

Library Board Minutes

January 9, 2023

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted in a hybrid form of in-person and virtually attendance via Zoom.

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

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld,
G. Christopher Hunt, Rachel Leon
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, Dale Sourbeck
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Julia Brennan, Amresse Farrow, Sarah Phillips,
Sue Schirripa

Other – Karley Biggs Sebia (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Delia Marrero, one open seat
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

The Board welcomed Mr. Diacogiannis from Hanover Township. He described himself as a lifelong resident of the Township with professional experience in marketing and sales.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

1. President Felker nominated Ms. Hinnefeld to continue serving as Vice President. Motion to approve was made by Ms. Leon, seconded by Mr. Sourbeck; motion approved with Mr. Diacogiannis abstaining.
2. Mr. Sourbeck nominated Ms. Blauth to serve as Secretary. Motion to approve was made by Mr. Sourbeck, seconded by Ms. Gill; motion approved with Mr. Diacogiannis abstaining.
3. President Felker thanked the Nominating Committee for their time and efforts.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the December minutes was made by Ms. Blauth, seconded by Ms. Hinnefeld; motion approved with Mr. Diacogiannis abstaining.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

1. President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds subject to audit. Ms. Blauth asked about the negative values noted for T-shirts and candy bars. Director Berk clarified that there were two things contributing to that figure. First, there was a large order placed for T-shirts that will now be

sold to offset money spent. Additionally, the price of candy bars doubled. Consequently, that increase wiped out any previous income made. That figure should also move back to a positive as candy is sold. Motion to approve the November operating funds, subject to audit, made by Ms. Gill, seconded by Mr. Sourbeck; motion approved with Mr. Diacogiannis abstaining.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

1. Ms. Blauth asked about a figure from Director Berk's written report. She noted there was a large amount of electronic database usage reported for 2021. In 2020 it was understandable, but she wondered about the 2021 number. Director Berk explained there was a change in the databases offered, one of which skewed the data, resulting in a change in the way the data is collected and shared.
2. Director Berk reported an increase in patron behavior incidents and other safety and security concerns at the Main Library recently. There is an increase in people needing shelter from the elements with nowhere else to go. Outbursts, drug use, and arguing against library rules have been stressful for library staff. Many incidents have needed police support to be resolved. Year to year he has seen an increase in this behavior from some people visiting the library. Ms. Brennan commented there also have been situations in the Youth area. President Felker asked if there is a regular forum of communication between local agencies that can support individuals with this need. Other Board members asked if the incidents have been documented and if there was any property damage. Director Berk's answer was yes to both. Ms. Blauth suggested starting work to help with communication across agencies. Director Berk also noted the new first floor layout will help with visibility, but still the library is not meant to be a daily shelter. The Board was understanding and supportive, and also provided some local contacts who might be of help.
3. Director Berk updated the Board about Lower Saucon residents, who have lost their home library, visiting BAPL locations. He said it has been unpleasant for library staff to deliver the bad news that they cannot use BAPL either. Reactions have ranged from disappointment to anger. He confirmed that it is a local issue and not a state library issue. He also expressed feeling good about the current municipalities who are working well together with BAPL. Mr. Diacogiannis said he will definitely be sharing library information with new and existing township residents. He plans to be a vocal advocate for the library.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Ms. Leon reported about the potential sale of United Lutheran Church properties. Currently there are three interested parties, including the City. The City's potential future plans would hope to utilize some

of the property for homeless sheltering. Additionally, she suggested a good model of community cooperation between the Philadelphia Free Library and a nonprofit called Mary's House.

2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Blauth requested future letters from BAPL regarding the budget to clearly summarize information regarding the per capita amount. Specifically, it is important to note that there was no increase again this year.
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Dr. Hunt reported there was not a meeting in January, but one will be scheduled.
2. Finance Committee – Ms. Gill reported there was not a meeting in January, but one will be scheduled.
3. Governance Committee – President Felker reported there was not a meeting in January, but one will be scheduled.
4. Human Resources Committee – Ms. Gill reported nothing needed to be shared.
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Ms. Farrow reported there was not a meeting in January, but one will be scheduled.
6. Strategic Planning Committee – Ms. Blauth reported looking forward to an update at February's meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Director Berk shared news about the first floor renovation plans at the Main Library. Funds previously raised will be used, but a campaign will be needed to raise more. He thinks there is a clever design in place to eliminate blind spots. The first floor, which houses the adult collection, is due for a refresh and re-organization. Ms. Gill asked about how much more money is needed. Director Berk explained there is a \$500,000 estimated budget for this project. While there is that amount in the money market currently, he would prefer to engage donors so all the library savings are not depleted. He asked the Board to look for grant opportunities that could be utilized for this project.

Beginning at 6:58 P.M., the Board took an Executive Discussion. The meeting came out of Executive Session at 7:20 P.M. Mr. Sourbeck made a motion to adjourn and President Felker adjourned the meeting at 7:21 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Randi Blauth (Secretary)