

Library Board Minutes

February 8, 2021

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted virtually via Zoom

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and introduced new Board member Rachel Leon, representing the City of Bethlehem, and Mary Musselman, an alternate from Bethlehem Township.

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

Staff – Josh Berk, Dana Hoy, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore, Sue Schirripa
Other – Cathi Alloway (Strategic Planning Consultant), Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul), Mary Musselman (Bethlehem Township alternate), Michael Prendeville (Hanover Township alternate)

ABSENT: City – Emil Signes

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion to approve the January minutes was made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Jay Finnigan; abstention by Dale Sourbeck. The motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS: A motion to approve the December operating funds, subject to audit, was made by Jane Gill; seconded by Dale Sourbeck. The motion was approved.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

1. Director Josh Berk noted that a stricter mitigation order from the state in December necessitated a return to doormat service for a short period (three weeks), but the library has now gone back to the previous model, with people allowed in the library to select materials, but not permitted to linger or use computers. There have been a small number of complaints about lack of access to computers, but this seems a reasonable compromise for keeping people safe. It is not clear when computers will be available to the public again. Director Berk described a nice response from one patron about the library's Youth Services staff. She reported that her grandson has become a much more avid reader as a result of increased use of the library and thanks to the staff's help and support.

2. South Side Branch Manager Brenda Grow's husband Ed performed as Santa Claus outside the South Side Branch.
3. Let's Play Books made books available for customers to purchase for the library as a holiday fundraiser.
4. The Main Library held an outdoor "Tug" event to celebrate the book's release, with the National Museum of Industrial History (NMIH) bringing the actual Tug vehicle to the library.
5. Coming soon will be a partnership with the Audubon Society and some other organizations, in connection with the Bethlehem City Council's recent vote to make the chimney swift the official bird of Bethlehem--a decision connected with recognition of the swift's endangered habitat due to Masonic Temple restorations. The library will sponsor a series of Zoom events titled "Save Our Swifts," organized by Jennie Gilrain and ornithologist Peter Saenger from Muhlenberg College. See www.bapl.org/saveourswifts/.
6. President Felker noted the significant increase in use of electronic resources by library patrons. Director Berk reported that while the Coolidge Building, which is still new and has also increased its hours, has seen increased physical book withdrawals, elsewhere book withdrawals are down, but there are substantial increases in electronic borrowing. Kanopy numbers are down because of the library's need to reduce the number of free withdrawals available to patrons.
7. Regarding the Coolidge Building, Regina Kochmaruk's outreach hours are reduced in connection with increased open hours. Director Berk says he does not want to cut hours at Coolidge, so he will likely assign more outreach duties to other staff members.

REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill noted appreciative comments from Bethlehem's neighbors about the library's resources at this time. Director Berk noted that he will be sharing various Board materials with new member Rachel Leon.
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – Looking forward to Books on the Hill.
4. Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan noted that Mike Prendeville is working with Director Berk on plans for a satellite site at the Hanover Community Center. Finnigan expressed his hope that this can happen reasonably soon. President Felker asked how the space compares with the Coolidge Building in Bethlehem Township. Director Berk noted that there are a few possibilities. The last visit seemed to suggest a larger possible space than was originally

proposed. There are two rooms roughly 20' x 25', but they are not next to each other, which means it would be hard to use both. The other option, a somewhat larger area at the front, would be about 25' x 30'.

5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – Director Berk reported that the Friends were able to provide a contribution of \$7,705.77 for 2021 programming, even without the normal fundraiser. Most of this will go to the Summer Reading Program for youths, as well as South Side youth and adult programming and Coolidge Building programming. They have plans in mind for some sort of virtual fundraising plus a membership drive in the coming year.

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 – Cathi Alloway displayed a draft strategic planning report, organized under three themes from the BAPL mission statement: “educates,” “inspires,” “informs.” Julie Zumas shared the draft report with Board members. Alloway noted that the plans outlined in this report will likely require two to three years of work, and that a definite timeline should be established.

Randi Blauth urged inclusion of language that specifically and directly addresses diversity within the report.

Alloway suggested that Board members take a closer look at the report and send responses, suggestions, etc. to Julie Zumas, with follow-up discussion to happen at next month’s meeting. Board members expressed appreciation for this draft report as a strong starting point for us as a Board. Zumas urged Board members to let her know when we have read the report, even if we do not have specific responses or suggestions.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Terry Faul noted that the signed contract with the City is now in place for the South Side Branch elevator project. Director Berk said the next step is dealing with various construction contracts, bids, etc. Faul suggested that perhaps Board members could take a more active role in overseeing this project, and President Felker encouraged any Board members who are interested in this to be in touch with Director Berk.

2. Mike Prendeville asked about Value Line (investment and stock analysis newsletter). Director Berk reported that Rayah Levy, head of Adult Services, has decided to cancel the library's subscription to the print version but enhance digital access to the newsletter. This will be promoted to the community.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Director Berk noted that Board officers will need to schedule a time to stop in to sign documents.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dale Sourbeck at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hinnefeld, Secretary