

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY (COMMUNITY ROOM)
Tuesday November 12, 2024

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

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

EXCUSED: Michelle Walsh

GUESTS: Phil Berardi, assistant director/head of Circulation and Technical Services
Tanya Choppy, accounts clerk
Jennifer Crawford, confidential secretary
Heather Lewis, external auditor
Nancy Benedict

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

PUBLIC PARTICPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

AUDIT PRESENTATION

H. Lewis, the principal in charge of the library's recent audit, reviewed the draft financial report and required communications letter. The required communications letter outlined the audit process. She discussed elements of the draft and said that auditors did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls. She noted the process for calculating post-employment and pension liabilities. She also noted that the library received an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.

M. Kissinger asked how the library building and land were accounted for. S. Whiting said they are treated as library-owned property.

H. Lewis said that S. Whiting and independent partners review the financial report for accuracy. She thanked library staff for being helpful and providing easy access to needed information.

On a MOTION by S. Patterson with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board voted unanimously to accept the draft financial report.

G. Sacco thanked the library's financial department for all the work they do.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Tuesday October 15 regular board meeting.

On a MOTION by L. Scoons with a SECOND by L. DiBetta, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the Tuesday October 22 special board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer's update

S. Whiting presented her report. She said recent investments have been a good way to take advantage of favorable interest rates while keeping money available in the short term.

S. Patterson asked about the New York Liquid Asset Fund. S. Whiting said that the library has been looking into it because it offers a better rate for short-term investments. G. Kirkpatrick added that it is one of the types of investments allowable for libraries, but it works a little different so it bears further investigation at this time.

M. Kissinger asked for clarification about a water test charge that appeared on the H-Fund schedule.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by L. Scoons, the board unanimously approved the Financial Statement dated 31 October 2024 (Checks disbursed in October 2024 based on pre-approval \$46,632.85; Checks disbursed in October 2024 relating to payroll \$206,178.59; Checks being submitted for approval \$61,993.13; CapProject Fund Checks \$169,751.00; Total: \$484,555.57).

PERSONNEL REPORT

The board noted the personnel report.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

There were no personnel actions requested at this time.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Story times continue to have really good attendance. The Saturday story time, which was requested by patrons, is also beginning to develop an audience.
- G. Sacco noted several of the programs in the report that could have benefitted from a larger community room, including Music and Movement, and the BHA series.
- Trunk or Treat continues to grow, and this year they had to cut off attendance as there were no parking spaces left.
- P. Berardi has been submitting the library's information to the Equity Challenge and has completed five of the eight areas. G. Kirkpatrick said it's a nice way to recognize what the library has done to promote diversity while also reflecting on what more can be done.

- G. Kirkpatrick said that a car had jumped the curb and driven up on the plaza to the front door. He said the circumstances are unclear but the Bethlehem Police Department responded right away and no one was hurt. Maintenance staff have since painted the curb red to increase visibility. L. Scoons asked if the library is considering concrete barriers.
- The police were also at the library to help a patron recover their phone.
- Staff NYLA reports will be included in next month's board packet.
- M. Kissinger asked how reliable the stats were for home page visits. G. Kirkpatrick said they provide a decent baseline, but can be easily influenced by bots. He said the library uses the number of individual page visits to determine the prominence of a link on the home page.
- M. Kissinger noted that wireless use was down. G. Kirkpatrick said that might be because the Town Hall link was down. He also said that the prevalence of unlimited data plans might result in a decreasing need for the service.

UHLS REPORT

L. Scoons said that last month, the board approved the 2025 central library budget. They will be reviewing the 2025 UHLS budget. She said they are also making headway with their website redesign, and they continue to develop public attendance and social media policies.

NEW BUSINESS

Engineering questions

G. Kirkpatrick said there were two structural engineering questions that the board might want to consider. The first is whether they wanted to include the infrastructure for a backup generator to make it easier to add one down the road. He said there aren't any firm numbers for such a project but it could range from \$90,000 to \$180,000 depending on the size of the generator.

G. Sacco asked how frequently has library loses power. G. Kirkpatrick said that it is once or twice a year and that during those outages, the public has to leave the building. L. DiBetta said it is a hard thing to say no to knowing that costs are only going to go up, but she is loathe to add any additional expense to the project. C. Brancatella agreed and noted for the public that this is one example of the choices the board has had to make to keep costs in line.

G. Sacco asked if, as a compromise, they could just lay the conduit or pathway so they wouldn't have to dig under foundation in the future. G. Kirkpatrick said he would look into it.

G. Kirkpatrick said that the board might also want to consider whether they wanted to bring up the risk category of the building so that it could be used as a designated shelter in an emergency. L. DiBetta asked if a designated shelter is the same as a warming station. G. Kirkpatrick said the library is already used in that capacity, but a designated shelter is a higher level of emergency services. C. Brancatella said it would be a natural fit for the library but the cost is more than they should take on. S. Patterson asked what other buildings in the community are designated shelters. G. Kirkpatrick said that Town Hall is one. S. Patterson said that with the vote only a month away, it would make sense to wait for the results before making any further decisions. G. Kirkpatrick said the time pressure is from the engineers and architects who want to have a final design put together by the end of the year.

G. Sacco said she is concerned that all of these design details may be irrelevant if the vote goes down and the library would still be on the hook for the design expense. She said she felt like they were running on the architects' timeline and not their own.

C. Brancatella said that some of those design services have already been paid for and could still be useful even if the vote were to go down. She said she assumes that if the bond does not pass, there will be a “pencils down” moment, but that costs incurred before the vote will still need to be paid. M. Kissinger said the board approved a contract with the architects and have not yet reached the cap. He asked if staff could put together an accounting of where the library is with those payments. The board took no action on the engineering questions. M. Kissinger encourages fellow board members to publicize the vote and share the informational video.

New York State retirement invoice

G. Kirkpatrick said that the invoice offers a small discount if it is paid before December 15.

On a MOTION by C. Brancatella with a SECOND by G. Sacco, the board voted unanimously to approve pre-payment of the NYS&L Retirement System invoice in the amount of \$323,915.

Other new business

G. Kirkpatrick said the library had received a request to rent the community room for a piano recital in late January. He said the cost for renting the space has not yet been established. He said previously they would pay just enough to defray the cost of piano tuning. He has looked at the BCSD rental price list for comparison and asked the board how they would like to proceed. The board agreed to look at the school district prices and be ready for a decision at the December meeting. G. Sacco said they should also consider janitorial costs.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business at this time.

FUTURE BUSINESS

There was no future business at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a MOTION by L. DiBetta with a SECOND by S. Patterson, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:18pm.

Prepared by
Kristen Roberts, recording secretary

Cosigned by
M. Kissinger, board president