

Library Board Minutes

July 8, 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 6:10 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld,
G. Christopher Hunt

Bethlehem Township – Carolyn Harper, Peggy Salvatore

Fountain Hill – Will Rufe

Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Sarah Phillips

Other – Alison Diefenderfer (Bethlehem Township alternate),

Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Joanne Garcia, Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Motion to approve the June minutes was made by Ms. Felker, seconded by Ms. Hinnefeld; motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:

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

DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:

Director Berk reported that Dr. Khalid Mumin, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, visited the South Side Branch to highlight the Summer Food Service Program. He is visiting other sites throughout the state for the program.

BAPL's Summer Reading Program has had an abundance of sign-ups and continues to be very popular. Edana Hoy, long-time Youth Services Department Head, recently retired. BAPL is in the process of hiring a replacement. Several good candidates are being interviewed.

Assistant Director Erin Martell Poore's father, Gary Martell, passed away and a memorial service was held today. He was a respected leader in the community and will be missed by many.

Director Berk continues to gather information about new bookmobile options. A patron saw one of the library's promotions and met with Director Berk. This patron has a local company that builds food trucks and offered to help. Director Berk will get them the specs so they can develop a proposal.

Director Berk estimates the replacement cost will be in the range of \$200,000 to \$400,000. It would be a bonus to work with a local company. He also found some used options, including a used option for \$175,000. He showed the group pictures of the vehicle - it had some desired features, such as an awning, a lift, and removable carts, which would be an improvement. This vehicle has 44,000 miles on it, and more would be added by driving it to Pennsylvania. Mr. Rufe shared that he has experience building food trucks, three so far. He noted that the expected lifetime mileage for this type of vehicle would be around 100,000. He asked that the Board please consider utilizing his expertise for this project. Director Berk concluded that there are no final decisions, but many good options once funding is more secure. Board members asked for an update on sponsorships. Director Berk reported that there are no large donors yet, but many small ones. He wonders if having a price for the vehicle will help with a larger donor and reiterated that BAPL is open to all levels of sponsorship to help cover the entire cost. Ms. Harper recommended looking for a sponsor whose business also focuses on education and literacy. She also suggested proposing a sponsorship over a period of time, for example, \$5,000 per year for five years.

COMMUNITY REPORTS:

1. City of Bethlehem – Ms. Felker reported that Director Berk had successful meetings with the City of Bethlehem. Director Berk shared budget numbers and said he met with Eric Evans, the City's Business Administrator. Mr. Evans helped tweak the request letter before it was sent to the mayor. In a nutshell, a 5.9% increase to BAPL appears to fit in the City's budget. Mr. Evans encouraged the library to share that number with the other participating municipalities as soon as possible.

Director Berk will share officially with Bethlehem Township, Fountain Hill, and Hanover Township right away, copying the associated Library Board representatives also. BAPL's Board will see what discussion follows this official request. Mr. Rufe believes Fountain Hill will be good with this number. Mr. Diacogiannis believes Hanover Township will also be fine for their budget. Ms. Harper and Ms. Salvatore will see what response they get from Bethlehem Township council. Other Board members offered to help them with talking points for their council members.

2. Bethlehem Township – Ms. Salvatore reported that Duck Donuts might be a potential sponsor or donor to the bookmobile project, and she is happy to make that call.
3. Fountain Hill – Mr. Rufe reported the Fountain Hill pool has re-opened this season. While not as busy as they hoped, it is definitely busier than expected. The pool is still leaking, but they were able to open it. The path for many people going to the pool passes by BAPL's Books on the Hill location. He is hopeful this will increase usage at Books on the Hill. Director Berk added there are many good programs planned for that location this summer.
4. Hanover Township – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that he wants to get their new manager, Mark Hudson, together with Director Berk to facilitate that relationship going forward.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Dr. Hunt reported there will be a meeting this month.
2. Finance Committee – Mr. Rufe noted the preliminary 2025 Budget discussion was held during the City of Bethlehem report.
3. Governance Committee – Ms. Felker followed up on the question of whether the bylaws should be amended to specify the roles played by alternate representatives to the board. The committee will meet to review other models and comprise something appropriate for BAPL. They will present official wording at the next meeting.
4. Human Resources Committee – none
5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Mr. Diacogiannis said there was nothing to report this month.
6. Strategic Planning Committee – Mr. Rufe said nothing to report, but discussion reminded members that the existing plan was through 2024. Director Berk noted having a strategic plan in place helps with grants, sponsor requests, and when responding to offers of help in both the positive and negative. For the September meeting, Director Berk will bring an updated checklist showing the progress on the strategic plan and noting which goals have not yet been reached.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. The preliminary 2025 Budget discussion was held during the City of Bethlehem report.

NEW BUSINESS:

Board members asked for an update on the current security situation at the library. Director Berk shared that incidents tend to decrease over the summer and this has held true for the Main Library. The South Side Branch has had more incidents and some that have escalated unexpectedly. He continues to look at adding a security or “library monitor” position, hired directly by the library. He felt that the company used last year was overly expensive and not as effective for the library's needs. Having the social worker on site at the Main Library has been helpful. He is considering something like a library monitor position, paid from the library budget, to enforce the rules of the library. Would look for an individual trained in de-escalation skills and experience. Board members asked if records are kept of incident reports. Director Berk shared that, yes, this has been ongoing. There are approximately four reports per month, with spikes at certain times and more during the colder months of the year.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Felker. President Gill adjourned the meeting at 7:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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