

NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday March 11, 2021
Zoom Meeting

Dierdra Gray Clark, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

Dierdra Gray Clark, President
Whitney Barrat, Vice President
Daniel Bonnet, Secretary
Charles Burke, Jr
Corey Galloway
Sarah Langlois
Beth Acocella

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The February monthly meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Dierdra Clark moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

WLS REPORT:

Francis Okelo presented the following report:

The WLS Executive Directors report for February 2020, which was earlier circulated to this Board members, provides an up-to-date information on the current activities of WLS and it's a recommended reading.

The WLS Board has planned in the coming months three workshops for its Board members on Balance Sheet, Income Statement and Special Financial Report. The workshops aim at enhancing Board members' understanding and appreciation of the various financial information regularly presented to them for consideration.

The Board reviewed the current practice in use by the WLS of depreciating WLS assets; Board approved the revised WLS code of Ethics and conflict of interest policy for the nomination of WLS Board members; Board considered the New Health Emergency Plan policy and the draft WLS Free Direct Plan, which are being forwarded to the PLDA for prior approval.

The Board established a Strategy Committee to work on directions on which WLS would like to focus, beginning initially with work on the 5-year plan-of-service. The Board requested me to lead and chair the Committee.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Dierdra Clark articulated the desire to see our library reopen once local COVID numbers decline and staff members are safely vaccinated. She also expressed her particular interest in continuing to push forward in our efforts to make decisions regarding possible Main Library facility infrastructure work. The significant cost of such work is a cause of concern and anxiety to Dierdra given its likely impact on our taxpayers.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Library Operations:

Our library continues to be closed to public access due to the pandemic (similar to the vast majority of WLS libraries) but service to the public is consistent and strong. We continue to be very busy with curbside service to patrons (653 transactions in February) as well as answering patron inquires via phone and email communications. The Children's Department "Book Bundle" service is finding great success with young families. Virtual programming continues to be popular with our younger patrons and their families. Our electronic content (books, audio, magazines, and streaming services) continue to see high usage. Notable achievements not easily quantifiable relate to the significant deaccessioning of dated and unused library print materials implemented by our Adult Services and support staff along with the subsequent re-shelving of various collection. We have also replaced the carpeting in the Children's area and are underway in comprehensive efforts to renovate our 2nd floor adult services area.

+ Main Library Gateway (Circulation Desk/Area) Project: This project is nearly complete with the formal closure of the grant expected to occur by May 2021.

+ Main Library 2nd Floor Renovation Project-Phase 1: This project has moved forward with furniture equipment and other improvements nearly complete. Unfortunately, the pandemic has delayed installation of most of the furniture. Our goal remains to close this grant out in April

+ Main Library 2nd Floor Renovation Project - Phase 2: The grant funds were made available to us in November 2020. We are rapidly moving forward on all fronts in the implementation of the 2nd phase of this project as Phase 1 is nearly complete.

+ HCL Furnace/Boiler Replacement Project: The project has been successfully completed but we are unable to close out this grant as we have remaining unspent monies. New York State Library staff have given us permission to spend our remaining funds in the installation of new LED exterior lighting.

+ HCL Stairway Replacement Project: The grant funds arrived in November 2020. Construction is underway with the removal of the aging unsafe stairway having taken

place. The new stairway is in place. Additional electrical and painting work is scheduled to be completed in the near future.

+ EDAP Grant: Access to this grant, as sponsored by Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, is pending until we are able to close out the Gateway Project.

+ AARP Tax Preparation Program The onsite/in-person AARP Tax Preparation service for 2021 has been canceled by the national AARP organization due to the pandemic. However, a remote service, staffed by New Rochelle AARP volunteers, has been instituted for patrons by utilizing phone and email services in the provision of service to interested residents. Our library is collaborating with our local AARP group in publicizing this option. According to the AARP Coordinator, their organization have received 114 inquiries and have completed 14 returns to date. Many returns are still in process.

+ Rotary Grant: The Rotary Club of New Rochelle made a gift of \$600 to our library. These funds were used to purchase nearly 50 titles (multigenerational in coverage) focused on civic engagement, voluntarism and community activism.

+ Red Cross Blood Drives: Our library continues to host a series of Red Cross Blood drives with April 8th as the next scheduled effort. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have hosted 5 events with 105 donations and 315 lives potentially impacted.

+ Community Read: Thanks to a County Legislative grant, our library and 4 other local libraries (Larchmont, Rye, Harrison and Mamaroneck) will participate in a community read for Isabel Wilkerson's bestseller Caste. Zoom book discussions will occur on April 8th, 17th, 25th 28th and May 3rd. The April 25th event will feature a lecture/Q & A with author Isabel Wilkerson and moderated by Dierdra Clark.

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends Book Store continues to be closed due to the closure of our library. Donations are not being accepted as few Friends are currently able to volunteer.

+ NRPL Foundation: The Foundation Board will hold its next meeting on March 15th. The next Cocktails and Conversation is scheduled for March 18th and will bring together authors Sara DiVello (*Where in the OM Am I?*) and Catherine Pearlman (*The Family Coach*) for an evening focusing on self-care set in the context of our world passing into the second year of the global pandemic. A future Cocktails and Conversation program will witness a Trivia Night competition on April 8th.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported that the library is still awaiting final (and much delayed) Civil Service approval for the upgrade of the Community & Services Support Specialist and the Social Media / Videographer. Second interviews for the Communications and Marketing Coordinator position are scheduled for later March.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Chair Dierdra Clark reported that the Budget Committee began to meet in January and continued meeting, as well as exchanging email and other communications, until early March in its goal of creating a prudent but responsible budget for FY 2021/22. After much deliberation, the Budget Committee agreed to recommend a budget to the Board

calling for a 2.71% increase in the tax levy over the current budget. Dierdra indicated that all library accounts were level funded except for contractual fringe benefit obligations and potential WLS and staff salary increases. The only discretionary increase is tied to the restoration of the Assistant Library Director lost nearly 10 years ago. Much discussion ensued.

In summary, the prospective FY2021/2022 budget is \$5,830,081.28. This budget constitutes an increase of 2.71% in the tax levy (or \$158,089.49) from the current year's budget. The City Finance Department has characterized this increase as an additional increase of \$10.01 per household for the "average" taxpayer.

Dierdra Clark moved to adopt the FY 2021/22 budget as recommended by the Budget Committee, seconded by Whitney Barrat and unanimously approved.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

Chair Sarah Langlois reported that the Committee (along with CROC) is working with Doug Emilio of APS in order to provide easy access to a priority listing of the infrastructure projects relative to timely completion and order of magnitude costs. Sarah also indicated that the library has requested Request for Information (RFI) presentations from 2 highly regarded firms specializing in the provision of project management skills and other similar services. It is anticipated that the Building & Grounds /CROC Committee (along with interested Library Board members) will interview these candidates in the next 6-week time period. Much discussion ensued. Among the topics introduced in this conversation:

- + Is it advisable to make a financial commitment to a facility unable to meet the long term needs of the community?
- + What level of financing would be needed outside of the resources available through the library fund balance?
- + Can a commitment to secure, upgrade and enhance our facility be made if our anticipated needs assessment/strategic plan is not yet in place?

The consensus of the Board was to affirm its intention in proceeding forward with interviewing prospective Project Managers candidates in order to prepare our library in meeting short term crucial facility infrastructure challenges.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Chair Daniel Bonnet discussed his recent attendance at a useful Montefiore Zoom workshop relating to the current status of efforts seeking to achieve an equitable distribution of vaccinations and the uneven impact on black and brown communities. Daniel noted this phenomenon is extremely unfair and needs to be appropriately addressed. Daniel also anticipates significant relief (in relation to housing, utilities and other necessities) our many residents experiencing economic challenges can expect to achieve in the future arrival of federal funding to our community.

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Chair Chuck Burke indicated that Tom Geoffino, in the near future, will present to the Finance Committee potential capital expenditures to be funded from our Fund Balance. Final decision regarding these capital initiatives will be made by the Library Board. He also indicated that Corey Galloway is working on the RFP needed for a Board reexamination of the library's banking affiliations.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Committee Member Dierdra Clark reported that the library is waiting on the library union to meet with its newly appointed CSEA representative. Upon completion of this meeting, the Board expects to begin collective bargaining negotiations in order to consider the adoption of a new contract to replace the document expiring June 30, 2021.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

Committee Chair Cory Galloway announced developer RXR has consented to provide a "no strings attached" grant (amount yet to be determined but possibly as much as \$35,000) to our library. Potential use of these funds are to be yet determined but may be used for a capital purchase or other significant operational need.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

Marjorie Sachs 14 Lakeside Drive

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Bonnet
Secretary