

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

PRESENT: Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Sarah Patterson
Gail Sacco
Lisa Scoons
Michelle Walsh
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
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Tracey McShane, personnel administrator
Chris McGinty, assistant director
Mary Service
Robert McDonnell

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

TRUSTEE OATHS OF OFFICE

M. Kissinger administered the oath of office to trustees-elect G. Sacco and M. Walsh.

ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

S. Patterson presented the nominating committee's slate of officers.

M. Walsh said she would like to reiterate what she had said two years ago about there not being a need for two vice presidents. She said it slows down decision making and it is not necessarily a training role as anyone on the board could be nominated as president. S. Patterson said that the nominating committee felt that it was valuable to have two people learning the role from a good governance standpoint.

The slate of officers proposed for 2024-25:

- President: Mark Kissinger
- Vice President: Michelle Walsh
- Vice President: Caroline Brancatella
- Secretary: Sarah Patterson
- UHLS representative: Lisa Scoons
- Board treasurer: Shari Whiting

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously accepted the 2024-25 officer slate as presented.

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

M. Kissinger said there are four standing committees required by the bylaws: nominating, building, finance and personnel. He asked board member to reach out and let him know where they might be interested in serving. C. Brancatella said the board might consider an informal committee to take point on the rollout of the bond. M. Kissinger said that the bylaws do not require a policy committee and asked if it was something the board was interested in keeping. M. Walsh asked if there were any policies that still needed updating. G. Kirkpatrick said that new laws now require that policies are reviewed more frequently. C. Brancatella said she would recommend keeping the policy committee because the board has committed to reviewing the meeting room policy on a quarterly basis.

M. Kissinger said the entire board has acted as the building committee in the past and he asked the board to think about whether that was something he wanted to continue or not.

G. Sacco asked about which meetings could take place over Zoom. G. Kirkpatrick said that there needs to be a seated quorum of four.

M. Kissinger said that the goal of the committees was to make the full board meeting shorter, but that has not happened. He said he would be making appointments at a later time.

BOARD ANNUAL AUTHORIZATIONS

L. Scoons asked if there has been a recent review of the library's insurance broker. G. Kirkpatrick said the broker had reached out for quotes on the library's behalf.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the 2024-25 authorizations as presented.

HOLIDAYS AND CLOSINGS/BOARD MEETINGS

The board meeting schedule for 2025 showed a conflict with Passover and spring break. The board agreed to shift the meeting to the first Monday of April.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board voted unanimously to adopt the amended board meeting schedule (with the April meeting moved up to April 7) for 2025.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to adopt the holidays and closings schedule for 2025.

ANNUAL ETHICS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Ethics statements were distributed to the trustees for signing and will be filed in the public record.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Monday June 10 regular board meeting.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Tuesday June 18 special board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

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

- The end of year report shows a preliminary net revenue of almost \$442,000. Auditors will be in Thursday to do some preliminary work, but S. Whiting said she doesn't expect any adjustments to be significant.
- S. Patterson asked if was the goal of the board to have a surplus. S. Whiting said there are a lot of estimates that go into the budget that can be hard to predict. She also noted that it has been helpful to build up the fund balance because of the building project, but the goal is generally to come close to breaking even.
- C. Brancatella noted that a quarter of the surplus was from interest revenue and credited S. Whiting with taking advantage of those rates. She said there will also be contracted increases in salaries and health benefits in the coming year.
- G. Sacco said a surplus can also be helpful when dealing with unexpected expenses. S. Whiting said that budget also includes a line for contingencies.

On a MOTION by M. Walsh with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 30 June 2024 (Checks disbursed in June 2024 based on pre-approval \$57,802.88; Checks disbursed in June 2024 relating to payroll \$196,478.51; Checks being submitted for approval \$137,694.79; CapProject Fund Checks \$140,990.01; Total: \$532,966.19).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report. G. Kirkpatrick said he was seeking fill the page position, but wanted to talk to the personnel committee about possibly combining positions in a cost neutral way.

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

- Library Page, part-time, permanent, 9.8 hours/week, \$15/hour

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- There are still some questions about how to get the rebates for the geothermal part of the project. He said it would likely involve the library filing a federal tax return.
- The architects' vision boards about the children's space has seen a lot of engagement, indicating this space is a big priority with the public. Several rounds of comment are being catalogued.
- G. Kirkpatrick praised the staff working to implement new meeting room policy.
- He noted that the end-of-year stats show a significant increase in the number of programs offered and attendance.

- M. Walsh asked what was driving the increase in e-magazine use. G. Kirkpatrick said OverDrive changed way magazines were highlighted in the collection so they are more visible. He said the overall increase in magazine use is not in the paper magazine collection.

UHLS BOARD UPDATE

L. Scoons said that while she wasn't at the most recent meeting, the main topic of discussion continues to be whether to allow Schenectady to join UHLS. She said there are still some questions about what that would mean and the topic was tabled until the September meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) valuation contract

S. Whiting said that the library has to have an OPEB valuation every year for the audit. She noted that there is an increase in the price of this actuarial service. G. Sacco asked if the price was fixed or could be negotiated because it seemed like a big increase. C. Brancatella noted that the board was being asked to approve the rates before them. S. Whiting said a lot of costs had gone up in the past couple of years. The next time the contract comes up, the board can have a discussion about negotiating a capped price. T. Choppy noted that the library paid approximately \$6,000 for the full valuation two years ago.

On a MOTION by G. Sacco with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with BPAS for a full OPEB valuation for fiscal year 2024 in the amount of \$7,000 and an interim valuation for fiscal year 2025 in the amount of \$2,000.

Construction Manager Contract

The contract with Schoolhouse Construction Services has reviewed by the library's lawyers and their suggested changes have been accepted. M. Kissinger asked when the contract would start. G. Kirkpatrick said it would as soon as the contract was signed. The term would last until the project is closed. He said Schoolhouse was in charge of phasing the project and would serve as the board's representative on the project, independent of the architects. M. Kissinger said he was part of the interview committee and was very impressed with the firm.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with Schoolhouse Construction Services for construction management for the library.

Length of Trustee Terms Discussion

L. Scoons said she brought the term length topic up at an earlier meeting and wanted to continue the conversation. She said she felt that the five-year term limit for trustee is an impediment for many potential candidates. She said other Upper Hudson libraries are also considering a change to a three-year term. If passed, this change would only apply to elections moving forward. M. Kissinger said that when he has tried to recruit people for the board, many are reticent about the five-year term. He said he welcomed further discussion. S. Patterson asked if it could be a four-year term. She said she was reaching the end of her first two years and just getting to a point where she felt comfortable with all there is to know. M. Walsh said she worried that if the term were too short, the board might lose expertise and organizational memory. L. Scoons said that the board has had some people leave because

the term is too long. C. Brancatella said that term limits were also being discussed for town positions as well. G. Sacco said she would like to see some more information about how this has affected other organizations, including the school district. She said that three years seems to short.

G. Kirkpatrick said that if the board pass a motion to pursue a term length change, then DLD would prepare the necessary resolutions to pass to make the charter changes. It would then to the regents for approval. He said that if the discussion isn't wrapped up within the next couple of meetings, it would likely be 2026 before implementation.

Other new business

There was no other new business to discuss.

OLD BUSINESS

Building project update

G. Kirkpatrick said he was still working with the school district and attorneys to figure out a mechanism for the bond vote. He said trustees may need to call a special board meeting in August to authorize the wording for the referendum.

G. Sacco asked if the board would consider postponing the vote. She said nothing be lost in terms of work already done if the vote were pushed past November to possible March. She said that it seems reasonable considering the political and financial climate. board consider postponing the vote. I think nothing would be lost in terms of work. With political election and financial climate. A lot of things going on that need board's priority attention. It seems to reasonable to say public we heard you. Past November and maybe in March.

C. Brancatella said her initial reaction is that they can't put it off and that costs and pricing would continue to dramatically escalate. G. Sacco said she hopes those numbers could be investigated. S. Patterson said the board has discussed the timing and know circumstances are not optimal but decided it was time to ask. M. Walsh said it would be an inefficient use of board time to rehash the discussion. M. Kissinger said the project has been talked about for a decade and he understands that there is no ideal time for a vote, but it will give the board a sense of public opinion. C. Brancatella said she doesn't see community opinion changing much between October and March and she would rather see the board put that effort into explaining the project to the public. S. Patterson suggested that someone act as point person on outreach.

G. Sacco said it would be ideal to hire a consultant to communicate the project with the public. She suggested the library hire a consultant for messaging and marketing. C. Brancatella said that a consultant used well could benefit the library, but she was concerned about the optics of tax dollars being used for the service. She suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Friends to do it. G. Sacco said she believes it is a totally appropriate use of library funds.

S. Patterson and M. Walsh asked if Patron Point, which the board approved at a previous meeting, would be a useful marketing too. K. Roberts said the library was already using Patron Point but its importance in regard to the building project was the ability to share information about the project not market it. G. Kirkpatrick suggested the board table the conversation until an attorney could be consulted.

M. Walsh said she believes the community is very invested in a vibrant children's area and she would like to see that reflected in the renderings.

Other old business

There was no other old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a MOTION by M. Kissinger with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 7:30pm to discuss matters involving proposed, pending or current litigation.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by M. Walsh, the board voted unanimously to adjourn executive session at 8:49pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:50pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president