

Library Board Minutes

June 12, 2023

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M., noting that we did not have a quorum and so would not be able to conduct official business.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Joanne Garcia, Joyce Hinnefeld
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

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

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill, G. Christopher Hunt, Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, one open seat

Note: We did not have a quorum of Board members for this meeting, so no official business was conducted. These minutes include only Courtesy of the Floor and reports.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

Susan Lawless, one of the five supervisors of Hanover Township, was present as a guest. She noted that Telly Diacogiannis has been keeping the supervisors informed about Library Board business. She would like to find a pathway to in some way replace the BAPL kiosk that is no longer available in the Hanover Township Community Center. She wonders what the possibilities are. A replacement kiosk would be pricey, based on her online search. She reported that township residents are heavy users of the library, but people have been asking when something will replace the kiosk. President Felker asked what we would need to know about Hanover Township residents' use of the library in order to make appropriate recommendations. Director Josh Berk noted that there will be a cost connected with any new alternative. He indicated that the kiosk did not get significant use; Ms. Lawless countered that it had not worked well for quite some time—but Director Berk responded that even at the height of its use, not that many books were withdrawn in this way. President Felker noted that when Jay Finnigan was a member of the BAPL Board, he expressed interest in a dedicated library space within the community center. But Ms. Lawless agreed that at present, there is no space in the community center—and, of course, creating a space and staffing it would be considerably more expensive than a new machine. Director Berk said that Mr. Diacogiannis had indicated that he had ideas about other possibilities, but Mr. Diacogiannis reported that these were just ideas of his own, not ones that had been discussed among the township leadership.

Ms. Lawless acknowledged that there was talk, at one time, about using one of the community center rooms, but with the return, and possible expansion, of the preschool program, this is no longer an option. President Felker agreed that a new space would be prohibitive, cost-wise, and so this is not on the table for the Board.

Mr. Diacogiannis wondered if there might be other options or technologies beyond the kiosk. Ms. Lawless said she is pretty confident that a new space will not be an option; if anything, there would be a desire for a replacement kiosk. Again, it would be helpful to the BAPL Board to have more concrete information about residents' wishes here. Ms. Lawless responded that she hopes it might be possible to replace the old kiosk with something that is more "user-friendly." She will report back on what kind of space will be available for such a machine. Director Berk noted that a 24-hour machine, placed outside the building, might be another option.

Director Berk said he did send some material to Mr. Diacogiannis about options in the past; he will supplement this material, as needed, with updated information. He repeated his concerns, however, that the previous kiosk was not heavily used. He noted that what people typically want from libraries are things like meeting space, computers, programming including storytimes for children, etc. Another option might be spending more on staffing, so that someone could travel to the township to provide some of these services.

Ms. Lawless suggested a survey of Hanover Township residents. Director Berk noted that he supports this, but stressed that the survey would need to ask responders to prioritize—since it will not be possible to provide everything. President Felker suggested that Ms. Lawless stay in touch with members of the Board about this issue and various possibilities, perhaps beginning with a proposed resident survey.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

No quorum.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

No quorum.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported on an ongoing series of U.S. citizenship classes at the South Side Branch, which culminated recently in one of the students officially becoming a U.S. citizen. In his written report, Director Berk reported on staff development, including a session on homelessness and mental health services, as requested by library staff members. He also noted a United Way 211 display on essential community services, now available downstairs at the

library. Since reopening following the first-floor renovations (and since the weather has been dry and pleasant), there have not been problems like those in the winter, with unhoused people causing disruptions in the library. BAPL has applied for a Community Recovery Fund (City of Bethlehem) grant to cover the presence of a social worker on the library premises and increase security.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Director Berk and Amresse Farrow reported that they are close to launching the first step in DEI staff training.
2. Finance Committee – Chair Jane Gill and Director Berk met to discuss the state of the operating budget, which is healthy at the moment. The capital budget has decreased as a result of the recent renovations. They talked about what comes next, such as fundraising to replenish capital funds. President Felker brought up the Governance Committee’s plan to set a required percentage of donations that will go into the endowment and asked if the Finance Committee would make a recommendation for this number. Another Governance Committee topic for Finance Committee members to consider: the forgiveness of fines and fees for lost books charged to young library users.
3. Governance Committee – The committee met last week and will bring forward a new policy on board committee membership and leadership at our next Board meeting. The committee will meet again in September.
4. Human Resources Committee – Director Berk and Ms. Marrero met to discuss the creation of a charter for this committee.
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Ms. Hinnefeld reported on the committee’s meeting on June 6. The committee is a lively and engaged group who are eager to support and promote the library. Director Berk shared data on library use that had been requested by committee members, and members discussed ways in which they might help spread the word about the library’s services and events, at community events and in community centers, businesses, etc. Plans are underway for Library Card

Sign-up Month in September, as well as a possible “apple tasting” fundraiser, in partnership with Scholl Orchards, in the fall.

Ms. Farrow also noted recent work on projects connected with BAPL’s community partners—e.g., BAPL presence at Juneteenth and Pride Month events and Iron Pigs games, along with Wind Creek gaming vouchers and an Edge Restaurant curbside meal fundraiser. She also made note of the library’s increasingly successful book sales.

6. Strategic Planning Committee – none

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Joyce Hinnefeld. President Felker adjourned the meeting at 6:57 P.M., urging all members to attend our next meeting in July so that we have a quorum and can proceed with Board business.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Hinnefeld (Vice-President filling in for the Secretary)