

## **Library Board Minutes**

September 10, 2018

Bethlehem Area Public Library

President Sharon Yoshida called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Bethlehem Township Coolidge Building located at 2740 Fifth Street, 18020.

ATTENDING: City – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Emil Signes, Sharon Yoshida  
Bethlehem Township – Malissa Davis, John Merhottein  
Hanover Township – Jamie Paxton

Staff – Josh Berk, Regina Kochmaruk

Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City – Olga Negrón, Marie Sterlein, Julie Zumas  
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan  
Staff – Erin Poore

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Jane Gill made a motion to approve the July minutes, seconded by Emil Signes. The motion was approved.

**APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:** A motion was made by John Merhottein, seconded by Jane Gill to approve the June and July Operating Funds, subject to audit. The motion was passed unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:**

1. President Yoshida thanked Director Berk for keeping Board members up to date with pertinent library news, including *New York Times* article "Is the Library Obsolete?" (Eric Klinenberg). Berk reported that the library's summer numbers are strong, with South Side Branch reporting the highest attendance statistics in his tenure to date, perhaps due to the Branch English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and the summer United Way food program. Adults are consistently using computers; bookmobile usage numbers are up for 2018 over 2017. There was a discussion as to whether this was due to schedule changes. The Hanover Township Community Center kiosk usage numbers have decreased, perhaps due to technical issues. Regina Kochmaruk explained the details of how the kiosk works.
2. John Merhottein suggested considering moving bookmobile stops in Bethlehem Township, citing good numbers possibly due to a schedule change in Hanover Township. Director Berk agreed to investigate and report back on the current usage numbers of each stop to see where changes may be appropriate.

## **REPORTS:**

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – President Yoshida shared that the Friends of the Library will be launching a “merchant member” program: businesses that pay a membership fee to support the Friends will receive signage to display. She also reported that Friends members will receive a survey asking for recommendations on how to increase participation at Friends’ events. Previous excursions included visiting libraries at Lafayette, Moravian, and Lehigh University.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Strategic Planning Committee: President Yoshida stated that Julie Zumas is spearheading this committee, and there will be a meeting in two weeks on September 24 with an outside consultant.
2. Marketing, Advertising, and Education Committee: President Yoshida suggested a need to consider other ways to market, advertise, and advocate for the library.
3. Human Resources Committee: Board members will be receiving an evaluation form to complete regarding Director Berk’s evaluation, which has not been done in the past four years. President Yoshida discussed the need for improved Board member orientation. There are informational videos shared by Director Berk with Board to help increase Board efficiency and performance, as well as a packet of information provided to new Board members. But, the idea was discussed that more could be done to welcome new Board members as well as provide continuing education for Board members.
4. Finance Committee: President Yoshida noted the Board Treasurer’s absence the past few meetings and remarked that no one else on the finance committee has called a meeting this year. She handed out information from the Philadelphia Trust Company on the BAPL Endowment for the committee to review.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. 2019 Preliminary Budget Discussion: Director Berk pointed out the challenges of creating a yearly budget due to competing pressures and a lack of clarity on how much money the library is going to be allocated each year. If a budget is two parts a) the ask amount and b) the allocations amount, then how to derive at the ask amount needs to be clarified.

Berk explained that contracts require contracting municipalities to pay the same per capita rate as determined by the City of Bethlehem. It is currently \$17.55 per capita; noting that prior to 2011, per capita amount was higher; decreased to 17.03 in 2011; now holding at \$17.55.

Anne Felker asked about other funding models. Director Berk explained that Pennsylvania has lots of various funding strategies: millage, referendum, school district, municipalities, and some combination. He noted that Nazareth has an increase every year, because zoning is changed yearly. Bethlehem's model is based on the census.

Malissa Davis asked what library services and expenses have been cut. Director Berk briefly explained that staffing, hours, and collection expenditures have all experienced cuts dating back over ten years. President Yoshida proposed that Director Berk create a budget based on an "ideal" amount. Yoshida made a motion calling for the creation of such a budget for further review. Felker seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

2. Adoption of 990: As prepared by the auditors, the Board has reviewed and approved to file the 2017 990. Malissa Davis made the motion, Jamie Paxton seconded. Motion carried 7-0.
3. Cohen Room Bids: Earlier this year, BAPL posted bids for Cohen Room contracts through the municipal bidding system, PennBid. Sargent Enterprises was sole bidder for asbestos remediation at \$48,000. There were seven bids for the General Contracting portion, one rescinded due to mathematical error. Mohawk Contracting & Development submitted the lowest bid at \$257,000. The library's architect/engineer thought the asbestos bid was too high, perhaps due to few bids being offered in the summer months. Anne Felker made the motion not to accept the Sargent bid, Gill seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

John Merhottein asked Director Berk to request references from Mohawk Contracting and to confirm how long the bid is good for before voting to accept the bid.

There was conversation regarding the Cohen Room design and whether the cost can be reduced. Merhottein suggested considering changing design

elements that might reduce costs, such as a half-glass door. The Glass door currently costs approximately \$50,000. If BAPL asks for change to design, companies will have to rebid. Currently the bid is for bathrooms, asbestos removal, glass wall, new carpet, and the creation of a second exit.

President Yoshida presented a \$10,000 check from the Friends group towards the Cohen Room fund.

4. Holidays and Special Closings: Director Berk asked the Board to consider closing the Friday after Thanksgiving due to logistical challenges from the City's tree lighting ceremony. John Merhottein suggested checking with City Hall to ensure this would not cause any disruption to the event. Malissa Davis made a motion and Emil Signes seconded for the Holiday and Special Closing schedule to be enacted with Director Berk's discretion. Motion carried 7-0.

The 2019 Holidays and Special Closings was presented. Jamie Paxton made the motion to accept as presented, Merhottein seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

5. Vice-Chair Vacancy: After Cathy Reuscher left the Board earlier this year, the Vice-Chair position was left vacant. President Yoshida made a motion that Jane Gill fill position. Malissa Davis seconded. The motion carried 7-0 and Gill will serve as the Vice-Chair for the remainder of Reuscher's term.
6. Retired Bookmobile for Sale: Director Berk asked the Board to consider the purchase of a second "retired" bookmobile from a library in Bloomsburg for \$5,000 to be used as a remote library outpost providing books for borrow and other library services throughout the service area. The possibility was discussed of having it placed in a rotation at various locations including Hanover Township, Fountain Hill, and Marvine Village. The IronPigs Charities Community Grant recently opened for application, and since it has a focus on education and youth, Director Berk felt it could be a good source to apply for funds to renovate this new bookmobile. It would not replace the current bookmobile but rather be housed semi-permanently at various locations on a rotating basis. President Yoshida asked about the condition of current bookmobile; Berk estimates a new bookmobile at \$150,000 would need to be purchased no sooner than five years. Anne Felker made the motion to purchase the bookmobile from Bloomsburg, Jamie Paxton seconded. Motion to purchase the bookmobile carried 7-0.
7. Donation Investment: Discussion was held on how to invest the recent \$200,000 gift. Since there are restrictions and limitations on the Endowment Fund, the Board resolved that Director Berk be authorized to open a new account at Philadelphia Trust for the purpose of depositing the \$200,000. The resolution authorizes current officers and Executive Director as signors, as such to be authorized on behalf of BAPL to open said account, transfer funds from the account, deposit funds, and receive information regarding the

account. Jane Gill made the motion, Malissa Davis seconded, and the motion carried 7-0.

8. Recording Studio: Professor Mary Foltz from Lehigh University contacted Director Berk about an available grant from LU's Mellon Digital Humanities Initiative to create a recording studio open to the public in the basement of BAPL Main Library. BAPL applied and the grant was approved. The terms of the grant state that Lehigh University buy the equipment and lease it to BAPL for \$1 a year, at the end of the lease transferring ownership of all equipment to BAPL. Funds are also provided for installation and training. The recording studio will be used for podcasts, oral histories, school projects, and for local musicians to use free of charge. The project will begin over the next few months.
9. Coolidge Building: There was a discussion regarding the possible usage and design of space in the Coolidge building if a BAPL operation is approved to be held in that space. The building will serve as a "satellite location of BAPL," with possible uses including book return, rotating collections for check-out, tutoring and other youth programming, public computers, and other options for library service. Regina Kochmaruk will gather examples of similarly-sized libraries and present to the Board at a future meeting. Malissa Davis enthusiastically suggested to "go big."

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Kochmaruk, Staff