

Library Board Minutes

April 11, 2022

Bethlehem Area Public Library

President Anne Felker began the meeting discussion at 6:06 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, Dale Sourbeck
Hanover Township – Jeff Warren

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips

Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul),
Rachel Leon (City Council Liaison for City of Bethlehem)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Emil Signes, three open positions
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

1. Randi Blauth had many compliments for the Lehigh Valley Book Festival held at the Main Library on March 26. She loved it and highly recommends attending it next year.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the February minutes was made by Dale Sourbeck, seconded by Jane Gill; motion approved unanimously.
2. Approval of the March minutes not needed, per Terence Faul, because no quorum was met.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

1. President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds for January, subject to audit. Motion to approve the January operating funds, subject to audit, made by Jane Gill, seconded by Joyce Hinnefeld; motion approved unanimously.
2. President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds for February, subject to audit. Motion to approve the February operating funds, subject to audit, made by Dale Sourbeck, seconded by Jeff Warren; motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

1. Director Berk reported that Representative Susan Wild visited the Books on the Hill location to deliver a donation of books. BAPL had requested foreign

language items to help grow that part of the library's collection. She brought a donation of kids' books and audio items as well.

2. More details about the success of the Book Festival were highlighted. There were Princesses and Superheroes reading to kids, bands playing throughout the day and two cool keynote speakers. Director Berk also mentioned potential for a grant from hotel tax money to help pay for next year's festival.
3. Spike the library lizard's birthday happens to be the same day as the anniversary of the opening of the upstairs Youth Library at the Main Library. A celebration will be held on April 30, the same day as the flea market also at the Main Library.
4. Hours at the South Side Branch have normalized with a full staff now in place.
5. Director Berk gave an update on the Strategic Plan, beginning with the news that BAPL did not get a Keystone Grant this year. However, since funds had been saved to match a potential grant, those monies can now be put towards some purchases to improve the physical building and grounds of the library. Cross-training between departments is starting to be coordinated by managers. An online, self-taught course for Spanish education was created in-house and shared with staff members. For continuing education, library staff will see a presentation about H.O.P.E, Health and Opioid Prevention Education.
6. Director Berk asked about the status of two new library Board Members to be appointed by the City of Bethlehem. Rachel Leon, City Council Liaison to the library, confirmed that G. Christopher Hunt and Delia Marrero were appointed at the last council meeting. There followed more discussion of Ms. Leon potentially filling the third open position for the City, but questions about conflict of interest still remain. President Felker understands the legal concerns and noted that Bethlehem Township and Hanover Township Board Members are in the same situation.
7. Dale Sourbeck asked if there is a way to track the number of people using the library from each area. Director Berk explained that the library's software system is able to track that information. It tells us the total number of items checked out by residents of each municipality, the number of cardholders from each municipality, and the number of items borrowed at each location.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Rachel Leon, Liaison for the City, reported that Bethlehem has \$32 million to use from the American Rescue Plan. There is a survey link to share opinions with council to help them decide about where these funds should be designated.

Ms. Leon also reported that there is a new development proposal for properties right next to the South Side Branch. The proposal, from a New Jersey developer looking to build more student housing, describes an 88 foot structure on the site after demolishing existing houses. The Library Board had many concerns, and President Felker posed the question “Should we take a position?” Jeff Warren said the Board should oppose the proposal and others agreed. Members noted that most college and university students do not become invested in the City, since they are here for a relatively short amount of time. Ms. Leon thought it was being rushed through, since the hearing was set for Monday, April 18, and the City had only been notified on Friday, April 15. Dale Sourbeck asked if it is zoned for a structure that high. Ms. Leon said it is, but 88 feet is more than City Council would like to see in that area. The Council would like to see the existing houses rehabbed instead of torn down. Potentially the Historic Conservation Commission could use the historic overlay to turn down this proposal. Board Members spent time crafting a letter to be read at the meeting. Some members hoped to be present in person also. Director Berk added that the current student housing adjacent to the South Side Branch building does not maintain the gutters. Subsequently, rainwater overflows and ends up flooding the basement of the Branch. That building's owner is also located in New Jersey and has not been responsive when the library has tried to reach them about the on-going issue. Joyce Hinnefeld and Jeff Warren worked on possible language for a proposed letter stating the Board’s opposition to the plan. Ms. Hinnefeld made a motion to approve language that substantially conformed to the letter included at the end of these minutes. Randi Blauth seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

Director Berk added that the City announced that Musikfest will have a platz with live music and food returning to the plaza again this summer. The library may need to adjust some open hours because of it.

Jane Gill said PBS39 was interviewing people out in front of the library, asking what it is like living in Bethlehem. She took the opportunity to promote BAPL as “a gem” of the city.

2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – President Felker spoke with Sharon Yoshida. Ms. Yoshida said the Friends have lost their 501(c)(3) status. Director Berk was also aware of this change, but was unclear how it came about. He will be meeting with that leadership this week. The Board discussed what the Friends should be for BAPL and how it should be structured. Director Berk noted that years ago, the library was not an official 501(c)(3), so it made sense for the Friends to have that designation. So now

that BAPL is a 501(c)(3), perhaps the Friends do not need to maintain that. Terence Faul said they could be an affiliate of the library. President Felker noted the value of the volunteer group and wants them to continue to be cheerleaders and fundraise for the library. Randi Blauth asked about things that the Friends usually fund for the library. Director Berk said their fundraising money would be a budget line item and donations would go directly to the library accounts. Most Board Members agreed on the concept of an “affiliate organization.”

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Finance Committee (Gill) – Ms. Gill reported things are in good shape. The committee met in March to discuss the library’s finances and to review plans to allocate gift money.
2. Governance Committee (Blauth) – Ms. Blauth reported the committee continues to work on guidelines for library staff scholarships for continuing education funds. Director Berk would like the following information to be considered and defined:
 - a. Who can apply?
 - b. How much will be given?
 - c. Is there an employment time commitment, after completion?

Ms. Blauth is also frustrated by lack of cooperation from other committee members. She only heard back from one other person. President Felker would like to have this committee meet more in person to encourage participation. Ms. Blauth said she thinks differently, but would reconsider her approach for managing the committee.

3. Human Resources Committee (Gill) – Ms. Gill reported there is a meeting planned for April 25.
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee (Hinnefeld) – Ms. Hinnefeld reported Amresse Farrow had reached out to committee members to decide on a meeting date. Ms. Hinnefeld would also like to see more action on this committee’s part, including possibly addressing issues like the banning of books and the funding of public libraries.
5. Strategic Planning Committee (Blauth) – It was noted that this was covered during the Director's Report.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Director Berk shared that BAPL's Studio 11 was featured in a story on WLVR, a local NPR radio station. He noted a sad statistic from the article: about half the libraries in Pennsylvania "have either zero or one full-time librarian." He also shared that it was announced today that Susan Banks is now the Pennsylvania State Librarian.
2. Randi Blauth complimented Rachel Leon about her remarks during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event.
3. Terence Faul reported that a meeting would be held on Thursday, April 14, to discuss the open lawsuit from Hanover and Bethlehem Townships.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dale Sourbeck, and President Felker adjourned the meeting at 7:24 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Joyce Hinnefeld (Board Vice President)