

Library Board Minutes

July 12, 2021

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Joyce Hinnefeld
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, Dale Sourbeck
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan
Hanover Township – Mike Prendeville (alternate)

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore

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

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill, Rachel Leon, Olga Negrón, Emil Signes, Julie Zumas
Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

1. Annamarie Jordan spoke about her positive experience using cloudLibrary, the library's new e-book system. The selection is very good. Director Josh Berk said that is one of the main reasons why we switched, more titles for less money. Most common patron complaint is that cloudLibrary does not work with Kindle Paperwhites, but overall it has been better districtwide.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the July minutes was made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Dale Sourbeck; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds, subject to audit, from May. Dale Sourbeck questioned a negative amount in the payroll account. Director Berk will look into it and report back if it is an issue of concern. Motion to approve the May operating funds, subject to audit, made by Joyce Hinnefeld, seconded by Randi Blauth; motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Before listening to the Director's Report, all present took the time to introduce themselves. Because this was the first in-person meeting since the start of the pandemic, many members had never met face-to-face. Board members and staff introduced themselves and greeted each other.

Director Josh Berk reported that in addition to switching to cloudLibrary, the library will be getting back to more regular processes and types of usage, including renting space for groups to meet in, beginning again in the fall. Dale Sourbeck asked what rented rooms are used for and what the charge is. Director Berk responded that uses vary from club meetings to birthday parties and showers. Rates are determined by what type of group is renting the space; for example nonprofits would be charged less.

The recording studio has been accepting signups and use is increasing. It is nice to have music in the building again. There was a clarinet in there today.

The Summer Reading Program continues to be a success, with around 800 kids signed up. Although this is less than during a typical summer, the library is pleased with the number of families returning for in-person programming. All youth programs are taking place outdoors this summer.

The library continues to request that masks be worn while patrons are inside the library. There has been more pushback from patrons in recent weeks, as other businesses have been relaxing mask requirements. However, Director Berk feels it is good to be safe and also in line with the Bethlehem Area School District, which is also requesting masks indoors for summer school and other programs. Schools do anticipate some changes before the beginning of the school year. One patron attempted to start a "petition," handwritten on the sign regarding masks at the entrance. However, the person failed to sign it themselves and the sign was replaced.

President Felker asked what the Townships are doing with masking in their public meetings, etc. Dale Sourbeck reported that Bethlehem Township has been distanced with no masks, but plexiglass is still in place. Annamarie Jordan reported that Fountain Hill was using masks at their in-person public meetings. Mike Prendeville (alternate) said Hanover Township is asking people to allow space and follow CDC guidelines. They will be holding their first in-person meeting in a few weeks.

Director Berk noted that there were more staff changes again this month. Jennifer Khawam, formerly in Marketing, left for her dream job at a publishing company. Libby Ortiz, formerly at South Side Branch, left for a full-time position at the Easton Area Public Library.

Director Berk finished his report by mentioning the Board should be aware of a Northampton patron complaining about area library collections having, in this person's opinion, undesirable books. This person gave an example of a book by Stacey Abrams as the type of book that should not be in a library collection because of their objections to her politics.

REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – none

2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – Plan to “soft open” Books on the Hill in August. No firm date because there is a small punch list of things to accomplish beforehand. Items needing completion include hiring someone to staff the location and fixing a minor WiFi and electrical glitch.

Annamarie Jordan says she will volunteer to be there! Director Berk noted that this location may initially be open with shorter hours that would soon change as we learn what fits best.

Solicitor Terry Faul asked about a Certificate of Occupancy for this new location. Annamarie Jordan confirmed that this was all approved.

Then the discussion turned to how hard it is to hire people now. Annamarie Jordan shared that Fountain Hill had recently hired six people and none of them reported for work after hiring.

Dale Sourbeck asked what qualifications would be needed to be hired for the Fountain Hill Books on the Hill position. Director Berk said he would share the job description as soon as the job posting was available. Multiple Board members expressed interest in using personal contacts to help with filling open positions.

Joyce Hinnefeld asked about filling the Marketing/Development Specialist position. Director Berk said he will also share this posting, but was considering an option to keep it unfilled for a few months. He proposed using the funds saved on that salary to hire a consultant to assist with executing the strategic plan. The Board felt this was a smart idea to explore further.

4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – Director Berk and Joyce Hinnefeld reminded everyone about the upcoming summer event on July 21: a Virtual Literary Salon focused on local writers. This event features three women, all writers and all professors. Attendees need to register for the virtual event. The Friends are and have been asking for sponsorships, so money has already been given at this time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Finance Committee (Sourbeck) – We have money.
2. Governance Committee (Blauth) – Hope to have the By-laws finalized by September’s meeting.
3. Human Resources Committee (Gill) – none

4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee (Jordan) – Since Jennifer Khawam left, the committee will wait for a new leader.
5. Strategic Planning Committee (Zumas) – Director Berk reported for Julie Zumas, saying that there has been good progress made. They are beginning with the Department Heads to discuss ways to improve and implement the strategic plan.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Annamarie Jordan asked if there had been any issues with the homeless population since opening the buildings up. Director Berk said there have not been any major problems, and that many returning homeless patrons are regulars. He did ban one patron, who complained to Representative Steve Samuelson about the situation. This caused the library to clarify guidelines with regard to limits with troublesome patrons. The advice of Solicitor Faul was no more lifetime bans, but suggested that the library ban, with a defined amount of time. Mike Prendeville (alternate) said that once the police are involved, it becomes a case of trespass. Solicitor Faul clarified that it is actually usually “defiant trespass” after the second warning. If unable to mail a notification letter, staff or police hand the warning letter to the patron at the next visit. Homeless populations are very common at city libraries across the country.

Dale Sourbeck complimented Regina Kochmaruk on her Bookmobile driving abilities and for how well she works with the public.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dale Sourbeck and seconded by Mike Prendeville (alternate). President Felker adjourned the meeting at 6:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Joyce Hinnefeld (Board Secretary)