

Library Board Minutes

February 12, 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 to order at 6:08 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld, Delia Marrero
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Sonya Hennes, Sarah Phillips, Susan Schirripa
Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Joanne Garcia, G. Christopher Hunt, Rachel Leon
Bethlehem Township – two open seats

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the January minutes as amended was made by Mr. Diacogiannis, seconded by Mr. Rufe; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

1. President Gill 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 Mr. Diacogiannis, seconded by Mr. Rufe; motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported when comparing the numbers from 2023 to 2022, the trends continue to be very interesting. With the Main Library closed for renovations, the South Side Branch numbers significantly increased during that time. Total BAPL items checked out is around 430,000 in 2023. This is an increase from the past few years. He also reported that the written annual report is being worked on. He will share that report, once it is completed.

Board member questions included: How is the library staff feeling since the remodel and layout change?

Director Berk noted how patron behavior has definitely been affected by the new layout. Library staff still experience some security issues. Visibility is greatly improved and more patrons are using the library space as it has been designed and intended.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – none
3. Fountain Hill – Mr. Rufe reported that construction to contain and repair a sinkhole in Fountain Hill is near the Books on the Hill location, but does not and should not pose a danger to the library location. He also shared an anecdotal usage issue from former Library Board member Annamarie Jordan. She wondered if other patrons were experiencing problems in the cloudLibrary ebook app with new items not showing up on her feed. Director Berk had also experienced this and thought it was a temporary glitch. He will double-check that it has been resolved.
4. Hanover Township – No report from Mr. Diacogiannis.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Ms. Marrero reported that the committee held its quarterly meeting. They discussed the staff survey results and information shared from the smaller staff meetings. The committee plans to use that information to recommend some next steps for Director Berk.
2. Finance Committee – No report from Mr. Rufe.
3. Governance Committee – No report.
4. Human Resources Committee – Ms. Marrero reported she is compiling results from Director Berk's evaluation input from Board members. When compilation is complete, she will share it with the Board.
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that the next committee meeting will be looking at the strategic plan for guidance. Marketing and Development Specialist Amresse Farrow shared a marketing report at their committee meeting. Other Board members are interested in reading that report also.
6. Strategic Planning Committee – No report from Mr. Rufe.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Director Berk shared Bethlehem Area Public Library's Waiver of Standards Application. He explained how the State gives subsidies to public libraries in Pennsylvania and sets certain standards for levels of aid. Because the Main Library is not open the designated number of hours as set by the State, BAPL must file a request for a waiver exception. He stated that the library has in recent years focused on service hours at its other locations, instead of expanding hours at Main, citing this as the underlying reason for requesting a waiver. Additional hours at the Main Library are something the library is working towards, dependent on funding. Ms. Hinnefeld moved to approve a board resolution for the Waiver of Standards, President Gill seconded the motion; the resolution passed unanimously, and President Gill signed the application.
2. Mr. Diacogiannis offered to attend a Bethlehem Township meeting to encourage them to appoint representatives to their open seats on the library board. President Gill appreciated him volunteering. Solicitor Faul also offered to send a written correspondence with a request. The Board will wait for an update from Ms. Felker to determine their next step.
3. Mr. Diacogiannis then inquired about Bethlehem Emergency Shelter (BES) looking for volunteers to assist with intakes at BAPL. Director Berk explained that BES employee Maria Shior is currently working five days a week at the Main Library. BES plans to hire and train a replacement, as this is not typically part of her job duties. He noted that the City grant for social services will allow the library to hire someone as well, but currently BES is doing the work. City grant funding for this position is to last for one year. Ms. Shior has been very helpful on site with a variety of situations. Board discussion included:
 1. Suggesting there could be a more permanent position for a social worker, co-funded by BAPL and BES.
 2. Moravian College masters degree students, supervised by an MSW, might also be an option. Potentially, they could also receive college credit, in addition to experience at the library.
4. Mr. Rufe suggested adding a list of last names below each committee on future meeting agendas to help keep everyone up to date. After brief discussion it was decided to note (in parentheses) the chairperson's last name followed by other committee board members.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Diacogiannis. President Gill adjourned the meeting at 6:46 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Board Resolution for the Waiver of Standards Signature Request

WHEREAS, PA Public Library Code 24 Pa.C.S. § 9332 (a) authorizes the State Librarian to waive standards for local libraries, library systems, and district centers upon application by the board of directors of the local library.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Bethlehem Area Public Library requests a waiver of standards for the reporting year 2023, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board held on this date February 12, 2024.

The Board of Directors along with the above named individuals, hereby submit this request and certify that to the best of our knowledge the responses herein provided as part of this application are correct and truthful. We understand the library or library system may not be eligible for consideration for State Aid if the request is not approved by the State Librarian.