

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday April 12, 2018**

Chuck Burke, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

Charles Burke, Jr, President
Dierdra Clark Gray, Vice President
Yadira Ramos-Herbert, Secretary
Quentin S. Jacobs
Whitney Barrat
Daniel Bonnet

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Mary Kane Passacreta

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

LaRuth Gray

NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Resignation:

On March 16, 2018, Trustee Greg Varian submitted his resignation due to personal reasons. Board President Chuck Burke expressed the sincere thanks and appreciation of the Library Board for Greg's successful 12-year tenure on the Board. He further indicated that the seat would not be filled by a temporary appointment as the May 15th Library Trustee election was scheduled to occur in the near future.

Chuck Burke moved to accept Greg Varian's resignation as a Library Trustee effective March 16, 2018, seconded by Quentin Jacobs and approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Downtown Redevelopment:

President Chuck Burke, reported that the Library Board had nothing to report in relation to the proposed Phase 1 agreement to perform a valuation of the library property and associated development rights. At this point in time, there is no agreement available for public discussion. In the wake of public discussions regarding the Library Board conversations with the developer RXR, Chuck highlighted the statement regarding this issue as authorized by the Board and posted on the library website. (This statement will be included in the approved April 2018 Library Board minutes.) He also made additional

remarks about this issue. (This statement will also be included in the April 2018 Library Board minutes.)

Vice President Dierdra Clark made a public statement about the Library Board and its conversations with the developer RXR. (This statement will be included in the approved April 2018 Library Board minutes.)

PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

The following individuals spoke during this time:

Amy Tietz
Greg Varian
Jeff Rifkin
Diana Mason
Lynn Green
Lisa Burton
Dan Miller
Anthony Lore
Erika Ezikowitz
Maureen Hussain
Diana Mason
Michael Yellin
Nora LeMorin
Carlos Mendoza
Monique Evellard
Donna Harris-West
Adam Deutscher
Charles Mirabella
Patty Cohen
Marjorie Sachs
Seth Markusfeld
Hillel Dugacz
Haina Just-Michael
Ryan Lewis
Chris Selin
Shane Osinloye
Sarah Longstreth
Pearl Quarles

WLS REPORT:

Dr. LaRuth Gray reported that WLS Annual Report FY 2016 (most recent year available) was recently shared with the Westchester community. County library statistics include:

- + Over 7,395,000 visitors in FY 2016
- + Over 117,750 hours open in FY 2016
- + Over 7,321, 000 titles circulated in FY2016

- + Over 7,385,000 reference transactions in FY 2016
- + Over 35,000 programs held in FY 2016
- + Over 681,509 program attendees in FY 2016

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The March meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Chuck Burke moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

EXPENDITURES:

Vouchers previously reviewed by various Board members were found to be in order and co-signed appropriately. Board approved payment of the following vouchers:

<u>April Vouchers</u>	
Health Care	\$4,867.02
Contractual	\$66,672.63
Various	\$1,989.36
Materials	\$15,070.46
Gifts and Donations	\$2,124.01
Total:	\$90,723.48

PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

No report was made as it was integrated into the Director’s Report.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Main Library Theater HVAC Grant: In August 2016, our library submitted a FY 2016/17 New York State Construction Grant awards in relation to work proposed for the Main Library Theater HVAC Project. Our grant award for this project was \$77,647 per WLS Board of Trustees. However, this award was increased by \$1,157 to \$78,804 due to the withdrawal of another WLS library grant application. This project is now slated to begin in May 2018.

+ Proposed Main Library Circulation Desk/Area Project: In August 2017, our library submitted a FY 2016/17 New York State Construction Grant application in relation to work proposed for the Main Library Circulation Area Project. The proposed project will allow the library to create a newly reconstituted Circulation Area, including an ADA compliant desk with unified circulation, return and registration functionality, back office area, library/lobby gates, security desk with electronic surveillance capability, new material anti-theft gates and patron placed hold pick-up shelving. Cost estimation for this project was \$368,485. On September 28th, our library was notified by the WLS Board that we were tentatively awarded the maximum grant amount of \$276,363. Next steps

call for the New York State Library confirming the grant award pending Dormitory Authority of the State of New York support. The initial payment will likely arrive in August 2018. In the meanwhile, our Foundation is beginning its efforts to raise the \$92,000 matching amount necessary in the acceptance of the grant.

+ Neighborhood Association Meetings: Our library mailed over 70 letters to New Rochelle neighborhood associations requesting to be invited attend meeting prior to the May 15th election. The goal in this effort is to share information regarding the FY 2018/19 budget proposal, provide an overview about library services, highlight notable achievements and answer questions about these topics or anything of interest to the New Rochelle community. Another important aspect of these meeting is the opportunity for residents to meet library trustees, especially candidates running for the vacant library trustee positions. To date, 9 local groups have issued invitations to appear at their meetings.

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends will hold its next Board meeting on April 11th with its Book Sale scheduled for May 3rd, 4th and 5th.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for May 21st meeting and the June 19th Annual Meeting. The next "Cocktails and Conversation" event - Writing Politics in the Age of Trump - is scheduled for April 26th, featuring Dr. Amy Bass (author of critically acclaimed One Goal) and David Friend (author of the popular The Naughty Nineties) and moderated by Literary Super-Agent Stuart Krichevesky.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat moved that upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby accept the resignation of Hourly Library Clerk Alex Horvath at an l salary of \$18.49 per hour, effective March 11, 2018, seconded by Dierdra Clark and approved.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

Tom Geoffino reported that the Buildings and Grounds/ CROC Committee meet on March 15th in order to revisit the Theater HVAC contract award. At the meeting, Consultant Gene Eng detailed the circumstances surrounding his recommendation that our library accept the recently revised bid as submitted by Green Mechanical of New York (GMNY.) This revised bid calls for a different hardware approach to the Theater HVAC system. In implementing this solution, the library will save over \$140,000 in project costs without sacrificing performance, longevity or our time sensitive schedule. After much discussion, the Committee decided to endorse this revision and recommend that the Library Board vote to approve it at its April meeting

Chuck Burke moved that the library, upon the recommendation of the Buildings and Grounds / CROC Committee, award the revised Theater HVAC contract to GMNY (and

subcontractors) for total project cost of \$401,500, seconded by Dierdra Clark and approved

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Daniel Bonnet reported on the numerous and diverse cultural, educational and recreational library programs currently available to our community. He encouraged patrons to “like” our library on Facebook and especially highlighted the upcoming film, Resilience and its screening at our library on April 26th at 6:30 pm as well as future MBK activities and upcoming summer youth employment opportunities as sponsored by our City’s Youth Bureau.

FINANCE, TREASURERY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Board President Chuck Burke reported that library and NRSD attorneys have reached an agreement in relation to finalizing an agreement that will memorialize TAN/Bond/BAN arrangements between both organizations. This agreement will provide the “safety net” support from the NRSD in relation to our annual cash flow challenges as well as provide a process/framework, via support from NRSD, that will characterize future library bonding initiatives.

Chuck Burke moved that the NRPL/NRSD Bond/TAN agreement be accepted and submitted to the NRSD, seconded by Dierdra Clark and approved.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

Tom Geoffino indicated that the library attorney made some minor changes to the draft Intermunicipal Agreement that would provide a \$30,000 PEG grant for the purchase of broadcast technology to be installed in the Ossie Davis Theater. With Board approval, this revised agreement was resubmitted to the City of New Rochelle for its consideration. Tom Geoffino announced that final NRSD approval was obtained for the broadcast of library Board meeting on the local cable (Cablevision and FiOS) education channels. The schedule will be posted on our website as soon as it is in place.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Yadira Ramos-Herbert
Secretary

Welcome and thank you for coming this evening.

We as a board are very thankful that the community understands the jewel that the New Rochelle Public Library is in this community and that so many of you have taken such an active interest in the Library's future.

The Board is aware that there is a high degree of concern in the community about the future of the Library. To address those concerns, the Board issued a statement a couple of weeks ago which I will read momentarily. We also have copies of the statement here tonight and it is posted on the Library's website.

Before I read the statement, I would like to directly address some of the concerns that have been raised:

- 1) **Independence of the Library Board:** The Library and its Board of Trustees are an independent entity and the actions the Board takes are not affected directly or indirectly by any other governing body, including the City of New Rochelle. In that vein, I want to make clear that any plans, architectural renderings, or models of the downtown distributed previously by the City or other parties have not been approved by the Board nor was the Board consulted in the preparation of any such materials.
- 2) **Fiduciary Duty of the Members of the Library Board:** As elected or appointed members of the Board we take an oath under NY State Law to act in the best interest of the Library and its patrons in line with the Strategic Plan of the Library previously approved by the Board. To be clear, our duty is to the Library and no other entity.

- 3) **Ownership of the Library:** The Library will always own the space it occupies. The Board would not entertain a situation where the Library was a renter or lessor of property owned by another entity.
- 4) **Commitment to the Downtown:** The library is committed to remaining the cultural heart of the downtown.
- 5) **Commitment to Transparency and Community Input:** The Board is committed to providing transparency into all actions it takes or plans to take in relation to the downtown redevelopment and in all of the duties we perform. We very much value and will continue to seek robust input from the community on important topics, including any potential actions we take with regard to the Library's facility.
- 6) **Commitment to Providing the Best Possible Resource for the Citizens of New Rochelle:** It is our duty as trustees to work with our director and staff to explore ways to enhance our facility and its offerings for the public in line with our Strategic Plan.

NRPL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

STATEMENT FROM THE NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON THE REDEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN NEW ROCHELLE

Issued on March 28, 2018

The New Rochelle Public Library Board of Trustees (the “Board”) would like to make clear certain facts regarding the downtown redevelopment and any opportunities said redevelopment may present for the New Rochelle Public Library located at 1 Library Plaza (the “Library”).

The Board feels strongly that the Library is the cultural center of New Rochelle and a vital resource for our community. The Board is committed to the Library continuing to maintain its place in the community and to being located at the center of our City.

The Board has been in a dialogue with RXR (and previously RDRXR) since late 2014 regarding potential exploration of redevelopment opportunities involving the Library. The Board has entered into these discussions with the sole goal of exploring a potential opportunity to provide our patrons and the residents of our city with an enhanced, state of the art, sustainable resource that will meet the needs of our community in the decades to come. The Board feels strongly that it is our responsibility to explore potential opportunities to improve and enhance the Library and its services for its patrons in New Rochelle and for the broader Westchester community.

At this time, the Board has not entered into any agreement with RXR. There are no plans at present to make any changes to the Library as it exists today.

The Board is exploring an initial agreement with RXR under which RXR will provide the Library with funding that the Board will use to pay for a consultant of the Board’s choosing to provide a valuation of the Library property and the development rights associated with the property. It

should be noted that the provision of funds to a not for profit or government-related entity by a private entity in exploration of a public/private partnership is common practice. In exchange for the funding of the valuation, the Board would agree not to speak with other developers about the Library property for 9 months following completion of the valuation, the "Exclusivity Period". During or at the conclusion of the Exclusivity Period, the Board could choose to continue discussions with RXR, or discontinue conversations with no continuing obligations beyond the agreed upon Exclusivity Period. If the Library and RXR were to move to a second step following the valuation, discussion would likely commence regarding a detailed needs assessment for an enhanced facility and potential redevelopment opportunities. Any next step would involve an additional agreement that would be discussed and voted on by the Board.

We encourage all members of the community to attend our monthly meetings at the Library. Everything described above has been discussed in our meetings. Each meeting includes an opportunity for members of the public to express views of which they would like the Board to be aware. The Board very much values the input from the members of our community.

Thank you all again for coming tonight and taking such an active interest in the Library. Dierdra Gray Clark, our Vice President will also now make a statement. Further to that, it is my expectation that other Board members may make statements in the future.

Good evening. My name is Dierdra Gray Clark and I am Vice President of the New Rochelle Library Board of Trustees. I wanted to spend just a couple of minutes this evening addressing the misunderstanding, misinformation and in some case untruths about our library and its future. The last two weeks have been nothing more than disheartening because it seems that the seeds of mistrust have been planted in the minds of many in this city, and those seeds, have no basis or foundation with the library trustees, our past actions, or even our honest and direct statements about the library.

I have been asked are you going out of business, are you in cahoots with the developers, are you sugarcoating what is really going on, just to name a few. The answer to all of those is NO.

When we library trustees took this oath, we did that so that we could serve the residents of New Rochelle and community members beyond. Some of the trustees moved here because of the mosaic of people, knitted together in this great city and they decided they wanted to be a part of that. Some of the trustees grew up here in New Rochelle and decided to volunteer and serve on this board so they could be a part of something that gave so much to them. Some of the trustees have deep roots in this city, having had parents who grew up and even parents who served as President of our own beloved New Rochelle library board--that would be me and that would be my mother. I grew up here. I got my first library card at the old library on Pintard, I was here when this very building opened and celebrated with the rest of New Rochelle. I am a living example of the fruits of wonderful library.

We trustees eat her, we go to the grocery store, we send our kids to school here. Each and everyone one of us, regardless of when we came to new Rochelle are as much a part of the fabric of this city as anyone else. I sit here proudly with each and every one of my colleagues knowing they love this city and the library just as much as I do.

So to read this narrative, that these library trustees would do something, such as give up ownership of the library, or put the library on the top two floors of a building with secondary access for library patrons, even when we put out a statement stating otherwise was discouraging.

But far worse, that narrative does nothing to further some of the discussions we should be having. I believe that my children, and every other child who visits this library, has the right to want and dream of a 21st century library. One that offers the best services any library has to offer. One that provides space for both new and improved tactile and digital learning opportunities. One that fosters the utilization of new technologies and future opportunities. One that continues to recognize and build upon the current libraries place as a civic hub for new Rochelle.

We have been told that we should not have a conversation with the RXR at all, ever.

That we should not entertain the idea of enhanced services, that we should not entertain the idea of better spaces, better lighting, better technology, more environmentally friendly space, better access for those with disabilities...we will not entertain any of that, because of the white building built over the garage in 1977.

I understand, acknowledge and even honor the real anxiety that people in New Rochelle are having around the new development and what that means for our residents. Then let's have an honest discussion about that. It is clear that we are a community that loves our library. Well then let's have a discussion about that. How can we improve our services regardless of who comes to town. We are your library board, we welcome tough questions and tough challenges, but let those tough questions be grounded in fact and not rumors.

We as a board must ask ourselves, is this building, in its current iteration of that white building built over a garage, is it the best possible facility for our residents and community members. That is what we are fighting for. I hope many of you will join us in that fight, grounded in facts and truth.