

Library Board Minutes

September 12, 2022

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Discussion began at 6:10 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld,
G. Christopher Hunt
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth

Staff – Josh Berk, Amresse Farrow, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore
Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Delia Marrero, Emil Signes, one open seat
Bethlehem Township – Dale Sourbeck
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe
Hanover Township – one open seat

A quorum was not established in order for any business to be conducted. Only five Board members were present out of a total of eleven seats. The City of Bethlehem and Hanover Township each needed to appoint one Board member.

Director Josh Berk began by sharing a report about current library usage, with focus on if library usage has returned to pre-pandemic levels. He looked primarily at the number of checked out items for each location. These numbers indicate that the Main Library and Bookmobile are almost back to pre-shutdown levels. Graphs presented predict an upward trend. The South Side Branch numbers are down by about 2,000 checkouts. The Coolidge location checkouts have increased. Coolidge continues to experience growth each month.

Director Berk continued with an update on Strategic Plan goals. Goals that have been accomplished include opening the Fountain Hill location, providing basic Spanish vocabulary training and resources for library staff, and identifying more potential community partners. Focus on representing demographic diversity for new acquisitions and some cross-training across departments have begun.

Some Strategic Plan goals are not currently feasible. The bids for an elevator and meeting room improvements at the South Side Branch came in too expensive. Additionally, first it would be prudent to address the flooding and structural problems of that building. The Friends of the Library has been disbanded. Director Berk reminded attendees that the 501(c)(3) designation for the Friends group had lapsed; in fact, this is no longer needed for the Friends, since the library already has this designation.

These updates spurred multiple discussions. First, there was talk about ideas for the South Side Branch. Will need to look at other factors, such as foot traffic and computer usage before deciding a future course of action for the Branch. Also, people wondered about where to direct volunteers interested in work formerly

done by the Friends of the Library. Committees, like Marketing and Advocacy, were suggested. Mr. Faul inquired if the Friends had any assets and if so, how those were being handled. Director Berk said they do have some money that they would like designated for a specific project. He had suggested using those funds to start an art installation, which could continue growing with future donations.

Director Berk continued the update with goals from the Strategic Plan that are in process. Marketing continues to improve after hiring Amresse Farrow. The library is working with New Bethany Ministries and the Bethlehem Area School District on a grant to place a social worker at BAPL. There is also a potential partnership with the Bethlehem YMCA for a meal program at BAPL. Additionally, he has received quotes from HR companies ranging from \$10-\$15,000 to include in the 2023 budget proposal.

Future renovations for the Main Library include new shelving, some cosmetic things and updating computers for patron usage. The matching funds for these improvements were raised when applying for the Keystone Grant, which we did not receive this time around. We are now obtaining quotes for work to be completed in 2023.

Director Berk concluded his report with a few questions concerning the best ways to communicate, and facilitate productive relationships, with all participating municipalities.

He also asked if the 990 form could be signed by proxy, since the Board has not been able to conduct business since June. Auditors were applying more pressure for this to be completed. Mr. Faul said it could be done, but all members would need to sign the document.

The next board meeting is scheduled for October 10.

Discussions ended at 6:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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