

Minutes of the Bernardsville Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting October 19, 2021

Attendance: Board members John Bertoni, Gretchen Dempsey, Rich Diegnan, Mark Krook, Lucy Orfan, Skip Orza, Terry Thompson, Christine Zamarra, and Amy DeMilt were present at the meeting. Alexandria Arnold, Executive Director, Bernardsville Public Library, Nancy Verduin, Friends of the Bernardsville Public Library and Library staff members Meaghan Darling and Jill Hackett were also present.

Not Present: Leslie Brown-Witt

President John Bertoni called the Board of Trustees (“Board”) meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and read the Open Meeting Notice as follows:

- In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-8 *et seq.*), 1975, written notice of this regular meetings has been sent to the following newspapers: *The Bernardsville News*, the *Courier News*, and the *Star Ledger*. Written notice has also been sent to the Borough Clerk, posted on the Library web page, and posted on the principal entrance to the door of the Library. The meeting will be conducted by in person, at the Library Community Room and the public has been invited to participate, and told how to participate, in the notices in the Library web site and the principal entrance door.
- The agenda and documents to be discussed at this meeting are available for review on the Library’s web site, <https://bernardsvilleLibrary.org/home/board>.
- They are also at the Library’s circulation desk on Monday, October 18, and Tuesday, October 19, during regular Library hours.
- Members of the public are invited to comment either during the public comment period of the meetings or by submitting written or emailed comments in advance of the meeting. All commenters should identify themselves by name and address.

The notice was followed by roll call.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Ms. DeMilt asked for any comments or edits on the minutes for the September Board of Trustees meeting minutes. Ms. Thompson and Ms. Arnold identified two amendments. Ms. DeMilt moved to submit the September 21, 2021 meeting minutes as amended for approval, the motion was seconded by Mr. Bertoni, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Director’s Report: In addition to the items mentioned in her report, Ms. Arnold presented highlights from and additions to her report, as follows:

The new book cart bin has been delivered and was actually present in the Community Room; it will be transferred to the book bin, with the older cart retiring.

On the issue of service restoration the community room and small meeting rooms are now available to be reserved by the community.

Overall the Library patron statistics were down for September however this would be anticipated since the children are now back at school full-time.

The Library received a donation from the AAUW to support women and girls. Since the donation is specifically earmarked and is to be disbursed over 2 years, this will be identified for restricted reserves.

Building and grounds: During a recent rainstorm John Macdowell from the Borough had an opportunity to review the garden draining issue. It was confirmed that there were no issues with the gutters or down spots. It was suggested to perhaps raise the bricks, securing with sand and to examine whether the weep holes may be the cause of the recurrent draining issue.

With respect to the Treasurer's report Ms. Arnold wanted the Trustees to be aware of a lag in the budget appearance due to encumbrances. Presently what appears in the packet may appear lower than where the Library is on the actual budget. For example: computer and tech line indicated \$37k spend and 86% over for the budget; in terms of all bills paid and encumbrances we have actually spent 96.93 %. Other encumbrances include furniture and material with upholstery encumbrance of \$2k; materials – audiobooks encumbrance and expended \$4500; books \$23k; DVDs \$1762; large type \$1513, and periodicals \$4614. Due to encumbrances it may indicate that the present target should be tracking will be increased and not particularly current. Mr. Krook indicated that this lag is not a new development but was appreciative of the reminder.

Ms. Arnold confirmed that the Library passed the Fire Test.

Mr. Diegnan inquired as to State Aid which is monies distributed from taxes to Library. This line item, per Ms. Arnold has traditionally decreased over the years; however this year the state legislature did increase the State Aid, which is added to the budget.

In response to Mr. Bertoni's question, Ms. Arnold confirmed that the door project remains on schedule. Funds for the door project are reimbursable after costs are outlaid by the Library. Mr. Bertoni also inquired as to whether the rooms could be scheduled by the public through MAIN on line. Ms. Arnold indicated most likely they could provide such an accommodation but there would be an IT cost to do so.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Krook reviewed the Treasurer's report and added the following:

We are 3/4s of the way through the year, the Library budget is doing fine, albeit a little low on income side. We will request \$25k from the Foundation; \$15k has already been credited in the budget. One call out by Mr. Krook is that the donations are significantly up.

Ms. Thompson inquired as to the status of the Wild Life World invoice that has been itemized the check, it was confirmed by Ms. Arnold that check was not sent.

Mr. Krook moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, to pay the new bills received from 9/21/2021 to 10/18/2021 and to ratify the payment of bills received and paid from 7/21/2021 to 9/20/2021. Ms. Thompson seconded the motion, which was then passed by unanimous roll call vote.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance: Mr. Krook indicated the Finance Committee met on 9/28 to start looking at the 2022 budget in anticipation of presenting to the Borough. Two items to note:

- (1) The Library most likely will be flat on budget in 2022 based on \$110k COVID savings, reduced budget, reduced saving from the budget. Mr. Krook recommended that we should consider taking a little more risk on the Personnel line. The Personnel line is budgeted knowing the Library usually will experience annual personnel turnover, and there is a projected underspend, and perhaps rather than 2% below; 5% -10% below should be considered to perhaps designate funds elsewhere. The change would reflect the actual numbers.

Ms. Arnold indicated that this year was extraordinary with COVID absences, Tammy's resignation and a number of other factors. Mr. Krook indicated that regardless of the COVID year – historically the Personnel line has always come in on this line.

- (2) The Library is currently at the bare minimum for staffing, a direct result of this is that a number of infrastructure projects are not being undertaken or completed. Without project completion we are unable to spend down the restricted/unrestricted funds. Perhaps bringing in a project oriented part-time person(s) to oversee/complete some of these projects would be beneficial. The position would be semi-permanent with the possibility of going full-time. After discussion it was agreed that the Personnel Committee would draft a job description for consideration.

General agreement to move forward with both recommendations.

Personnel: Ms. Thompson indicated a meeting was held on 10/13 to discuss the needs of the Library to hire part-time personnel to effectuate projects referenced above in the Finance Committee discussion. Ms. Thompson and Ms. Arnold have had several meetings to discuss the proposed position(s) which may align specifically with certain projects. There are 3 buckets of projects: (1) smaller scale – e.g. upholstery; (2) larger scale - such as a bathroom update – this would require a person familiar with municipal bidding protocol and procedure – an experienced project manager, and (3) administrative tasks which would require minimum oversight and be on the lower pay scale. The Personnel Committee will need to meet next week; with an eye to providing a job description(s) by the next meeting. Mr. Krook reminded the Board that since the job(s) would be part time, Board approval is not required.

Policy: Ms. Orfan stated there was no meeting this month, however Ms. Arnold is still reviewing all of the policy manuals and will present several updated policies at the upcoming November

meeting. The Unattended Children policy discussed at the September meeting will remain in place unchanged.

Planning: Ms. Thompson indicated the strategic planning survey is now on-line. The survey was sent via mail earlier this week. The Bernardsville News will run 2 QR coded survey advertisements: one prior to the general election and second after. Mayor Canose will highlight the survey in her next mayor column. Of note: there will also be a corresponding Spanish survey that was created by staff members. Dr. Dempsey will send along the survey in the Friday folder. Eagleston is monitoring responses and will keep us apprised (750+ is needed for verification). Presently there is no end date established for the survey.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Friends of the Bernardsville Public Library: Nancy Verduin, for the Friends, reported that they are working on their annual review draft budget. Two people will be rolling off the FBPL board. Campaign letter will be going out by the end of November. Soft contact with Golf sponsors (8 have confirmed – 2 nos; some maybes). The recent concert was poorly attended – perhaps the fine weather interfered. New board members are being solicited.

Bernardsville Library Foundation: Leslie Brown-Witt for the Foundation was not present but had shared updates with Ms. Arnold and Ms. Thompson. Ms. Arnold confirmed that there are 2 new members but anticipate higher turnover rate due to term limits.

Non-event update: behind on calculation - \$5,425; most of the mystery bags have sold; 50:50 tickets will be sold at Farmers' market. Ms. Thompson indicated the Foundation has retained a CPA to review compliance with respect to any required regulatory filings.

Communications: See packet.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- (1) Closing Dates – proposed dates are in the packet; Ms. Thompson moved to accept the proposed dates, all approved.
- (2) Meeting dates – after the September discussion regarding summer meetings it was proposed that we most likely would have to amend the by-laws which require a monthly meeting. Volunteers were enlisted for an ad-hoc committee to review the by-laws and recommend any changes on meeting dates. Any proposal will be presented at next Board meeting.
- (3) Project Resources (see above) want to make sure it is in front of us as New Business.

At 6:27 p.m. the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy DeMilt, Secretary