some aspect of the SEQR.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the district had any concerns about rolling the consolidation into the SEQR process. G. Kirkpatrick said that Whiteman Osterman & Hanna has also advised the district to wait.

M. Kissinger asked what the board's role would be in the SEQR process. G. Kirkpatrick said they would be authorizing the engagement with counsel, as well as public notifications.

L. DiBetta said that she works for DEC and consulted their attorneys and was advised to recuse herself to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.

C. Wijeyesinghe asked if the SEQR reports would come back to the board. G. Kirkpatrick said that information would be shared with trustees.

M. Walsh asked if it was normal for the board to act as lead agency in the SEQR process. G. Kirkpatrick said it is typically the government body with the most vested interest, and the school district does the same. He said the library and board would not be the ones putting together the actual report.

Attorney engagement for SEQR/bond counsel/building project

G. Kirkpatrick presented the board with the engagement letter for Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna. He said the library has worked with them on smaller projects in the past and they are on the library's approved authorizations list. C. Brancatella noted that the quoted rate was quite favorable.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Brancatella, the board voted to accept a proposal from Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna to provide legal services in connection with the library's building project at the following rates: \$250 per hour and \$150 per hour for all paralegal time. LD abstain Caroline Brancatella, Mark Kissinger, Sarah Patterson, Lisa Scoons, Michelle Walsh and Charmaine Wijeyesinghe voted in favor. Laura DiBetta abstained.

Other new business

There was no other new business at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by C. Wijeyesinghe, the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 6:15pm to discuss matters involving proposed, pending or current litigation.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to adjourn executive session at 6:43pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:44pm.