

## **Library Board Minutes**

December 14, 2020

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted virtually via Zoom

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

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

Staff – Josh Berk, Julia Brennan, Elizabeth Burch, Dana Hoy,  
Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore, Laurel Stone

Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul),  
Michael Prendeville (Hanover Township Alternate)

ABSENT: City – Emil Signes

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:** Executive Director Josh Berk thanked Sharon Yoshida for her many years of service on the Board, at this, her last board meeting. He noted that Sharon joined the Board in January 2013 and was an officer for many years, including president of the Board (during a time of challenges and growth, including the renovation of the children’s room). She was also instrumental in the revitalization of the Friends of the Library and has been a consistently generous donor through the years. Director Berk noted his gratitude for her leadership and good counsel to him as library director, and said that the Ron and Sharon Yoshida Endowment Fund will serve as a testament to Sharon and Ron’s devotion to the library for years to come. When asked, staff members spoke particularly of her cheerful and cheering smile, as well as her constant support, encouragement, and appreciation. One staff member said, “Sharon, as well as Ron, are inspirations to us all.”

Sharon assured Board members that she will continue working with the Board as part of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Had we not been on Zoom, we would have joined in a toast to Sharon. All present expressed their appreciation and applauded her service.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion to approve the November minutes made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Sharon Yoshida; Dale Sourbeck, Jane Gill, Olga Negrón, and Jay Finnigan abstained; motion approved.

**APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:** A motion to approve the October operating funds subject to audit made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Jay Finnigan; motion approved.

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

1. Director Berk noted some highlights from the written report, including some outdoor gatherings earlier in the fall, in addition to online events, thanks to creative staff members; in particular he noted the "Natural Wanders" event at the Main Library, along with the newly launched job-seekers program.
2. Prior to the meeting, Director Berk had shared State mitigation directives as the pandemic worsens. At the end of last week, a lot of local libraries went back to curbside service; late today Bethlehem City Hall announced cessation of in-person services until January 4, 2021. Our plan is to move the Circulation area back into the lobby and resume pick-up/drop-off there. He noted that it is difficult to do so, but for everyone's health and safety we must close down computer use within the library at this time. The libraries will not be closing completely, but we will be going back to check-out at the door instead of the Circulation Desk, along with no computer use or in-person browsing. The South Side Branch will also handle check-outs at the door, and the Coolidge Building will have similar restrictions. Hours will remain the same, and library returns are to be put into book drops, to eliminate any congestion at the check-out area. These changes will go into effect tomorrow, Tuesday, December 15, and will be in place until January 4, 2021, when we will reassess. Julie Zumas suggested reassessing later (January 11 or later), to allow for sufficient time following the holidays; Board members agreed with this suggestion.

Anne Felker asked about what the Townships are doing in response to State directives. Jay Finnigan reported that Hanover Township is staying open by appointment, sanitizing regularly, etc. Dale Sourbeck reported that Bethlehem Township employees are largely working from home, with appointments required for services. Fountain Hill is closed to the public, with inside access for council members and the mayor only. In all cases, staff and public works employees are continuing their work, but public access to buildings is limited.

## **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 – A committee is addressing how to increase membership. There was a good turnout for the annual Friends of the Library meeting, which included wonderful presentations from department heads--a good way to demonstrate how much work is accomplished thanks to Friends donations. Randi Blauth, who attended, suggested that department heads share their presentations with the Board

also; she described the librarians as “incredibly creative.” Sharon Yoshida suggested going back to having one presentation from a department head at the beginning of each Board meeting (a practice from the past). President Felker also attended and agreed with these responses and encouraged other Board members to join and participate with the Friends of the Library. Olga Negrón asked if the annual meeting was recorded and suggested that if it was, the presentations by department heads might be shared more widely. President Felker will check on this. Olga also suggested having each department head make a brief recording to share with the Board and perhaps also with the public at large, via social media.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Finance Committee – none
2. Governance Committee – none
3. Human Resources Committee – none
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – none
5. Strategic Planning Committee – Julie Zumas thanked all who attended the December 3 Board Strategic Planning Retreat. The committee is now waiting for Cathi Alloway to share details and suggestions. Julie will share this information with Board members for us to consider when she receives Cathi’s draft.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. The 2021 Budget, approved previously, was shared by Director Berk with improved formatting etc.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. South Side Branch elevator project: CDBG (Community Development Block Grant, dispersed through the City of Bethlehem) has awarded BAPL \$75,000 (\$20,000 from previous year’s budget, \$55,000 from this year’s budget) for the South Side elevator project. An elevator is needed to provide access to meeting rooms, etc. in the basement of the building. This is about half of what installing the elevator will cost. It is now up to the library to continue to raise money and, perhaps, allocate funds from our existing capital account. Director Berk noted that it is a strange time financially right now, with uncertainties about State funding, but noted that capital funds remain available. Jay Finnigan asked if there is a time limit for accepting the funds and completing the project. Based on the award letter, it is possible that there is a deadline of the end of next year, though it is possible--based on the wording of the award--that this could be extended. Terry Faul noted that the main time issue will be getting a design and bids; the project itself should not take that long. Julie Zumas asked about the requirement that these grants serve lower-income people (HUD requirement), and how this will be

documented. Olga Negrón said that the library's presence in the South Side census tract makes it likely that this requirement will be met. Terry Faul also noted that accessibility will be part of HUD requirements, and of course accessibility is the goal here. President Felker asked how long Director Berk thinks the project will take. He recalled estimating that it could happen within the scope of a year (design through bidding, construction, inspection), or nearly so; he will check on what was included in the original application. Jay Finnigan estimated something more like 18-24 months for the entire project. Julie Zumas asked if Director Berk has an architect in mind for the project, and he said he assumed he might work with the firm that did the estimate (and also designed the Cohen Room). Julie noted another, possibly faster, option if time is crucial.

Following this discussion the Board considered a motion to (a) authorize the executive director to notify the City that the Board has approved acceptance of the CDBG grant and (b) authorize who the appropriate Board officer is to sign, signifying our acceptance of the grant (and commitment to raising the additional funds). Motion made by Sharon Yoshida; seconded by Dale Sourbeck; motion approved.

2. President Felker asked about any update on projected costs for a new library presence in the Hanover Township Municipal Building. Director Berk reported rough estimates of \$10,000-\$15,000 in start-up costs, with ongoing costs of roughly \$20,000/year for services available around 3 days/week.
3. The Nominating Committee will present in January 2021. If the slate of officers is approved, new officers will take over then.

A motion to adjourn was made by Sharon Yoshida. The meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hinnefeld, Secretary