

Library Board Minutes
Monday, March 9, 2020
Bethlehem Area Public Library

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

ATTENDING: City – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld, Sharon Yoshida, Julie Zumas
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, John Merhottein
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan
Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan

Staff: Josh Berk, Erin Poore, Liz Saraceno
Other: Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City–Negrón, Signes

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: Director Berk reported on the following projects/goals for the year 2020: Books on the Hill, an elevator at the South Side branch, the rollout of an outreach book bike (funded by IronPigs Charities) which will allow for increased presence at community days, farmers’ markets, etc., and can fill in when Bookmobile is requested but not available, and a Main Library shelving shift to improve sightlines and eliminate trouble spots. He also reported that the Strategic Plan is well underway.

Director Berk also shared administrative goals for 2020 including the following: updating the online board policy portal, revising the personnel manual, updating the organizational chart, revising the patron behavior policy, updating the safety/security plan. Noteworthy planned events for 2020 include the following: Lehigh Valley BookFest rescheduled for June, Lehigh Valley Podcast Festival at ArtsQuest, Spike’s birthday party in April, InFocus Conference at Moravian College (Josh on panel with speaker Eric Klinenberg), Punk Rock Flea Market in May, several author events throughout the year, Summer Reading Program (also at Coolidge), 11Fest (studio fundraiser) in November, and one that already occurred -- a big genealogy event with PBS39 (Feb. 26 “Finding Your Roots”). He also gave an update on the “Black Experience of Bethlehem” project, noting that recordings of many of the interviews will be available on the BAPL website.

Director Berk asked for board participation in an upcoming fundraiser: Tunes at Twilight (May 21). Staff members and members of the Friends of the Library are being asked as well to serve as bartenders. Tips will go to the library.

It was noted that the Friends of the Library fundraiser in April may be postponed due to coronavirus concerns.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. February

Motion to approve February minutes made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Julie Zumas.
Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS

1. January

Regarding the Statement of Financial Income & Expenses: questions were raised by John Merhottein about discrepancies in revenue lines on different documents. He indicated these would be taken up by the Finance Committee at their next meeting and discussed with Director Berk.

Motion to approve operation funds subject to audit made by Julie Zumas, seconded by Annamarie Jordan. Motion passed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

1. January

Director Berk noted that an event with author Liz Moore in January was well-attended and successful. He also noted that the library received a lot of press coverage regarding a long-overdue book which was returned to the library in January. The book *Happy Birthday Baby Jesus* was checked out approximately forty years ago before making its way back to Bethlehem this year.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

1. CITY OF BETHLEHEM - Felker, Gill, Hinnefeld, Negrón, Signes, Yoshida, Zumas

None

2. BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP - Blauth, Merhottein

None

3. FOUNTAIN HILL - Jordan

Annamarie Jordan reported that she is eagerly awaiting the opening of Books on the Hill in the Borough. Work has been completed on the electricity and quotes are being sought for improvements to the HVAC repair. Collection plans are in place and the library continues to work out details on hours and staffing.

4. HANOVER TOWNSHIP - Finnigan

None

5. FRIENDS OF THE BAPL – Yoshida

Anne Felker asked for the President of the Friends' email address so they can be invited to attend Library Board meetings. Sharon Yoshida noted that the Friends group will soon determine whether to hold or reschedule the April fundraiser. The Friends have a very small group (5-7 people) who do most of the work; Library Board members are encouraged to become members of the Friends.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE COMMITTEE (Merhottein)

John Merhottein discussed the financial reports and would like to propose some changes to the ways these reports are completed each month.

2. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Anne Felker shared that the governance committee has a revised draft of the library's by-laws; some questions exist which will require the Board's input, to be taken up next month. Other libraries' effective by-laws have been examined as models. The goal is to make a clearer structure for BAPL by-laws, and to remove internal inconsistencies. The committee will also look at the patron behavior policy and suggest revisions to it if need be.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Jane Gill noted that the committee has all the data needed for the Director's 2019 evaluation. They are working on this collaboratively. This committee will hold a March meeting online to complete the evaluation.

4. MARKETING AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE (Jordan)

No meeting in February; next meeting on Mar. 23.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE (Zumas)

Julie Zumas noted that this committee has not met since the last board meeting, but much work has been completed. Members have been completing stakeholder interviews as part of the strategic plan; all members of the board should try to have these submitted to Cathi Alloway by March 15. Interviewers should be sure to send thank-you notes to interviewees; BAPL cards were provided for this. Committee probably will not meet until after the Board retreat (May 7). Cathi has a meeting scheduled with library users on March 27 (and another one in April); Berk will work with Cathi on recruiting people to come to these meetings.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Challenged Materials Policy

An instance of a challenged book (reported on in February minutes) is being handled by Director Berk, but the Governance Committee will also take a look at the existing policy and complaint form and perhaps edit/update and share with the Board soon. A suggestion was made that detailed questions in such a form are a good idea; Randi Blauth will look into providing good examples here.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Financial Questions

Director Berk responded to questions previously emailed by Jay Finnigan.

Question 1: What endowment is the library's interest tied to and what are the interest earnings we are receiving? Answer: The endowment is held by the Philadelphia Trust; it is heavily invested in equities and managed by them. As per the endowment policy, an annual distribution of 5% of the total value is taken by the library. On the current approximate \$2 million endowment, this 5% (which goes into the operating budget each year as revenue) equals approximately \$100,000 yearly.

Question 2 was regarding overdue fines and their aging. Director Berk explained that the amount reported on fines was the actual amount paid in 2019 (not related to age). The old system purged records every 5 years; the new system retains records indefinitely. Anyone applying for a library card has their past record checked. There are borrowers who pay a lot of fines; some fight this, others accept it as a risk connected with borrowing books. The library does use a collection agency when needed for large fines. Borrowers receive email reminders, then reminders by mail as time extends. Fines over \$25 or over 60 days are sent to the collection agency and the user's card is suspended until fines are paid. The budgeted amount of overdue fines for 2020 of \$90,000 is probably high (\$65,000 was taken in 2019). Assistant Director Poore reported that the collection agency (Unique) is successful in getting items returned and collecting fees.

Question 3: What is the library's annual appeal benchmarked against? What are other libraries of similar size in the Commonwealth receiving? Annual appeal is benchmarked against past years. The goal is to increase the amount each year. In the past two years, a larger mailing campaign has begun, which results in more cost but more return. Libraries around the state vary vastly -- some take in more money and others do not have an annual appeal at all. BAPL's is similar to the amount taken in by Allentown and Easton's libraries, Director Berk explained.

Question 4: What is the pass-through category on the financial report? Director Berk explained that this is income and expenses for special projects not tied to the usual budget. This includes gifts and grants and fundraising for special projects. In 2019 approximately \$350,000 was recorded in pass-through expenses. Director Berk reported that most of this (approximately \$250,000) was construction and other expenses connected with Cohen Room renovations. Included here are funds that come in but are specifically targeted (e.g. a fund created in response to a deceased person's bequest). Merhottein asked where this gets recorded. It shows up in the yearly audit, but he would like this to be reported more specifically in the monthly reports (specific sources of income, specific things these funds are spent on). Berk said he can share this more detailed information in a report next month.

Question 5 was regarding the overall loss recorded in 2019. Berk reported that this was due to money that came in in 2018 and was then used for Cohen Room renovations in 2019. This shows up in the statements, but not in the budget. Do we have a capital account budget, separate from operating budget (one that lists out restricted income and expenses)? Yes. It is not published as a budget but these are all coded appropriately, and again, this could be shared as a report to the Board.

2. In other new business, there was a discussion about disruptions from people who appear to be homeless sheltering in the Main Library, as well as violence spilling in from the street. Annamarie Jordan urged that the library consider having funds designated for improved security when planning future budgets, for the sake of the staff as well as patrons. A question was asked about whether homeless people in the library have library cards; Berk reported that some do, some don't, and it's not always possible to tell.

3. Questions were raised about coronavirus concerns. Berk noted that increased cleaning is already being done; there has been some talk about front desk staff wearing gloves. No other plans related to this have been made at this point, but library staff are following conversations about this within the library professional community. There are concerns about the next book sale (last Saturday and Wednesday in March). Events may have to be cancelled.

No further new business. An EXECUTIVE SESSION began at 6:56 PM.

Motion to adjourn made by Joyce Hinnefeld at 7:15 PM.