

## **Library Board Minutes**

March 13, 2023

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted in a hybrid form of in-person at the South Side Branch and virtual attendance via Zoom.

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Joyce Hinnefeld, G. Christopher Hunt, Delia Marrero  
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth  
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe  
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Julia Brennan, Amresse Farrow, Dana Hoy, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore, Brad Rogers, Sue Schirripa, Stephanie Steinly, Christine Wieder

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

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill, Rachel Leon, one open seat  
Bethlehem Township – one open seat

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:**

1. South Side Adult Services Librarian Christine Wieder shared about the South Side Branch's lunch program and how they are providing enrichment along with food. She talked about the ongoing book sale. Ms. Wieder said that they are coordinating free adult dinners on Tuesdays and Thursdays with the YMCA through the month of April. She mentioned they are looking into reorganizing the adult collection by genre at the South Side Branch versus the Dewey Decimal System. She reported things have been busier at the South Side Branch since the Main Library has limited availability.

Board members were saddened to learn of Mr. Sourbeck's death since the last Board meeting. President Felker will coordinate a donation on behalf of the Board members. Funds will be given to the Johnston Estate as requested in his obituary.

This began a discussion about filling the now vacant seat for the Bethlehem Township representative. Ms. Blauth reported it is too early to know who will fill that spot.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Motion to approve the February minutes was made by Ms. Marrero, seconded by Mr. Rufe; motion approved unanimously.

## **APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:**

1. President Felker called for a motion to approve the operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the January operating funds, subject to audit, made by Mr. Rufe, seconded by Ms. Hinnefeld; motion approved unanimously.

## **DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:**

Director Berk began by thanking Dr. Hunt for the Black History month program he hosted in February. Director Berk also updated the Board on the Main Library renovation project. There is new carpeting down and painting has started. Some furniture delivery has been delayed, but the project is on track. Some staff have temporarily moved locations to help manage increased patron traffic at the other library locations. He gave high praise to Buildings Supervisor Richard Ruiz and Circulation Manager Delia Paredes for their expertise in managing staff and thoughtful planning amid the upheaval. Ms. Blauth inquired about the Lehigh Valley Book Festival scheduled. Director Berk confirmed it is still planned for Saturday, March 25, at the Main Library. The children's character Bluey, Rupert Holmes and Maria Rodale are among the special guests making appearances. Friday events are at Let's Play Books. Saturday's events are at the Main Library and Sunday events will occur at ArtsQuest.

Returning to the renovation topic, Mr. Rufe and Ms. Hinnefeld offered to plan a grand reopening event once upgrades are complete. Director Berk agreed, asking them to wait to choose a date until the work is closer to completion.

Director Berk also reported on a new donation concept being implemented at BAPL. The idea is to cultivate "sustaining donors." For example, patrons will be encouraged to donate five dollars a month.

Ms. Hinnefeld broached the subject of the City grants, that Ms. Leon had reported about being available through the American Rescue Plan. Director Berk noted that an application is already in process. The majority of this request will be used to increase the safety and security at the City of Bethlehem locations.

More funds still need to be raised to cover remaining renovation costs. Board members thought perhaps something for existing donors to preview the new space.

Ms. Marrero asked for confirmation of partnering with City social workers and other community groups to support the safety and security initiatives. Director Berk confirmed they will be asking local groups for letters of support. He mentioned groups such as Lehigh Valley Street Medicine and New Bethany Ministries. He illustrated his point with a story about the first day of renovation work at the Main Library. There was concern for recent regulars once the first floor was closed. The Bethlehem Health Bureau and Police

Department were on hand, along with City social workers. The professionals were able to connect with people who now could not stay inside the library. Ms. Hinnefeld encouraged sharing this story of community cooperation.

Returning to the sustaining donor concept, Mr. Rufe asked if there would be a “set it and forget it” option. Director Berk confirmed there will be. Ms. Marrero suggested an online fundraising app called Givebutter. She also supported the idea of telling BAPL’s success story of connecting social workers with patrons needing those services. Ms. Blauth mentioned Easton Area Public Library, having similar issues with increased tensions between people patronizing that library and Ms. Brennan concurred. President Felker concluded the discussion, encouraging everyone to highlight the narrative of the library's social commitment for everyone's safety along with the success story of facilitating connection to social supports, thus requiring less police involvement.

### **COMMUNITY REPORTS:**

1. City of Bethlehem – President Felker reported a current candidate from the City is moving forward for the open Board seat.
2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Blauth reported earlier about the Board member vacancy. Board members thought perhaps Jeff Warren might be interested in serving for the township, since he had previously served for Hanover Township and now resides in Bethlehem Township.
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that the library kiosk at the Community Center has not been working and that he has been investigating possible replacements with Director Berk.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – President Felker requested a decision on a chairperson. Dr. Hunt reported the committee met on January 25. They planned a Black History Month program for February. They also were looking at DEI training quotes to present to the Board.

The FACES International quote is \$6,000 total: Phase 1 is \$4,500, Phase 2 is \$1,500, and Phase 3 is quoted as \$250 an hour.

The National Diversity Council quote is \$10,740 total: Phase 1 is \$5,540, Phase 2 is \$5,200, and hourly rates range from \$230-\$475 an hour.

Board discussion points included: One group is located in Houston, the other is a local group; Dr. Hunt reminded Board members how funding for DEI

training will come from the Yoshida Endowment Fund. History of deciding on a DEI training group for BAPL was discussed.

President Felker called for a motion to accept the FACES International quote of \$4,500 for Phase 1, a subsequent \$1,500 for Phase 2, subject to counsel's review. Motion was made by Dr. Hunt; seconded by Ms. Blauth; it passed unanimously.

At the conclusion of the report, Dr. Hunt volunteered to be chairperson for the DEI Committee.

2. Finance Committee – none
3. Governance Committee – President Felker reported they met today to look at the proposed Social Media Policy. This discussion was tabled for a potential vote at the next meeting after Board members have had time to review it. They also discussed committee membership and revisions to the library's Patron Behavior Policy.
4. Human Resources Committee – none
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Ms. Hinnefeld began her report, asking if this committee should be chaired by a Board member. She also proposed discussion of changing the name to Advocacy and Outreach, since the library has hired a marketing professional, Ms. Farrow. Mr. Diacogiannis will join this committee, and they plan to meet again next month before the next Board meeting.
6. Strategic Planning Committee – Director Berk reported that the Board has some tasks that are due. These include a Board self-assessment that should be done now along with succession plans for Board members. Mr. Rufe will join this committee and take on these tasks. He will begin to research for completion, as soon as possible.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dr. Hunt, and President Felker adjourned the meeting at 7:14 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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