

Library Board Minutes

February 10, 2025

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

President Joyce Hinnefeld called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Joyce Hinnefeld, Christie Jacobsen, Ron Williams
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 – Nicole Gencarelli, Hilary Kwiatek, one open seat
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Ms. Jacobsen noted a correction needed for spelling of her name in two places of the draft January Board minutes. Ms. Harper and Ms. Salvatore noted corrections needed for switching who reported what during the Bethlehem Township community report. Motion to approve the January minutes as amended made by Ms. Harper, seconded by Ms. Salvatore; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

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

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported on end-of-year numbers for 2024. When looking at the most recent past years for comparison, he reminded Board members of renovation work that occurred at the Main Library in 2023, the South Side Branch being closed for parts of 2024, and the Bookmobile also out of service for a while in 2024. Director Berk highlighted how Bethlehem Township's Coolidge location continues to show growth under all circumstances. He also

noted that the use of Kanopy has increased. He was also surprised to see a slight drop in e-book usage, so that is something to watch.

Director Berk reported how hiring continues for the South Side Branch. Once staff is hired, hours there will return to normal for that location.

Ms. Harper inquired about children's programming numbers being down in 2024. Director Berk explained that the former head of youth services retired at the Main Library, followed by a lot of turnover. Lisa Underwood was eventually hired and is providing stability and leadership in the position. Youth Services staff kept regular activities going before Ms. Underwood was hired and it can be expected that programming will increase now that full staffing is again in place.

President Hinnefeld reordered the meeting agenda items at this point, to deal with Old and New Business ahead of Community and Committee reports. The goal was to ensure adequate time for discussion and voting on business needing attention.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. President Hinnefeld called for a vote on the proposed amendment to the Bylaws regarding Alternate Trustee Policy. Please see Attachment One. Board discussion included:

Ms. Jacobsen inquired if alternate representative names will be shared? Yes, in addition to Ms. Diefenderfer for Bethlehem Township, Mike Prendeville is the alternate for Hanover Township.

When serving as the Board member, an alternate can vote or choose to abstain, regardless of prior Board meeting attendance.

It is the responsibility of Board members to keep their alternate representatives up to date on current Board business.

After the amendment is added to the Bylaws, alternate Board members will receive Library Board communications.

President Hinnefeld called for a vote; the amendment was approved unanimously.

2. President Hinnefeld distributed the 2025 Committee Board Member listing. She explained that now there will be two adjustments to the committee structure. The Finance Committee will consist of the Board Treasurer, who then has the ability to utilize more people on an ad hoc basis. The Human Resources Committee will consist of the Board Vice President also with the ability to utilize more people on an ad hoc basis. Potential changes for a

committee structure overhaul can be considered as part of strategic planning during this year.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. President Hinnefeld began discussion on the Young Lungs at Play Policy that was earlier shared with Board members. Please see Attachment Two. This policy addresses people smoking close to the Library's outer walls and entrances. Solicitor Faul suggested changing language to "areas adjacent" to the Library. He also suggested adding "as of the date below" so the policy can be followed and enforced, regardless of signage posting timelines. Board discussion included:

The greater plaza area is defined by the City as "a pedestrian mall."

The City may wish to update their plaza/pedestrian mall behavior ordinance language, if so recommended.

Ms. Felker moved to approve the Young Lungs at Play Policy with both Solicitor Faul's suggested language changes added, Ms. Salvatore seconded; the motion approved unanimously.

2. A proposed Tuition Reimbursement Policy for Library Staff members was shared to be added to the next Board meeting agenda. Please see Attachment Three. Ms. Felker gave an overview of the details. Board discussion included:

Changing wording to clarify up to \$10,000 maximum reimbursement for employees that graduate with a Masters degree in Library Science or Information Science.

Specifying that class time is expected to be completed outside of regularly scheduled staff hours.

Ms. Felker will make discussed changes to the proposed policy for the next Board meeting.

3. President Hinnefeld shared proposed meeting months, instead of almost every month of the year. Board members were asked to consider Board meetings to be scheduled in January, March, May, July, September, October and December. There would not be scheduled Board meetings in February, April, June, August and November. Scheduled meeting dates could be changed for the remainder of 2025. The Board plans to revisit the topic during their March meeting.
4. There was discussion about a new strategic plan or refreshed strategic plan, including a Board retreat. After speaking with Director Berk, Cathi Alloway estimated a strategic plan refresh cost of \$5,000 to \$6,000. President

Hinnefeld recommends the Strategic Plan committee get up-to-date on the previous plan for further discussion.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Dr. Hunt wrote to resign his Board position due to his wish to spend more time with his newly growing family. Board members were grateful for his time and expertise given for the good of the Library. Ms. Felker moved to accept his resignation, Ms. Salvatore seconded; motion approved unanimously. Director Berk will forward his letter to the City and request another person be appointed to serve.
2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Harper reported after speaking with Township officials, that she plans to put up posters and have flyers available in the days prior to the Bookmobile's scheduled visit to their community center. She wondered who to work with for details and design elements. Director Berk will message the staff marketing group to begin working on Bethlehem Township specific flyer and poster.
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that he was thankful for the write-up about BAPL in Hanover's community newsletter. He likes to have the Library mentioned in some positive way every time that newsletter is published.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None, due to the annual Board member committee reorganization. President Hinnefeld asked all committees to decide on a committee head and/or a committee convener, who would schedule their meeting times.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Salvatore. President Hinnefeld adjourned the meeting at 7:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Attachment One Alternate Trustee Policy

When a participating municipality appoints an alternate board representative in addition to their regular representative(s), the alternate is fully authorized to act as a board member in the absence of the regular board representative. Alternate board members need not attend any board meeting when the regular representative(s) of their municipality is/are present.

ARTICLE III TRUSTEES

Section 1. Number of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall be comprised of Trustees appointed by the participating municipalities in accord with the terms of the compacts existing by and among the BAPL and the participating municipalities. The Board of Trustees currently consists of eleven (11) trustees. At the current time, seven (7) trustees are appointed by the City of Bethlehem, two (2) trustees are appointed by Bethlehem Township, one (1) trustee is appointed by Hanover Township, and one (1) trustee is appointed by the Borough of Fountain Hill. Such appointees shall be the Primary Trustee(s) for that municipality.

Section 2. Selection. Individual Trustees shall be appointed by each participating municipality in accord with the terms of the compact with that municipality, and no municipality shall have the right to approve or reject any individual Trustee appointed by another municipality.

Section 3. Alternate Trustee. Each of the Participating Municipalities may additionally appoint an Alternate Trustee for each Primary Trustee. The same Alternate Trustee may be appointed for multiple Trustees if the appointing municipality has the authority to appoint more than one Trustee. An Alternate Trustee shall serve in the event that the named Primary Trustee for that municipality does not attend a meeting of the Board of Trustees. If a Primary Trustee is absent from a meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Alternate Trustee for that municipality shall be entitled to participate in the deliberations of the Board of Trustees and exercise all powers of a trustee that the Primary trustee could exercise, including voting on any measure which comes before the Board of Trustees at such meeting. An Alternate Trustee shall be entitled to one vote for each absent Trustee for which the Alternate Trustee has been appointed. Notice of all meetings of the Board of Trustees shall be provided to all Primary Trustees and to each Alternate Trustee.

Section 4. Term of Office. Individual Trustees shall serve no more than three (3) consecutive three (3) year terms.

Section 5. Resignations. Any member of the BAPL Board of Trustees may resign at any time by giving written notice to (1) the municipality that appointed the Board Trustee, and (2) the President of the BAPL Board of Trustees, with a copy of the notice to be provided to the Library Director. Such resignation shall be effective as of the date of the receipt of such notice by the President of the BAPL Board of Trustees, or at any later time specified in the notice and, unless otherwise specified, the acceptance of such resignation by the BAPL Board of Trustees shall not be necessary to make it effective.

Section 6. Vacancies. Any vacancy on the Board of Trustees shall be filled only by the municipality which appointed the Trustee member who is no longer willing or able to serve as a Trustee.

Section 7. Fees. Trustees shall serve without compensation for services rendered as a member of the BAPL Board of Trustees.

Attachment Two
Young Lungs at Play Policy

Bethlehem Area Public Library Policy Prohibiting the Use of Tobacco on Library Premises, 2025

A POLICY OF THE BETHLEHEM AREA PUBLIC LIBRARY (BAPL), PROHIBITING THE USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES ON ALL LIBRARY PROPERTY TO PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY.

WHEREAS, secondhand smoke is a significant health hazard, contributing to over 50,000 deaths annually among non-smokers, and poses risks to children and adults alike;

WHEREAS, tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable death, killing more Americans than alcohol, drugs, homicide, and accidents combined;

WHEREAS, the Library seeks to promote public health by ensuring a clean and safe environment for its patrons and staff, free from tobacco-related risks;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Bethlehem Area Public Library Board of Trustees enacts the following:

Section 1: Tobacco-Free Library Property

The use of any tobacco product or electronic cigarette is prohibited on all Bethlehem Area Public Library properties, including but not limited to:

- The Main Library located at 11 W. Church St., Bethlehem, PA
- The South Branch located at 400 Webster St., Bethlehem, PA
- Outdoor areas immediately adjacent to a library structure, including the entryway and porch of the Main Library, and the entryway, stairs, and porch of the South Branch.

“Tobacco product” includes any substance made or derived from tobacco or nicotine, whether smoked, heated, chewed, absorbed, or inhaled, as well as electronic nicotine delivery systems like e-cigarettes, vapes, or similar devices.

Section 2: Signage

Appropriate signage will be posted on all BAPL properties to inform the public of this policy and delineate tobacco-free zones but shall be effective as of the date set forth below regardless of whether the signs have been posted as of that date.

Section 3: Enforcement

Violators of this policy will receive:

- A verbal warning for the first offense.
- Repeated violations may result in a ban from all BAPL properties for a period of time, determined at the discretion of library management.

This policy will be enforced by library staff and, if necessary, local law enforcement.

Section 4: Community Notification

This policy was adopted at a public meeting held on [date]

Section 5: Effective Date

This policy will go into effect **TBD 2025**.

Signed on this [date] by the Board of Trustees:

President, BAPL Board of Trustees: _____

Library Director: _____

POLICY STATEMENT

The Bethlehem Area Public Library is committed to creating a safe, healthy, and welcoming environment. Tobacco use near library facilities poses health risks, contributes to litter, and sends a harmful message to youth. This policy ensures that library spaces remain clean and safe for everyone.

Thank you for supporting BAPL's commitment to community health and wellness.

Attachment Three
Proposed Tuition Policy

BAPL TUITION REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Purpose: The purpose of this tuition reimbursement policy (Plan) is to financially assist employees to secure their Master's degree in library or information science from an ALA-accredited university, with the goal of retaining such skilled employees for as long as possible after completion of the Master's degree.

Reimbursement under this Plan shall be in accordance with Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code. In no instance shall reimbursement payments exceed the amount of tuition reimbursement deemed tax-exempt under Section 127, currently set at \$5,250 annually.

Eligibility: Permanent part-time and full-time employees qualify for the Plan after having completed one year of employment with BAPL. This policy functions as a reimbursement for tuition, up to a maximum of \$10,000 in total, after the employee graduates with their Masters in library or information science [TLF1]. Employees seeking to participate in this program must first secure the endorsement of the Director, and then apply for reimbursement to the Library Board, at any time before, during, or after employee's securing their Master's degree. No reimbursement will be provided for any course work undertaken prior to 2019.

Plan Benefits: To the extent that funds are available, the library shall [TLF2] reimburse up to \$5000 per year paid by an employee to a university with an ALA-accredited graduate program in library or information science, to a maximum of \$10,000 in total. The Library shall not be responsible for reimbursement of fees, books, or any other costs beyond tuition. Employees must earn a grade of "B" or better to receive reimbursement for their coursework. A current transcript shall be submitted with each request for reimbursement.

Prohibited payments: BAPL is a not -for-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and no employee is a shareholder or owner within the meaning of Section 127(b)(3). BAPL does not currently employ anyone defined as a highly-compensated employee within the meaning of Section 414(q) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Plan prohibits payments to highly-compensated employees when such payments would violate the discrimination clause set forth in Section 127(b)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Prohibited choices: This policy prohibits BAPL from offering eligible employees a choice between educational assistance and other compensation.

Library Obligations: The educational support provided for in this policy is dependent on the availability of funds. BAPL reserves the right to change or terminate this policy without prior notice, though only for employees who have not already taken on tuition expenses in reliance on BAPL's approving them for reimbursement upon completion of their degrees.

Employee Obligations: An employee must actively pursue:

A) A Master's degree in library or information sciences from an ALA-accredited university, complete the degree in a timely manner as required by the school, agree to accept full-time employment with BAPL if offered, and continue working for BAPL for a minimum of (4) four years after receiving the Master's Degree;

B) An employee must submit to the Director all information requested on the course of study for which they seek tuition reimbursement. An employee must maintain a 3.0 grade point average to receive reimbursement. Only employees who were ranked as "Satisfactory" or above on their last BAPL internal employment performance review are eligible to receive tuition reimbursement under the Plan.

C) An employee who is reimbursed for his/her educational expenses under this policy and who leaves the employ of BAPL (voluntarily or involuntarily) less than 4 years after completion of their degree, shall return to BAPL the reimbursement received, according to the following schedule:

- a) less than one year after completion of degree, 80% of reimbursed funds;
- b) less than two years, 60% of reimbursed funds;
- c) less than three years, 40% of reimbursed funds; and,
- d) less than four years, 20% of reimbursed funds.

Such obligation to repay BAPL shall not apply if the employee is terminated from their employment with BAPL due to lack of work [TLF3].

D) If an employee commences a program of study but then fails to take any courses for a period of more than one year, that employee will be deemed to have abandoned the educational program and will be required to repay 100% of any tuition reimbursed by BAPL.

E) Any return of funds from an employee to BAPL must be made in full within one year from the date of that employee's separation from employment or failure to complete the program of study after having received an initial reimbursement.

The sum due from an employee shall be determined on the date of abandonment of the educational program or separation from employment, and shall include interest at ten percent (10%) per annum, to accrue from that date forward; and the employee shall be obligated to repay BAPL the entire amount due no later than one year thereafter, by making monthly payments of no less than one-twelfth (1/12th) of the outstanding balance per month, to be applied first to interest, then to principal, with payments due on the first of each month, until paid in full.

This implies that an employee is eligible to request reimbursement only after obtaining the Master's degree? The next sentence states otherwise.

Only if admitted to the program and otherwise meets the criteria set forth. Do you want to use the term "shall"?

Would it be preferable to say "without cause"? If so, it will also be necessary to define "cause".