

Library Board Minutes

February 14, 2022

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,
Emil Signes
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, Dale Sourbeck
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe
Hanover Township – Jeff Warren

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore

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

ABSENT: None, but three open positions for City of Bethlehem

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

1. Board members and meeting attendees introduced themselves to the new Hanover Township Library Board Representative, Jeff Warren.
2. Emil Signes shared an essay he referred to as a “Library Loveletter.” A copy is attached to this document. President Felker would also like to post a copy to the BAPL website.

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS:

1. Director Berk updated the Board that Rachel Leon has been named the library liaison to the City of Bethlehem and thus, will no longer be a voting Board member. Details were determined by one of the City of Bethlehem’s new solicitors. Consequently there are now three open positions waiting for appointees from the City of Bethlehem. Terence Faul, BAPL’s solicitor, wants to know who to contact to understand the reasoning behind this conclusion, since most of the participating municipalities are in the same position. Director Berk will contact the City’s Solicitor Office.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

1. The Nominating Committee, comprised of Joyce Hinnefeld and Anne Felker, proposed the following slate of candidates to serve as officers in 2022:
 - Anne Felker for President
 - Joyce Hinnefeld for Vice President
 - Emil Signes for Secretary
 - Jane Gill for Treasurer

Sarah Phillips, BAPL staff, will continue to record meeting minutes and work with the Board Secretary to prepare them for submission.

2. Randi Blauth moved to approve the slate of officers as presented, seconded by Will Rufe; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Dale Sourbeck noted a typo designating him as being in charge of the Finance Committee. Sarah Phillips will correct that and change it to Jane Gill. A motion to approve the January minutes as amended was made by Jane Gill, seconded by Emil Signes; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

Director Berk followed up with an explanation from January's meeting about Elan. Elan is the name of the credit card processing company for the library. There was a higher amount than usual last month because the library bought some needed computers.

This line item will be more clearly identified in the future.

Director Berk also passed out printed copies of the 2022 Budget.

President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the December operating funds, subject to audit, made by Joyce Hinnefeld, seconded by Dale Sourbeck; motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported that \$1,200 was raised to support the yoga classes offered at the library. Matthew Rothfuss, Head of the Reference Department, asked participants to donate and the response was wonderful.

It continues to be a strange time for planning predictions. The South Side Branch hours are still not back to normal. Waiting for two more positions to be hired in order to support more open hours there. Usage of the Coolidge location in Bethlehem Township and eResources have increased. Foot traffic at the Main Library is lower.

Director Berk is hoping for more in-person events in the near future. The Lehigh Valley Book Festival is scheduled for the last Saturday in March. Third year is hopefully a charm, as the last two needed to happen virtually.

He is also working on the 2021 Annual Report.

President Felker noted that she has found the website to be "jumpy" recently. She noted she was looking at the Events page and Library calendar. Director

Berk was concerned to hear about this, since we just put money into the site to optimize its performance. He will be looking into this further.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Need three open library Board positions to be filled.
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – Mr. Rufe wants to encourage more usage of Books on the Hill location. Perhaps will entice patrons there with food.
4. Hanover Township – none
5. Friends of the Bethlehem Area Public Library – A call for new members has been sent out. Development and Marketing Specialist Amresse Farrow and Friends President Krista Best are working together on this. Director Berk will add Board members to the library's monthly email and forward them the one about the Friends, too. He also gave an overview of all the good this group does and has done for BAPL, from supporting kids and adult programming to special requests. Noted that it will be nice to get back to fundraisers in person, as online options have not brought in as much money.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Finance Committee (Gill) – Jane Gill will be calling a meeting to deal with the end of the year numbers, including gift and grant monies.
2. Governance Committee (Blauth) – Director Berk requested work be done to lay out some guidelines for reimbursement to employees to pursue a library degree. There is a gift from the Yoshida's for this purpose. Randi Blauth plans to start working on this.
3. Human Resources Committee (Gill) – Jane Gill wants to add more people to this committee. Will Rufe volunteered to join. Randi Blauth reminded everyone of a Bethlehem Township volunteer, named Susan McNamara, and she will share a new contact email.
4. Marketing and Advocacy Committee (Hinnefeld) – Jeff Warren will join this committee. Joyce Hinnefeld will share this information with Amresse Farrow.
5. Strategic Planning Committee (Blauth) – Randi Blauth will assume leadership of this committee. As laid out in the Strategic Plan, the committee will provide quarterly reports on progress.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. The Office of the Commonwealth responded that the BAPL Board has been selected for a virtual “retreat.” Need to provide some options for dates and they want at least 80% participation. Estimated length is 2 ½ hours. Mr. Faul suggested an online poll to get an idea of the best times for maximum attendance.
2. Director Berk shared that a Laros Foundation grant will be used to renovate the AV systems in all the BAPL meeting spaces. He also mentioned the NORCO grant for the Local History collection housed at BAPL in the Bethlehem Room. Out of the \$18,000 grant, \$11,000 will be spent on a scanner to digitize the collection.
3. Keystone grants will be announced in March. It is a matching grant that BAPL is hoping to receive to use towards renovating the first floor. Project estimate is \$700,000.
4. The elevator installation at the South Side Branch is still pending. There were no bids received for this project the first time it was posted. The job will involve working by hand to excavate the area for elevator access.
5. Director Berk also commented that the South Side Branch is noticing a post-lockdown change in patrons returning for inside use. Staff report not seeing as many families; this may be due to more student housing being built in that area, with families needing to move elsewhere. When more open hours are able to be staffed at this location, will need to adjust them to meet these needs. Will Rufe agrees and noted changes are also being noticed in Fountain Hill.

Terence Faul asked if Lehigh University has been involved in thinking about what library resources might serve the student community. Lehigh has a new president. Mr. Rufe said Lehigh students use our area as a “runway.” Since they are only here for about four years, the student community is hard to engage.

Solicitor Faul wondered if it makes sense to invest a capital expense at the South Side Branch. Perhaps funds would be better spent elsewhere.

Mr. Rufe observed many families are moving away from the South Side to Fountain Hill and other surrounding areas. He would like to see more data to determine best use of space and to try to address the most needs for the community.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Terence Faul requested a discussion of a proposed Agenda Policy and a copy was distributed to people present. Due to changes to the open meeting

law, boards must notify the public of agenda items three days prior to a meeting. Otherwise the board cannot take any action on those items. Since BAPL is a private nonprofit, there is some question about whether the library board must follow this change in law. The point that BAPL is 95% publicly funded was also raised.

This proposed Agenda Policy is submitted to the Governance Committee for review.

Would continue to share the agenda on the BAPL website and post a physical copy at the location of the meeting, in this case, the Main Library on Church Street. Title 65 PA C.S.A. section 709 is part of the "Sunshine Act." Will Rufe explained how Fountain Hill handles it.

The BAPL Board will also review the proposed Agenda Policy and it should be added to the agenda for the March 14 Meeting.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dale Sourbeck and seconded by Emil Signes. President Felker adjourned the meeting at 7:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Emil G. Signes (Board Secretary)