

## **Library Board Minutes**

September 9, 2024

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

President Jane Gill called the meeting discussion at 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Nicole Gencarelli, Jane Gill,  
Joyce Hinnefeld, G. Christopher Hunt  
Bethlehem Township – Carolyn Harper, Peggy Salvatore  
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips, Erin Poore, Sue Schirripa  
Other – Alison Diefenderfer (Bethlehem Township alternate),  
Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero  
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

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

1. Attendees welcomed Nicole Gencarelli, a new Board member representing the City of Bethlehem. Helpful tips were shared, and she will soon have access to the Board portal on the Library's website.
2. Ms. Hinnefeld inquired about the timing of the Annual Appeal letter and suggested having a patron or youth patron write part of it. Director Berk said letters are usually sent in late October or early November.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Motion to approve the July minutes was made by Ms. Hinnefeld, seconded by Ms. Harper; motion approved with Ms. Gencarelli abstaining.

### **APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:**

1. President Gill called for a motion to approve the June and July operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the June and July operating funds, subject to audit, made by Ms. Felker, seconded by Ms. Harper; motion approved unanimously.

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

Director Berk reported things were a little slower in August with Musikfest affecting hours at the Main Library and Summer Reading programming ending. July, however, was very busy and a little more stressful than usual, since the longtime Head of Youth Services retired. He explained how two subsequent new hires accepted that position and then left for other

opportunities soon afterwards. A third new hire is expected to begin later this month. She is currently the director of the Emmaus Library and will join BAPL as the Head of Youth Services. Additionally, the most recent South Side Branch Manager left after one year for another opportunity. Summer Reading with no managers at either site was challenging, but experienced staff made it successful. A long discussion followed with Board members asking how much was the salary amount a factor in people leaving. Also if there are other opportunities to be an attractive workplace by looking at employee benefits and paid time off. Additionally, they suggested sharing job postings with Board members to pass on and publicize through their local communication. Director Berk was not comfortable quantifying departure reasons, but thought salary must play a role. He noted the pay scale that BAPL is using is 10 years old, should be updated, and that the 2025 Budget will be discussed later in the meeting.

Director Berk next announced that a “new to BAPL” bookmobile was purchased with fundraising monies and savings. The vehicle is here now and at the City’s garage for some minor changes before it will go out into the community. He shared how a local company’s quote came in too high. Since that company had also not built a bookmobile before, Director Berk decided to go with this used bookmobile opportunity. Fundraising to support the new bookmobile will continue. Moreover, a \$5,000 donation from American Fence and Flag is being used to encourage more donations as a matching amount from library supporters.

Director Berk shared the news that there will be no Trunk-or-Treat event this year, since there is simply not enough library staff to organize and support the event. The South Side Branch has also been closed to the public until there is enough library staff for coverage.

Board members were enthusiastic about promoting the new bookmobile. Proposals such as an appearance in local Halloween parades as “The Boo Mobile” as in years past and the City of Bethlehem’s Tree Lighting were mentioned.

## **COMMUNITY REPORTS:**

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Harper reported that she will not be at next month’s meeting. Ms. Diefenderfer will be in attendance. Also requested that Ms. Diefenderfer be added to the library board email distribution list so she can stay current.
3. Fountain Hill – none

4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that Director Berk and Mark Hudson, Township Manager, will be meeting this week. Mr. Diacogiannis also spoke with Ms. Kochmaruk about some Outreach ideas in Hanover Township.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Dr. Hunt reported on and shared a flier for an upcoming World Stories, craft and story time, with Dr. Claudia Mesa from Moravian University.
2. Finance Committee – none
3. Governance Committee – Ms. Felker reported that this committee needs more help. Ms. Salvatore agreed to join.
4. Human Resources Committee – none
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that he planned to connect with Ms. Farrow. Director Berk shared that Ms. Farrow will be leaving BAPL for another opportunity. Director Berk will manage marketing for the library in the interim and currently has an intern to help in this area too. Director Berk highlighted the Sherlock Holmes event happening on September 28, sponsored by Elliot Tracey-State Farm Insurance. Excitement will build during the day with a “vintage” book sale, then the ticketed event will be held from 5-7 P.M. The evening event will include an auction of a signed copy of *The Stark Munro Letters* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and an actor portraying Sherlock. Board members were curious about how BAPL obtains rare books. Director Berk praised book sale facilitator, Laurel Stone, saying she knows what she is looking for. Ms. Stone also manages a large team of volunteers to make the book sales happen. He noted how some rare books are received as a directed donation to the Library. Mr. Diacogiannis suggested sending fliers or information to local bookstores to promote this event.

Mr. Diacogiannis also asked for more help with this committee. Discussion occurred about how to include community members more, shaping how it functions and possible new leadership. Discussion was tabled until next month. President Gill encouraged members to look at the Board section of the website and think about if they can contribute more.

6. Strategic Planning Committee – none

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

Mr. Diacogiannis started a discussion about approaching new businesses in the area to talk about BAPL. Other Board members added thoughts on asking for grant support, brainstorming ideas for future strategic plans, and continuing ongoing community relationship building.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Proposed 2025 Budget discussion began with Director Berk reporting that planning is heading in the right direction with an expected increase in local funding. He wants to invest more in library staffing and plans to add another position next year. To make hiring more successful, the current pay scale needs to be updated. The current pay scale is 10 years old and not competitive. He recommended the Human Resources committee look into accomplishing this update.

He expects most expenses will remain flat, although there are some inflation related increases predicted for 2025. Director Berk will share a draft budget for the October Board meeting.

Ms. Harper and Ms. Salvatore asked for advice on encouraging support for the BAPL with their township commissioners. Other members suggested how often being present at township and city meetings is a good reminder for supporting the Library.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Felker. President Gill adjourned the meeting at 7:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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