

Library Board Minutes

February 10, 2020

Bethlehem Area Public Library

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

Staff – Josh Berk, Erin Poore, Liz Saraceno, Matt Wolf
Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul),
Michael Prendeville

ABSENT: City – Sharon Yoshida

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: President Felker announced a plan to have a library employee present at each Board meeting. Joining the Board at this evening's meeting was Matt Wolf from Adult Services, who provided a presentation on Kanopy, the online streaming platform for libraries, which was recommended by a patron. Kanopy has a per-use fee only (\$1/movie). A \$5,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) via Northampton Community College has made an increase from one to ten uses per month (per user) possible. So far the library has seen good usage rates, rising each month. Kanopy has been available since February 2018 and has gone from 24 uses per month initially to 1,316 in January 2020. The \$5,000 grant has been renewed for 2020.

Use of Kanopy may allow us to order fewer DVDs, though they remain very popular. Also included with this streaming service are public performance rights, which allow the library to use it for onsite film series. A question was raised about feasibility if the number of users keeps growing. There is the possibility of lowering the number of films per user per month if this becomes a concern. Kanopy is available via our website, under the Research & Learning link on the left-hand side. Users need to authenticate their library cards on first use. It is then possible to add the Kanopy app on a smart TV at home. Patrons are given two days to watch a film that is checked out and can also add films to "My List." The service is appealing to users, particularly those with an interest in independent, foreign, and educational films, but also more mainstream art films.

Copies of the list of current Board members were reviewed, with no corrections needed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A correction was noted in the spelling of Liz Saraceno's last name (no "t"). Julie Zumas made a motion to accept the January minutes, seconded by Annamarie Jordan, and the motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS: On the Statement of Financial Income and Expense document, a question was raised about the apparent deficit of \$100,000. Director Berk noted that this was related to construction costs connected with the Cohen Room renovation, the funds for which were raised in previous years.

John Merhottein raised a question about the timing of the director's sharing of financial records and requested that these documents reach Board members at an earlier time. Director Berk explained that it is difficult to gather the data much faster. Randi Blauth expressed her shared concern about the timing of the reports. Board members wondered if these reports could be sent at least somewhat sooner rather than right before the meeting at which they are to be discussed. Director Berk will look into sending the reports as soon as they are finished, rather than right before the meeting.

Jane Gill made motion to approve the December operating funds subject to audit, Olga Negrón seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

1. Director Berk made Board members aware of the elimination of funding for the IMLS (Institute of Museum & Library Services) in the president's proposed federal budget. He noted that Pennsylvania libraries are funded by the State (not this federal agency directly); however, Pennsylvania *does* receive IMLS funding in support of the licensing of the software package used for circulation, etc. The last three years' federal budgets had this funding cut, but it was restored by Congress. Should such a cut happen, it would be devastating to State Library funding. In our case, we would probably have to pay \$50,000-\$60,000 more for software licensing. Olga Negrón asked Director Berk to keep Board members in the loop if we need to do lobbying, calls to legislators, etc. He noted that there has been a big push to reinstate this funding in past years, and presumably, there will be again.
2. Director Berk noted that the State Budget for next year is proposed to be level for libraries.
3. One pressing local issue is the significant increase in problem patrons and homeless people in the Main Library. There appears to be an increase in homelessness in Bethlehem, with more people sheltering in the library, which creates challenges. There have been recent frightening incidents, such as street violence spilling in from the street. The library does have a monitor (an AARP employee) for four hours a day, Monday through Friday. The proximity

to the City of Bethlehem's police station is also helpful. There does seem to be an increase in incident reports, which also have been more threatening.

Julie Zumas noted the possibility that the temporary shelter at Christ UCC Church (Market & Center Streets) has brought more people with nowhere else to go during the day to the library. The location of this shelter will be changing, probably to Southside Bethlehem. South Side Branch staff member Liz Saraceno says there are also a significant number of housing-insecure patrons there, but these are mostly people who are known to the staff, and generally do not cause problems.

4. Randi Blauth noted an increase in incidents throughout Lehigh Valley neighborhoods, perhaps drug-related in some cases, and said that we may need to do more to ensure the safety of library patrons and staff. Director Berk noted that in the past a City police officer made rounds through the library. He has asked about starting this again but has been told that the force cannot do this for the library only. The police force contact suggested hiring a private security guard, but the quote received from a security firm (Securitas) was "wildly expensive" and comparable to hiring a full-time staff member.

Annamarie Jordan asked about the possibility of seasonal hiring of security staff (i.e. in the winter, while noting that hot days in the summer can also be problematic). Director Berk says library staff are considering a change in the physical space to try to counter issues here (e.g., fewer large tables that lead to crowding elsewhere if one person is sitting there and others are avoiding it).

The incidents that have occurred have been mainly threats of violence between people visiting the library (not directed at staff). Staff members sometimes call the Northampton County Crisis Hotline, as well as the Lehigh Valley Street Healthcare program. This experience has definitely been a drain on the staff. President Felker asked about the possibility of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) training for the staff. Director Berk mentioned having taken training in mental health first aid, perhaps there could be other resources here for staff.

5. Director Berk reported on a patron request to remove a title from our collection, *Beyond Magenta: Trans-Gender Teens Speak Out*. This patron read an article claiming that the book promotes promiscuousness among young children (patron only read this article, not the book itself). *Beyond Magenta* is actually a YA book (not a book for children or in the children's section). The question was raised of whether we need a committee to deal with this, and/or a clear policy. (In this particular case, Director Berk will be able to have a conversation with this patron, whom he knows.)

Jane Gill noted that the library has not had many of these instances in recent years. She recalled a written procedure for dealing with such instances in the

past including a detailed form to be read and completed by the complaining patron (including ALA statements, BAPL's selection policies, etc.). The library's selection policy still exists and could be shared with anyone who brings a complaint. In the case of *Beyond Magenta*, the department head (where the book was shelved) prepared a formal response including copies of reviews, a list of other libraries that own the title, etc.

Should the Governance Committee take a look at this? Director Berk thinks this would be a good idea; at least to have a correct date connected with the policy. Those present agreed that in this particular case, Director Berk will speak to the patron first, and then he can pursue this further with the Board, if needed.

REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – Homework Help hours at Coolidge have been established and publicized, and also published by the Bethlehem Area School District. They may also look into publicizing this more widely (private schools, PTAs).
3. Fountain Hill – Borough residents are patiently awaiting Books on the Hill. This project has turned into something more like a building project, with issues related to clearance, foundation, insurance, electrical, and HVAC. John Merhottein asked whether the Borough could challenge uniform code in this case. Director Berk noted that one issue does have to do with accessibility (the ramp not reaching the entrance properly). In this case, work will be done to adjust placement as needed. There are also uncertainties about the HVAC system's durability, and a question about whether or not to upgrade it now. The library raised money for exterior renovations. Plans call for interior renovations to be done in-house, working with Borough staff. Annamarie Jordan noted that people in Fountain Hill are enthusiastic, and there have been discussions of creating a park space in the area surrounding the stationary library truck.
4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – The Friends of the Library's annual fundraiser is scheduled for Friday, April 24, at 7 p.m. The inaugural Lehigh Valley Book Festival will be held at the end of March, with a number of events with writers to be held at the Main Library on Saturday, March 28, and other events being held at PBS-39 and ArtsQuest. The festival is sponsored by BAPL and by organizer Let's Play Books in Emmaus.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Finance Committee – John Merhottein asked about interest in a possible fundraiser at the Hotel Bethlehem. He spoke with Bruce Haines, who is willing to help with this, promising his best event planner and “a break” in the cost. Lead time for something like this would probably be at least a year. Would it be possible to do this in partnership with Friends of the Library? This would presumably be a black-tie event. John believes a bigger event like this could be a good thing for the library. A good next step would be to ask Sharon Yoshida about this when she returns next month.

John Merhottein asked how much was raised by the last Annual Appeal letter. Budget information shows roughly \$7,700 after the cost of the mailing. The mailing list for the appeal letter is determined by using a combination of library card owners and zip codes. In addition, staff member Kate Racculia now maintains a donor database DonorPerfect.

2. Governance Committee – President Felker reported that the committee is at work on a redraft of the By-laws, working to clean these up so that the strategic planning process can address any other ways in which the By-laws should be changed. The committee has also reviewed the meeting room use policy, which needs just a few tweaks, in connection with opening of the Cohen Room. There have occasionally been issues around other libraries renting spaces to groups that others are offended by. This could be a concern once rental of the Cohen Room goes public.
3. Human Resources Committee – Jane Gill reported that the committee now has the last bit of information needed for the director’s evaluation. Committee members will be using Google Docs to write up this evaluation collaboratively.
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Annamarie Jordan reported that the committee’s focus for 2020 will remain reaching residents who are not computer-savvy to encourage more library use among this population.
5. Strategic Planning Committee – Julie Zumas reported that the committee has been compiling a list of “influencers” (Cathi Alloway’s term) who pay attention to the library. The suggestion is for every person on the Board to interview at least one person on this list. The list was distributed and Board members were invited to sign up for people they are willing to interview, and also to add names to the list. Director Berk will also be providing more names. The interview guidelines and questions were shared (“Community Leadership Interviews: Discussion Guide Questions”). Director Berk and Julie Zumas already interviewed the library’s teen group last week.

John Merhottein requested a digital version of the questions, which Julie will provide, but she noted that interviews are supposed to happen face-to-face. Deadline for interviews is March 15. We also need to determine a date for a

strategic planning retreat (3-4 hours); Cathi Alloway's availability is May 2, 7-9, 11, 18, 20. Julie will do a Doodle poll to check on Board members' availability.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2020 Committee Appointments: President Felker spoke to Sharon Yoshida about committee appointments and has asked Jay Finnigan to serve on the Governance and the Marketing and Advocacy Committees. Sharon and Jamie Paxton, plus two community volunteers, will be Finance Committee members. Information on when committees regularly meet was requested, so that committee memberships can be organized and clarified. It was noted that the process for confirming membership on committees has been pretty informal and seems to have worked so far. Are there nondisclosure forms needed for committee members? Perhaps committee members should sign the ethics form.
2. 2020 Board Membership Agreement: Board members should print this form (available on the Board page of the website), sign, and submit.
3. President Felker raised the possibility of a "consent agenda" as a possible time-saving device for future meetings. This would require that Board members read all meeting materials in advance and come prepared to approve various reports, or not.
4. A motion was needed for final payment of the contractor for the Cohen Room. Director Berk has the final payment request and a sign-off report from the architect (Cornerstone), and he is just awaiting final okay from our Buildings Supervisor Rich Ruiz. Jay Finnigan moved to authorize issuance of final payment to the contractor, subject to a final walk-through, inspection, and approval by Rich Ruiz; Olga Negrón seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.
5. It was suggested that Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce members receive a notification/invitation about viewing and possibly using the Cohen Room.

A motion was made to adjourn by Annamarie Jordan at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hinnefeld, Secretary