

Library Board Minutes
Monday, May 11, 2020
Bethlehem Area Public Library
Meeting conducted virtually via Zoom.

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld, Olga Negrón, Sharon Yoshida, Julie Zumas
Bethlehem Township – Randi Blauth, John Merhottein
Fountain Hill – Annamarie Jordan
Hanover Township – Jay Finnigan

Staff: Josh Berk, Erin Poore, Liz Saraceno, Dawn Fritz, Sue Schirripa, Brenda Grow, Elizabeth Burch, Edana Hoy, Janine Santoro, Stephanie Steinly.
Other: Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul); Mike Prendeville (Hanover Township alternate); Cathi Alloway (strategic planning consultant), Eric Evans and Mark Sivak (City of Bethlehem), Jacquelyn Tornabene (public).

ABSENT: Emil Signes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. April

Motion to approve April minutes made by Annamarie Jordan, seconded by Randi Blauth; motion approved.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS

1. March

Motion to approve operating funds subject to audit made by Jay Finnigan, seconded by Sharon Yoshida; motion approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

1. March

2. Oral

There were many changes over the month of March, as the written report illustrates (half the month happened in person at the library, and half was virtual). The library continues to offer interesting online offerings, thanks to the staff (author talks, baking instruction, writing groups, yoga, etc.). It's challenging to keep statistical reports as are kept under normal conditions; staff members are keeping up with state requirements as well as possible. There has been much public use of online resources (e-books, Kanopy films, reference questions via email). Has also been use of library wifi (outdoors near the library), though this isn't being advertised. Staff members are working across departments more than ever. A few people go into the library to check on the physical plant, sign checks, deal with mail, etc. at least once a week.

Director Berk is involved in plans for reopening (to be discussed under New Business). He is awaiting word from the governor; other parts of the state are beginning to open up and BAPL is looking to these areas for ideas.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

1. CITY OF BETHLEHEM - Felker, Gill, Hinnefeld, Negrón, Signes, Yoshida, Zumas

None

2. BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP - Blauth, Merhottein

None

3. FOUNTAIN HILL - Jordan

None

4. HANOVER TOWNSHIP - Finnigan

None

5. FRIENDS OF THE BAPL – Yoshida

The Friends still haven't decided what to do about the cancelled fundraiser; did write to sponsors--none of whom have retracted contributions. Not clear whether people will be ready for a fundraising event in the fall. Have been holding Zoom meetings; no other news.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE COMMITTEE (Merhottein)

None

2. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (Felker)

None

3. HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE (Gill)

None

4. MARKETING AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE (Jordan)

None

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE (Zumas)

Josh and Julie spoke with Cathi Alloway by phone; they have agreed to suspend the strategic planning process for now. For the time being the focus will be more on shorter-term issues related to reopening.

NEW BUSINESS

There was an open/public discussion of the Board's response to Hanover Township's advising the Library that they will be making reduced payments to the operating budget (rather than the per capita amounts paid by other constituent communities). Terry Faul noted that a partial payment was made in March; no payment has been recorded so far for April or May. Jay Finnigan says that April and May checks were mailed. March payment was \$16,686.08 (less than the \$17,105 required).

Board president Anne Felker noted that a legal response *could* be forthcoming from the Library, but a response to the broader community is also possible. She emphasized that it is important to note that the library cannot do its job without required financial support; the entire system of working cooperatively with several municipalities requires cooperation from all--and so a public statement about this situation may be in order. A number of board members expressed agreement.

Jay Finnigan, representing Hanover Township, asked that "personnel matters" related to this decision be discussed during Executive Session this evening; he also reported that the Township's budget--including the library contribution percentage--was made publicly available to residents of the township.

Anne Felker proposed a statement about this on the BAPL website, designed to convey appreciation and assurance to other municipalities who are contributing the agreed-upon percentage. Julie Zumas noted that this decision by Hanover Township (refusal to pay the per capita charge paid by other contributing municipalities) raises questions about possible cuts in service to township residents as a result (this discussion referred to Executive Session). Felker and other board members discouraged the idea of a press release or op/ed. Joyce Hinnefeld asked about notifying residents of Hanover Township about the specifics of this situation. Zumas suggested including a letter with Township residents' water bills; Olga Negrón suggested notifying Hanover Township library users via email.

Felker and Zumas will write a draft letter for municipalities for Board members and Solicitor Faul to review; this letter will be posted on the BAPL website and will be sent to the leadership of other municipalities, and to Hanover Township library users via email.

Director Berk asserted that the per capita amount expected from Hanover Township was conveyed "regularly, clearly, and often."

On the library's eventual re-opening:

Director Berk referred to helpful information in messages sent by the state (Dept. of Ed, etc.); he is also in contact with colleagues in other parts of the state that are beginning to open. When the library gets okay to move to the yellow phase, it may begin opening in stages: first just to pick up reserved items or drop off resources (no browsing, use of computers, restrooms). The priority here will be getting books to kids for the summer, without putting anyone at risk.

While there has been talk about curbside service, there is concern about the potential for transmission in this case. It's clear that what we will have will not look like a regular library at first. There will be likely limits on gatherings/in-person library events for the remainder of this year.

There has been assurance from the state that there will be proper lead time; BAPL will need training for staff, and will need to order additional cleaning supplies (which may be difficult to get).

Randi Blauth asked about the quarantining of books, etc. for 24 hours or so. Berk said this will be the case, and that tables will be set up in the Cohen Room in order to label/date. While there isn't a lot of concern about the virus living on paper, we know it *does* live on plastic. Book covers, DVDs, etc. are a possible risk.

Comments from staff:

Liz Saraceno raised a concern about staff members who are considered high-risk. What happens in this case? She expressed hope for this to be considered as well. Berk acknowledged that there are staff members who are in this category; every effort will be made to make needed accommodations here; staff should be sure to remind library leadership if this is the case.

Julie Zumas raised the possibility of an anonymous staff survey to try to estimate the need for accommodations; Berk acknowledged this as a good suggestion, and Saraceno noted that this would provide important reassurance. Felker stressed the necessity of this being anonymous, and Negrón noted that HIPAA restrictions also are important to keep in mind. Perhaps a single administrative person might be identified to whom staff may safely report concerns, conditions, etc.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion made by Annamarie Jordan and seconded by Olga Negrón to move into Executive Session at 6:47 PM.

Board members agreed to begin holding board meetings at 6:30 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM.