

Library Board Minutes

September 13, 2021 (Amended)
Bethlehem Area Public Library

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, Dale Sourbeck
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan
Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips

Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul),
Mike Prendeville (Hanover Township alternate)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Rachel Leon, Olga Negrón, Emil Signes,
Julie Zumas

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

1. Mike Prendeville, a Hanover Township resident and board alternate, asked for an update on setting up a satellite location in Hanover Township. Director Berk said he had nothing new to share. President Felker noted that the assumption has been that efforts to make this happen would originate in the Township and asked if there is something he is asking Board members to do in order to further the process. Mr. Prendeville thought the Board had taken it under consideration, so he wanted to continue discussion. Annamarie Jordan asked if the room in the Township building is still available and is the building open to the public at this time. Jay Finnigan said the building is currently open for public use. President Felker explained that Hanover Township also needs to support the effort and take the lead on such a project. Mr. Prendeville said he can re-start talks with the Township and confirm space availability.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the July minutes was made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Randi Blauth; Jay Finnigan questioned a negative amount in the payroll account brought up at July's meeting. Director Berk explained it was a coding error that has been corrected. The error amount never hit the bank account. Motion carried with Mr. Finnigan abstaining.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

President Felker called for a motion to approve operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the June and July operating funds, subject to audit, was made by Jane Gill, seconded by Joyce Hinnefeld; motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

In addition to his written reports, Director Berk noted that there were a few more staff changes again this month. Matthew Rothfuss has been hired as our new Head of Adult Services and Librarian Kristen Leipert is the latest new hire in that department.

The Main Library experienced some plumbing issues today, but things were able to be managed well, so there was no need to close the building. The South Side Branch took on water in the basement during the heavy rains brought by Hurricane Ida at the beginning of the month. It is a reason for some concern, since it is in the location for the new elevator. We will need the engineers to look at that more closely.

The Bookmobile had some planned maintenance performed and had the air conditioning fixed.

Bethlehem's mask mandate for all City buildings is making it easier to enforce mask-wearing indoors. All youth programming will again be moved outdoors, since one city elementary school, Miller Heights, had to close their building for a week, due to 12 cases of Covid-19.

Jane Gill asked after library staff health. Director Berk noted that everyone was fine, just some run of the mill illnesses, nothing to cause concern.

Annamarie Jordan inquired if hiring efforts had improved. Director Berk said yes, there was one more Circulation position still unfilled, but that was close to a decision.

President Felker wondered how the soft opening for Books on the Hill had gone. Director Berk reported it has been very good and residents are asking for even more services, especially computer access. Cleveland Wall was hired for this staff position; she will be the main employee working there. There will be additional signage added. The library will plan a Grand Opening on Saturday, October 2.

Annamarie Jordan added that Fountain Hill's goal for the area where Books on the Hill is located is a "passive recreation" area.

Open hours are set and will begin with alternating Friday and Saturday hours.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill has had patrons share their appreciation of the library's virtual programming and literary support, with comments revolving around helping them through a dark time.

2. Bethlehem Township – Dale Sourbeck talked about the recent bad rains and damage caused by them.
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – Nothing planned, but they have had some events already this year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Finance Committee (Gill) – Ms. Gill reported the committee met virtually. They looked at the investments and discussed the budget.
2. Governance Committee (Blauth) – Ms. Blauth reminded members that they should have received the final copy of the updated By-laws. This will come up for a vote at the next meeting. She asked people to contact her with any questions beforehand. She also asked what the Governance Committee should look at next. At Director Berk's suggestion, it was decided to revisit the Social Media Policy to help guide employees when responding to public comments on our website and the library's pages on social platforms, specifically considering questions of free speech versus protection from offensive speech on public forums, and when it is acceptable and advisable to remove comments. Director Berk will share the last draft and other pertinent information he thinks may help.
3. Human Resources Committee (Gill) – none
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee (Jordan) – none
5. Strategic Planning Committee (Zumas) – Director Berk reported that Julie Zumas emailed that she could not attend tonight's meeting and that the committee should have an update soon.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Director Berk raised the topic of U.S. Census number reporting as the census figures are used to assess the contribution to BAPL from each municipality in the coming year. Jay Finnigan thought these numbers were already released and could be found on census.gov. President Felker asked each contributing township, borough, and city to be prepared to discuss census numbers for the next meeting. The Board will also look to see what kind of increases these numbers show. Dale Sourbeck thought Bethlehem Township census count

was around 25,000, and Mr. Finnigan thought Hanover Township was over 11,500. Mr. Finnigan also noted Hanover Township staff would be presenting the township's proposed budget on Thursday, September 16. Annamarie Jordan said Fountain Hill was also starting to discuss budget figures and are working with a new borough manager. President Felker will inquire about numbers for the City of Bethlehem. Bethlehem Township will be discussing their budget in October. Director Berk wants to align with the timelines of the City, Fountain Hill Borough, and Bethlehem and Hanover Townships, and wants to ensure that no one is using differing census numbers. President Felker agreed that the library should be clear on census numbers and be prepared for budget discussions.

Annamarie Jordan is actively looking for the next Fountain Hill volunteer to serve on this Board.

Randi Blauth broached the subject of board members who attend meetings only infrequently. She feels it is important to have members regularly attend meetings to get the work of this board accomplished and asked what can be done about problems with meeting attendance. Annamarie Jordan observed that this seems to be a more recent problem, since returning to in-person meetings after the Covid-19 shut-down. Ms. Blauth pointed out how it increases the workload for those that do attend and proposed approaching the City for replacement volunteer appointments. Dale Sourbeck suggested a diplomatically worded email to encourage attendance. President Felker presumed there were multiple reasons why people were not attending and plans to contact board members personally.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Jay Finnigan, and seconded by Joyce Hinnefeld. President Felker adjourned the meeting at 6:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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