

## **Library Board Minutes**

January 8, 2024

Bethlehem Area Public Library

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

President Anne Felker called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld,  
G. Christopher Hunt  
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe  
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Amresse Farrow, Regina Kochmaruk, Sarah  
Phillips, Susan Schirripa  
Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Joanne Garcia, Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero  
Bethlehem Township – two open seats

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

None

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

1. Mr. Rufe, representing the Nominating Committee, read the proposed slate of officers for 2024: Jane Gill as Board President, Joyce Hinnefeld continuing as Vice President, Delia Marrero as Secretary, and Will Rufe as Treasurer. He then made a motion to approve the proposed slate. President Felker called for a vote and the motion approved unanimously. Ms. Felker passed the gavel and leadership of the meeting over to President Gill.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Motion to approve the December minutes was made by Ms. Felker, seconded by Mr. Rufe; motion approved with Ms. Gill and Ms. Hinnefeld abstaining.

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

1. President Gill called for a motion to approve the November operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the November operating funds, subject to audit, made by Mr. Rufe, seconded by Ms. Felker; motion approved unanimously.

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

Director Berk reported that end of year numbers are currently being calculated, but he would report on data through November. The Main Library's numbers for the year are down slightly, because it was closed for renovations. He noted how other locations' numbers increased during the time that the Main Library was closed. Over all for 2023, attendance numbers for programming for all ages were all up at all locations.

Director Berk also reported that a donation from the Laros Foundation has been received and will help cover costs for adding roof/ceilings to the small reading rooms on the first floor of the Main Library. This addition will help sound proof those spaces. Patrons are finding many uses for those rooms. For example, a quieter study spot, tutoring sessions, and intake meetings with Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering staff.

## **COMMUNITY REPORTS:**

1. City of Bethlehem – Ms. Felker reported that the City has billed the library for approximately \$70,000 for HVAC work completed earlier this year. This is an unexpected bill. Ms. Felker and Director Berk met with the City about it. They reminded the City there was no increase to the per capita for library costs. They also explained how BAPL is still waiting on District funds from the second half of 2023.
2. Bethlehem Township – No report, but Director Berk did contact the Township Manager who shared that appointing library representatives had been tabled at their last township meeting.
3. Fountain Hill – none
4. Hanover Township – none

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Dr. Hunt reported there will be a meeting later this month.
2. Finance Committee – President Gill reported that Mr. Rufe will be taking over this committee as part of his Board Treasurer duties.
3. Governance Committee – Ms. Felker reported that Ms. Hinnefeld will be temporarily taking on fewer responsibilities. President Gill will look at who else can help on this committee.
4. Human Resources Committee – none

5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Ms. Farrow reported there is a meeting scheduled for tomorrow. After some discussion, it was decided that Mr. Diacogiannis will take over as chair. He hopes Ms. Farrow will continue to assist with managing the committee.

Director Berk also shared that Touchstone Theatre has applied for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The grant is part of “The Big Read” and Touchstone wants to partner with BAPL. They plan for it to become part of the Festival UnBound.

6. Strategic Planning Committee – none

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Solicitor Faul started a discussion by recommending BAPL have an official lease agreement with the City of Bethlehem. Currently, the City administration is friendly to the library and things are mostly fine. However when different people are in charge things may become more unsure. Director Berk elaborated more about the \$70,000 invoice that had been received. He explained how it is a shared HVAC system and all of the library's air handlers had to be replaced, along with equipment replacement and maintenance on the City Hall side. Solicitor Faul reported he had looked at the initial agreement with the City, from when the City Center and the library were built. That agreement specifies the space must be used for a library, but the language is ambiguous about rent or rent-free. The City of Bethlehem owns the building. Previously they had created a Library Authority. Once that authority disbanded, ownership reverted to the City.

Board discussion included:

Issues with the pension fund that had come up years ago. If there was a rental agreement/lease agreement, planning for expenses might be better, but that is another additional expense for a very tight budget. Director Berk noted there is currently a lot of cooperation. He said while it is not unfair, it is unpredictable. He also shared how historically the library has covered costs inside the building, while the City has covered outside costs. This situation with the air handlers came up since they fit into both categories. Director Berk felt it would be helpful to have the City/library relationship officially defined.

Further discussion noted that the South Side Branch is owned by BAPL, but the insurance is held through the City of Bethlehem's policy. The City also holds the insurance policy for the Bookmobile and other library vehicles. Mr. Rufe inquired if there would be any other legal relationship definitions that

could be adopted, rather than a tenant-renter relationship to consider. Solicitor Faul said at the Coolidge location with Bethlehem Township, there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU). He said the MOU basically functions as a lease/rental agreement but is a more general agreement between the two parties. General consensus felt an official document would be helpful to have the relationship and future costs defined.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Rufe. President Gill adjourned the meeting at 6:48 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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