

## **Library Board Minutes**

July 13, 2020

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted virtually via Zoom

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

ATTENDING: City – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld, Emil Signes,  
Sharon Yoshida, Julie Zumas  
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth  
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan

Staff – Josh Berk, Brenda Grow, Erin Poore, Janine Santoro,  
Liz Saraceno

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

Public – Cathi Alloway (Strategic Planning Consultant), Michael Prendeville  
(Hanover Township Alternate)

ABSENT: City – Olga Negrón  
Bethlehem Township – John Merhottein  
Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion to approve the June minutes was made by Sharon Yoshida, seconded by Annamarie Jordan; motion approved.

**APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:** A motion to approve the May operating funds subject to audit was made by Joyce Hinnefeld, seconded by Emil Signes; motion approved.

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

1. Director Berk noted that, as would be expected, there were big jumps in numbers for online resources such as streaming films, e-books, and library databases in May. Lots of online events were held, including an event with writer Emma Copley Eisenberg and a virtual home gardening series, "Home Gardens of Hope," offered in both English and Spanish.
2. The library has been active in planning for a celebration of the Bethlehem Steel's 25th anniversary of the final steel made at the Bethlehem plant (along with ArtsQuest and the National Museum of Industrial History). Interest in a "story time with a steelworker" resulted in collaboration on a new children's book about Bethlehem Steel, titled *Tug*. Organizers were looking forward to a big event at the library in the fall (November 1995 is the date of last steel-making), but, of course, this is up in the air now.
3. We are now offering door-side pickup of library items. We are not yet allowing people in the building, but are getting books out at all four locations.

People are able to request and pick up books, and some preselected books are available for kids to choose from through themed “grab bags”. Summer Reading sign-ups have been growing. There is a summer offering at the South Side Branch of meals provided through the Bethlehem Area School District lunch program. This program is overseen by Liz Saraceno, who discussed efforts to link this program with the Summer Reading Program at the South Side Branch, using a necessary “grab-and-go” model of service at this point.

4. During the recent drive-up book sale on June 27, prepared bags of books sold out in the first hour. Staff filled more bags and sold 200 bags total, taking in around \$1,000. Plans are being made for another book sale next month.
5. Julie Zumas asked about when the library will be open to the public. Director Berk does not have a date, and based on the growing number of COVID-19 cases, he is hesitant to open too soon. He expressed his sense that the current model is working well. (He noted that Easton Area Public Library lets people in for half-hour periods, but there has not been a lot of use. Jane Gill noted that the layout of the Bethlehem Area Public Library would make this difficult because it is harder to keep track of where people are in the building.) Cathi Alloway noted a similar experience at her library, also located in a college town (State College), where there is a lot of local concern about the return of the college students and unsafe behaviors.
6. President Felker asked about the comfort level of staff members with current procedures at the library. Director Berk’s sense is that the experience has been perceived as positive. Julie Zumas noted that things are being handled carefully, safely, and well from her perspective.
7. Director Berk noted that while other libraries are not accepting book donations, we are and have been getting a lot.
8. Julie Zumas also asked whether the library is now prioritizing the purchasing of e-books. Director Berk said yes, and that a lot of requests are coming in for specific books.
9. Director Berk shared a copy of *Healthy Living at the Library*, in which he is referenced and quoted in connection with BAPL’s bike share program (which has not been started up again yet). President Felker noted that there is a big increase in interest in bikes right now (she has seen this through her work with Coalition for Alternative Transportation). She recommended connecting with CAT for thoughts on starting this up again at the library. Director Berk also shared one of a number of “love notes” shared with BAPL staff.

## **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 – The Friends have just donated \$1,000 in support of Janine Santoro’s workshops on systemic racism, Dialogues on Racial Justice, held on the second and fourth Tuesdays in July and August. Janine offered thanks to the Friends for this support, and also to Kate Racculia and other staff members who created a landing page with lots of great resources ([bapl.org/antiracistresources](http://bapl.org/antiracistresources)). There are four anti-racist programs. The first is on systemic racism and is full (capped at 30 people, with others emailing to ask to be let in). The facilitator is Linda Wiggins-Chavis. Janine is willing to share the link for this event with interested Board members, despite the first session being full.

Sharon Yoshida also noted that President Felker is in contact with the president of the Friends about ways in which the Board might work with the Friends on advocacy efforts in support of the library.

Sharon also urged Board committees to get back to meeting regularly. President Felker seconded this and suggested that committees start up again in August.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Finance Committee – none
2. Governance Committee – none. President Felker asked if Jay Finnigan plans to continue working with this committee, and Mike Prendeville said that he does.
3. Human Resources Committee – none
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – none
5. Strategic Planning Committee – No meeting. Julie Zumas said she hopes for a meeting in August, and noted that strategic planning consultant Cathi Alloway has been joining us at Board meetings to keep abreast of BAPL developments.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Social Media Policy: Director Berk noted that the library has had a presence on social media for quite some time and has not had a need for a policy.

Recent posts addressing current social issues, however, have elicited some very negative, and sometimes profane, comments. So the library is now in need of a policy dictating how to respond to this. Director Berk and colleagues did research into what other libraries have done in this area. It is a complicated issue.

Director Berk and the staff do have draft language for this policy, which he shared with President Felker. She reported that this language is a good start, and Board members agreed that the next step is for the Governance Committee to consider this draft. President Felker did ask Solicitor Faul for any parameters we should be aware of here. Solicitor Faul reported on a United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit (Virginia Eastern District Court) decision regarding Facebook and free speech. According to this decision, a public forum is not supposed to restrict speech, including hate speech. This decision came down at the beginning of 2019, and there have been 30-40 cases since then. Facebook itself has a policy and can remove hate speech. The question is whether a governmental body can request that Facebook do this on that body's behalf.

Solicitor Faul said it may come down to whether third-party participation (that is, comments from non-staff) can be allowed at all. Director Berk questioned whether this is possible, but Annamarie Jordan noted that the Borough of Fountain Hill has determined that they will prohibit comments on their Facebook page (may have to do with the type of page used by the boroughs--e.g., possibly a private group page).

President Felker asked about removing comments that contain threatening language, but Solicitor Faul said it is not clear that even this can be excluded legally. Director Berk noted that there is a Facebook profanity filter that can be used.

President Felker asked anyone on the Board with additional ideas or a particular interest in this issue to please join the Governance Committee in beginning this work. Director Berk and his staff are encouraged to continue operating as they have been so far, until a more formal policy can be enacted.

A motion was made to adjourn to Executive Session by Annamarie Jordan at 6:55 PM; seconded by Jane Gill.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hinnefeld, Secretary