

## **Library Board Minutes**

January 13, 2025

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

Vice President Joyce Hinnefeld called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Nicole Gencarelli, Joyce Hinnefeld, Christie Jacobsen, Hilary Kwiatek, Ron Williams  
Bethlehem Township – Carolyn Harper, Peggy Salvatore  
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe  
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Mary Catherine Bluder, Sarah Phillips, Sue Schirripa  
Other – Alison Diefenderfer (Bethlehem Township alternate),  
Lauren Phillips

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – G. Christopher Hunt

### **BOARD MEMBER VACANCIES:**

Since all vacancies were filled, the meeting began with a round of introductions.

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

Vice President Hinnefeld extended her thanks to Library staff for their continued good work. Especially, the dedication and flexibility demonstrated since the Covid-19 shutdown and throughout renovations at the Main Library. Director Josh Berk highlighted some of the renovations for the benefit of the newest Board members. He added that the new meeting rooms are well used. The main floor renovation improved visibility of staff and for staff in that space. Director Berk also gave a short history of renovations under his purview, including the Youth Library moving upstairs, the Cohen Rooms (a flexible meeting space), Studio 11 (a recording studio), with the most recent being the main floor renovation.

Director Berk also shared an inquiry from a patron. He had expected this person to show up for this meeting, but since they were not present, Director Berk wanted to make the Board aware of continued patron interest in auto-renewal of items checked out. The current library software system does have this option, thus there is potential that it could be utilized. This patron also wondered about BAPL implementing fine-free borrowing. Ms. Felker mentioned the Governance Committee has this topic on their discussion list, also.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

1. Ms. Felker and Mr. Rufe, the Nominating Committee, shared the proposed slate of officers to serve in 2025:

Joyce Hinnefeld as President  
Will Rufe as Vice President  
Peggy Salvatore as Treasurer  
Anne Felker as Secretary

Mr. Rufe made a motion to approve the nominated slate of officers, seconded by Ms. Felker; the motion approved unanimously.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Mr. Diacogiannis noted a correction needed for his Township report and revised wording was agreed upon. Motion to approve the December minutes as amended was made by Ms. Felker, seconded by Mr. Diacogiannis; motion approved with Ms. Jacobsen, Ms. Kwiatek, Mr. Rufe, and Mr. Williams abstaining.

## **APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:**

1. Director Berk focused attention on a generous donation of \$200,000 from the Estate of Barbara and Dave Roper. For the benefit of newer Board members, he gave a brief explanation of the library board financial reports they receive each month. These numbers are meant to be a "snapshot" he explained with visual examples shared on screen. He noted that BAPL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, not a branch of the local government. When discussion circled back to the fine-free library concept, Ms. Salvatore noted how fines amount to income of \$45,000. Discussion also included considering fine-free youth library cards. Director Berk provided history of past fine forgiveness through community fundraisers. Many Board members like the community involvement these fundraisers foster. Others pointed out how fundraisers can also raise awareness of BAPL activity and act as marketing/advocacy for the library. Large donations such as that from the Roper Estate can create community interest, but are best presented carefully as allowing the Library to go above and beyond the tax dollar support, so they are not misunderstood as a replacement for the financial support of the municipalities. Board members asked for a differentiation between the Buy-A-Book campaign and the Annual Appeal letter.

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

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

Director Berk began his report calling everyone's attention to the *Morning Call* January 4th edition, where sweet photos of kids reading to therapy dogs in the Youth Services department were on the front page.

He continued with a quick overview of his written report for newer Board members. He reminded everyone that the numbers compared to the previous year's are skewed due to the South Side Branch being closed and the Main Library renovations. He also shared that the high staff turnover situation continues to be an issue. He brought new members up to speed with the Bookmobile art design by a Pennsylvania artist working on a wrap for the outside of the bookmobile. Zachariah OHora, author and illustrator, also did the art for Books on the Hill. He has a new show on PBS called *CARL THE COLLECTOR*, but plans a "evergreen" design so it will not just be Carl. He also described the "satellite" locations of Coolidge and Fountain Hill's Books on the Hill.

## **COMMUNITY REPORTS:**

President Hinnefeld explained how community reports are shared as needed.

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Salvatore reported that there was a great write-up in the Bethlehem Township newsletter about the BAPL. She also shared a good perspective after seeing a Los Angeles news reporter get emotional while reporting on the fire in the Pacific Palisades. The reporter said, "this library is the heart of the community." Ms. Salvatore reminded everyone how BAPL is also impacting this community and doing good at levels that we may not be aware of.

Ms. Harper inquired about having the bookmobile for an event at the Bethlehem Township Community Center. Director Berk shared that the schedule for the bookmobile is fixed and pretty full, but offered other options. The outreach van or the book bike are fun for events.

3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that since many residents are asking him about the new bookmobile, he posted on the local resident group with photos and information about where to find it. He also put out a teaser about how it will look different soon and to watch for the new artwork. He was sure to mention with township supervisors that the bookmobile was purchased with donation funding that had been organized by library staff members. The book room for their community center planning work continues. He envisions it as a designated area to find a few items and a central location to find BAPL information. Mr. Diacogiannis has also

continued keeping up the conversation about the library regularly with the township supervisor. He feels this keeps the relationship on a good footing and results in a smoother conversation around increased library funding.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Before Committee discussion began, information for new Board members about the Library Board portal was shared.

Governance Committee – Ms. Felker reported that the language for an amendment relating to alternate Board members needs to be added to the Board's Bylaws. Topic was tabled until February's meeting.

In place of other Committee reports this month, the Board discussed aspects of the current committee structure they would like to adjust for how the Board wants to function. Director Berk pulled up the current committee list, along with descriptions and President Hinnefeld began discussion about simplifying the current committee structure.

For the Finance Committee, the treasurer is the chairperson. The treasurer will pull together an ad hoc group when they deem it to be necessary. Board members want to simplify the description and remove any overlapping language with the Governance Committee description.

The Strategic Plan Committee was discussed next. Board members agree the next plan should be made for five years, which will take us to 2030. Director Berk mentioned he spoke with Cathi Alloway, who said a refresh plan should be possible. Ms. Alloway will send questions to help determine the most appropriate next step.

For the Human Resources Committee, the vice president serves as the chairperson. They can also utilize an ad hoc group, as needed, since there is not necessarily monthly work involved. Board members want to simplify the description and remove any overlapping language with the Governance Committee description.

Board members decided to keep the Governance Committee description as is, since rewriting the descriptions for Financial and Human Resources should remove any overlap with the Governance committee responsibilities.

Potential changes for the Marketing and Advocacy Committee were numerous. Board members agreed this committee's role needs clarification and needs strong leadership. There was discussion about if "advocacy" should be part of the name. Could add "communications" or "PR" in place of advocacy, since Board members are advocating for the library as part of their roles and responsibilities. Director Berk said there is not a budgeted position for marketing at this time. A Library staff committee is managing the daily operations, which is currently the most active part of marketing. Board

members also noted that community committee members are interested in planning larger events and galas for fundraising.

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee wrapped up this topic. Board members are considering combining DEI with the Strategic Plan committee. Since it is a large part of the plan, perhaps this would help keep the committee structure more streamlined.

President Hinnefeld recapped the committee structure discussion topics. She requested that Board members send her email about where they would like to serve prior to the next scheduled meeting in February.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Board members discussed continuing monthly meetings or reducing the number of meetings to maybe seven times per year. Something more than every other month was generally agreed as desirable. Fewer large group meetings could potentially encourage better attendance at Board meetings. Committees could meet during an “off month” and report during a meeting month. Director Berk reminded Board members that the Bylaws allow the Board to choose a meeting schedule that fits current needs.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Felker. President Hinnefeld adjourned the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Felker (Secretary) and Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff)