

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday December 9, 2021**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

Whitney Barrat, President  
Daniel Bonnet, Vice President  
Sarah Langlois, Secretary (absent)  
Charles Burke, Jr. (absent)  
Corey Galloway  
Beth Acocella  
Lucille Renwick (absent)

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino  
Jean Manning  
Yesika Torres

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The November 4th Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Corey Galloway moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Beth Acocella and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made the following report:

- WLS Board of Trustees held its last meeting of the year on Tuesday November 30, 2021. The Board meeting was preceded by an Annual Meeting of WLS which had only two items on the Agenda (no guest speaker this time): a) Election of three Trustees to replace the three whose five-year terms end this year. b) Report by the Executive Director on the activities of the organization this year 2021.
- The Executive Director dwelt at some length on the results of the 2020 Census, largely because the work that was completed through the Census project has played a major role in the work that has taken place in 2021, and will continue to be addressed going forward. The relationships that were forged during this exercise have proven to be invaluable to WLS as it addressed the challenges faced by member library staff and the public due to the pandemic.
- The Director highlighted some Census results that would have lasting impact on the region. For example: The Westchester County population increased to over one

million; eight of the County's municipalities had a self-response rate of over 80% in 2020, while in 2010 no municipality had reached that rate; Yonkers has moved ahead of Rochester to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in New York State; Portchester was able to identify and count an additional 800 households within existing housing units.

- For the next 10 years, the Director went on, these are the numbers that will impact Federal funding received by the State, County and Municipalities, and the amount of New York State Library Aid received by WLS and the member libraries.
- The Director concluded that the need for public libraries and public library systems is stronger than ever. They help individuals and communities in good and bad times. They build social connections and connect people to informational resources and services. It is work that is ongoing, important and meaningful.
- Trustees Board approved the WLS Operating Budget for 2022, and will consider the Capital Budget as soon as it is ready. The Board also approved an Executive Committee slate for 2022 where Karen Zevin (Croton, Montrose, Yorktown) will serve as President, Francis Okelo (New Rochelle) as Vice President, and Idris Scherer (Lewisboro/South Salem, North Salem, Somers) as Treasurer.
- The Board was reminded that the third and last Library Trustee Training, devoted to Personnel Matters, would take place virtually on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat deferred to Director Tom Geoffino.

#### DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Library Operations: Staff is currently observing plateauing levels of activity attributed to the growing COVID (Omicron) infection rate. Nonetheless, teen room, study/conference room Wi-Fi and computer usage continues to be strong.

+ Pending NYS Library Construction Grants: The WLS Board voted to approve the WLS PLDA Grants Committee recommendation to fund our 2 NYS Library Construction Grants for Main and Huguenot Children's libraries submitted in late August 2021. The Main Library grant application requests \$342,674 (with a library match of \$114,224) and proposes to provide a significant renovation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor space (similar in scope to the 2nd Floor Renovation Project) with significant renovations, upgrades and updates scheduled throughout the space. The Huguenot Children's Library grant application requests \$17,813 in grant monies (with a library match of \$5,937) and proposes to replace the 3 poorly performing aged ductless mini splits installed during the successful PHCL 1998 renovation with 3 replacement units. Library Administration continues to await further analysis by New York State Library and DASNY staff. The process will continue

through the current fiscal year with confirmation likely to be obtained by June 2022. It is estimated that the grant monies will be made available to our library in October 2022.

+ Main Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Renovation Project - Phase 2: We are nearing completion regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of this project – only a few remaining elements need to be in place prior to our closure of this important project. Time frames for the delivery of most outstanding items are now estimated to be sometime in January/February time period.

+ Library Collaboration with NRSD: On November 30th, our library began to temporarily host the NRSD Huguenot Academy (H.A.) (currently the alternative New Rochelle high school) on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Due to the destruction of the H.A. facility (thanks to Hurricane Ida) located in NRHS, space for student classes, etc. was granted on our 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and lobby meeting room and theater spaces. It is expected H.A. will vacate our library in February.

+ Continuation of the Trustee Handbook Club: Additional Zoom Library Trustee continuing education courses will be offered from January to June 2022 to all interested parties.

+ AARP Tax Preparation Service: It is likely that AARP will once again offer free tax prep help at our library. The program is tentatively scheduled to begin on February 1<sup>st</sup> (and end in mid-April) and will provide only appointment based assistance – no walk in traffic will be allowed. More details will be released in the near future.

+ Thanksgiving Parade 2021: Our library had a robust presence at the recent November 20<sup>th</sup> City Thanksgiving Parade. Library Board President Whiney Barrat (and daughter) library staff, along with Foundation President Chris Selin (and granddaughter) and Friends Board Member Joy Levy marched and upheld the library banner to great acclaim!

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends Book Store continue to provide the community with open hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The December Holiday Sale was a characterized as a financial success. Currently, donations are being accepted with 2 small boxes/bags allowed per individual.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup>. Its Annual Appeal letter has been sent out to its patron base (and the community at large.) Tonight will witness the latest Zoom installment of the Cocktails and Conversation with Great Holiday Gift Book ideas serving as the timely theme of the program. Planning is actively underway for the May 12th Foundation Gala event.

#### PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby:

+ approve the appointment of the following individuals:

Constantine Ziogas as an hourly contractor Teen Assistant on December 6, 2021 at an hourly salary of \$22.76.

Florence Simunyola as an hourly Librarian I (Children's Services) on December 12, 2021 at an hourly salary of \$24.21

+ approve the resignation of the following individual:

Beatriz Gayosso Alvarez as hourly page on November 12, 2021 at an hourly salary of \$14.00.

Seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

Tom indicated that the full time Library Assistant (Circulation) will be Amanda Burgos. Her start date will be January 3, 2022. The initial Zoom interviews for the vacant Assistant Director position are now underway. To date, we have committed to interviewing a pool of 9 strong candidates. A second “in-person” round will be established for a small group of “finalists” with this time frame tentatively scheduled for early 2022. Our newly created Programming position will witness initial Zoom interviews prior to the holiday week. The advertisement of the Librarian II (Children’s Services) position is underway and will close within the next week. We have no information yet from Civil Service regarding the posting of the hourly Laborer position.

#### BUDGET COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

#### BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

#### COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Chair Daniel Bonnet shared the community activities report as created by Community Outreach Coordinator Denise Link:

- Continued ERAP Assistance from the Hudson Valley Justice Center- help counselors for the ERAP rental assistance program and free legal advice, focusing on eviction, immigration, etc.
- Nonprofit groups tabling at NRPL include: **People USA**, a NY Project Hope provider of COVID-19 crisis counseling program that provides information, education, emotional support, and links to resources. **Urban Strategies**, a new Early Head Start Program in NR and the **Montefiore Hospital Diabetes Education Center**.
- Uptick in one-to-one assistance with unemployment and Id.Me verification, award letters from Social Security, credit reports for housing and Covid travel documents for traveling overseas. Many patrons are searching for holiday employment and need help applying online.
- Civic/Citizenship classes with Immigration attorney Sonica Dixon will resume in January 2022. Our healthcare Navigator, Elizabeth Blackwell, will return in person starting Jan. 2022, to assist with open enrollment for health coverage in a qualified health plan.
- An outreach and information session was given for the NRHS Alternative High School orientation at the NRPL theater for morning and evening meetings. A

Brief overview of NRPL, important database resources, teen areas and youth employment resources and college scholarship opportunities were discussed.

- \$500 was awarded to NRPL for The "Opportunity Youth Part" program mentor book club from the New York Community Trust and the efforts of long-time resident, Ann Spindel. The funds will help purchase books for their mentor Book Club.

Tom Geoffino reported that the library is planning to partner with Opportunity Youth Part (OYP) in order to assist Judge Rice and his team in their efforts to help young people facing legal difficulties. He also announced that once again our community will participate in the "5 Town, 1 Book" program as sponsored by CURE (The Coalition for Understanding Racism Through Understanding). The book The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee will the community "read" with each community hosting a program to discuss the book and its implications. Our library is scheduled to serve as the keynote site on March 27<sup>th</sup> in order to host the author Ms. McGhee in a hybrid (in-person and Zoom) meeting format.

#### FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Chair Corey Galloway reported the Committee is looking towards 2022 in regards to taking action regarding the Library's new banking affiliation given the upcoming institutional merge between M & T Bank and People's Bank. Tom Geoffino indicated that copies of the Library Audit (as a subset of the BOE approved NRSD Audit) have been made available to library trustees. He encouraged the Board to examine this document and prepare questions for Library Administration, NRSD Treasurer or NRSD external auditors.

#### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Committee member Daniel Bonnet reported that the Personnel Committee will meet with Library Union leadership on December 16<sup>th</sup> in order to continue Collective Bargaining negotiations.

#### POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

#### SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat indicated that the Strategic Plan/Needs Assessment is nearly ready to share with the community though additional Board feedback is still sought. Whitney also indicated that Public Works Partners will likely be asked to contribute additionally in order to add context and additional "heft" to the document. A change order will be forthcoming.

#### PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

Troy Brown            Address unknown.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois  
Secretary