

Library Board Minutes

October 14, 2024

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 discussion at 6:07 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Nicole Gencarelli, Joyce Hinnefeld

Bethlehem Township – Peggy Salvatore

Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips, Sue Schirripa

Other – Alison Diefenderfer (Bethlehem Township alternate),

Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill, G. Christopher Hunt, Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero

Bethlehem Township – Carolyn Harper

Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the September minutes was made by Mr. Diacogiannis, seconded by Ms. Felker; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

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

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported that in the month of August, Musikfest brought schedule changes to the Main Library. In October, there have been disruptions to the South Side Branch schedule. Due to staffing issues and rapid turnover, the Branch has been closed to patrons. A new Branch manager just started, but will need additional support staff hired and trained to open again at the end of October. Board questions included:

Will this affect anything between BAPL and the state of Pennsylvania?

Do the outdated salary ranges (10 years old) affect these staffing issues?

Director Berk explained the need to notify the State and that the district consultant had already taken care of it. The temporary Branch closure should not affect any State level funding.

Director Berk also replied that, yes, he is certain the outdated salaries are contributing to the hiring difficulties this year. There will be more discussion on this topic during the budget discussion session later in this meeting.

The Sherlock Holmes fundraising event was a success. A first edition of *Great Expectations* and a signed copy of *The Stark Munro Letters* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were among the high-priced items auctioned off.

Next, Director Berk reported that the new bookmobile is currently being worked on at the city garage. The height needs to be adjusted to fit in the bookmobile garage bay. The total height including the HVAC unit on the roof was not included in the original specs shared before purchase. Director Berk is excited to have a Pennsylvania artist working on art that will wrap the outside. Zachariah OHora, author and illustrator, did the art for Books on the Hill. He has a new show on PBS called *CARL THE COLLECTOR*. This relationship may result in a sponsorship or donation from PBS. The inside of the bookmobile is all set. The outside needs to fit in the garage and become specific to BAPL.

Director Berk concluded by reporting that he and a committee of BAPL Staff will manage the marketing for the library for the time being, at least until the end of the year.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that Hanover Township had a good Fall Fest on October 5. He was pleased that Regina Kochmaruk, Head of Outreach, worked with him at this event. They set up two tables and Ms. Kochmaruk signed 15 people up for new library cards. The other table had craft projects available, which kept children entertained while he and Ms. Kochmaruk “talked up” BAPL with interested adults.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Director Berk shared there had been a meeting scheduled for today, but it needed to be rescheduled.

2. Finance Committee – Director Berk reported he has been working on the budget proposal for 2025. Also the 990 tax form was sent out and needs board approval. He also shared a letter from Maher Duessel, CPAs. Mr. Diacogiannis may contact them about language used related to the Library for the City of Bethlehem. BAPL is not a “public entity” according to the state of Pennsylvania, but rather a “component of the city.”

Director Berk also shared that Lauren Phillips is the new library accountant, replacing Elyse Geyer.

3. Governance Committee – Ms. Felker reported that this committee had not met, but plans to this month. Also reminded everyone that Ms. Gencarelli and Ms. Salvatore have joined this committee.
4. Human Resources Committee – No report, but Ms. Hinnefeld inquired if Director Berk’s evaluation had ever been finalized. There was also a Library Board self-evaluation that was in process. Ms. Hinnefeld will direct these questions to Ms. Marrero.
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that he is hesitant to take on more leadership with this committee for various reasons, for example work with starting up a Book Room at Hanover Township. Board members hope more group committee work can occur in the new year. Ms. Hinnefeld shared that many people have expressed interest in a repeat of last year’s Apple Tasting Event, perhaps consider making this an annual fundraising event.
6. Strategic Planning Committee – No report, but Director Berk will have an update before the end of the year. He mentioned that there are “next step” options to consider as this current plan comes to an end. The possibility of again working with Cathi Alloway received a positive response, even if it was managed virtually.

OLD BUSINESS:

Director Berk reported working towards a proposed 2025 Budget for BAPL. If the budget increase requests come through, he calculates there will be around \$135,000 in additional funds to work with for 2025. He will provide specific details shortly, but in general the bulk of additional funding would be used towards increasing employee salaries and increasing the materials budget, and to offset inflationary expenses.

Mr. Diacogiannis shared there will be a meeting on October 30 at 8 A.M. at Moravian University outlining the City’s budgeting process. Other Board members understood this to be an informational meeting put on by the Chamber of Commerce. Bethlehem City Council approves a budget closer to the end of the year. Director Berk explained that Ms. Leon is Council Liaison to the Library Board and although she has not been to a Library Board

meeting this year, can advise regarding the budget process and will advocate for the library at budget time. Director Berk has been working closely with the City budget office as well to explain the need for additional library funding. Bethlehem Township and Hanover Township budgets will be up for voting before the City's budget is approved. Mr. Diacogiannis noted that the increase for library service has been included in the proposed 2025 budget for Hanover Township.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Salvatore. Vice President Hinnefeld adjourned the meeting at 6:57 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Delia Marrero (Secretary)