

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday February 10, 2022**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The January 13th meeting minutes were not reviewed by the Trustees due to the lack of a quorum. The January meeting minutes will be reviewed at the March 10th meeting.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo reported on the following issues:

WLS Board held its first meeting of the year on Tuesday January 25, 2022. It was a brief and relatively light meeting. First part of the meeting was devoted to these in-house organizational matters:

+ Formal approval of the member composition of the Board's Executive Committee for this year 2022, as follows: President Karen Zevin of District I (Yorktown); Vice President Francis Okelo of District XIV (New Rochelle); Board Secretary Andrea Bober of District III (Bedford Hills); and Treasurer Idris Scherer of District IV.

+ The swearing-in of two new Trustees for a five-year term to replace the two retiring ones. And the re-election of three Trustees for another five years, beginning January 1, 2022. It was noted that, according to the WLS Bylaws, no member of the Board may serve as President for more than two consecutive terms.

+ *Formal approval by the Board of a WLS capital budget request for FY 2022 in the amount of \$189,000 for the purchase of a replacement vehicle and, b) for the purchase of a new Primary Server Hardware to replace the exiting one which has seen better days. The Board was informed that the new hardware would ensure that the VDI systems and virtual servers used by our member libraries and the WLS staff continue to operate in stable and uninterrupted environment.*

+ *I previously distributed to the Board a note prepared by the WLS Executive Director Terry which contains some important information affecting our libraries. Specifically, The New York State Budget for FY 2022/23 proposed an amount of \$96.1 million, for library aid, which is \$2 million more than was proposed for last year's budget; But the proposed amount for Public Library Construction Aid is \$14 million, which is \$20 million less than last year's allocation of \$34 million. In addition, the Library Advocacy Day this year will be held on Wednesday March 2, and will be virtual; as well as information regarding the amended Law on Open Meetings recently signed by Gov. Hochul.*

+ *The January Report by the WLS Executive Director contains a lot of very interesting and useful information on some activities of the organization. For example: On the issue of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), the Report notes that WLS has initiated an audit with Your Choice Coach to ensure that WLS fosters an environment where employees feel welcome, valued, respected and heard. This exercise will include an audit of organizational policies, practices and processes of WLS through a DEI lens, with the goal of creating more equitable and proactive inclusive process. Your Choice Coach is already interviewing a number of Board Trustees, including myself, for their views on DEI. This is a very positive development by WLS, and I fully support it.*

+ *Lastly, the series of Trustee training by the Trustee Handbook Book Club carried out last year will continue this year as well. The first training of the year is scheduled for Tuesday evening Feb 22, from 5 to 6.30 pm, and will be on the subject of FACILITIES. The complete schedule of the trainings has already been circulated to this Board our Library Director Tom.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat deferred her Strategic Plan/Needs Assessment update for the Special Projects Committee report later in the meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Library Operations: Staff continue to characterize activity levels as quiet and attribute this phenomenon to the prolonged anxiety surrounding the COVID infection rate. As previously indicated teen room, study/conference room Wi-Fi and computer usage

continues to be strong. Some in-house Adult programming continues with Children's preschool programming returning to in-person status in mid-March.

+ 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 3rd 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 2nd Floor Renovation Project - Phase 2: Most aspects of this project are now nearly complete with a few remaining elements (some shelving and computer furniture) requiring completion prior to our closure of this project. Time frames for the finalization of most outstanding items are now estimated to be sometime in March.

+ Main Library Fire Stopping & Safety Project: In September 2020, our library received a NYS Library Construction Grant in order to address issues surrounding the integrity of the existing fire-rated demising walls throughout the Main Library. The project architect is currently working with his team and library staff in order to schedule in a series of investigations (in a non-invasive manner) of the demising walls prior to the creation of the project construction drawings.

+ Main Children's Bathroom Renovation: Our library continues to move forward in the process of renovating the Main Library children's bathroom. This project will transform 2 tiny, dark and uncomfortable restrooms into 1 (more spacious) ADA Compliant family friendly restroom. Funds to be utilized will be taken from the recently established Capital Projects Fund. Questions ensued.

+ Family Foundation Grant: The library continues to be engaged in discussions with an anonymous Family Foundation regarding a possible series of grants. No formal determinations regarding these potential grants have yet been made.

+ Continuation of the Trustee Handbook Club: Additional Zoom Library Trustee continuing education courses are being offered from January to June 2022 to all interested parties. The next workshop is scheduled for February 22nd and will address the topic of facilities maintenance.

+ AARP Tax Preparation Service: This extraordinarily popular service (as provided by AARP volunteers) returned to our library on February 8th in order to offer free tax prep help at our library. The program is strictly appointment based (no walk in traffic will be allowed.)

+ 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 2nd floor and lobby meeting room and theater spaces. On January 20th, H.A. vacated our library in favor of another temporary space able to accommodate a full week of classes.

+ CURE: The “5 Town, 1 Book” program as sponsored by CURE (The Coalition for Understanding Racism Through Understanding) is moving forward. The book The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee is the community “read” with each community (New Rochelle, Larchmont, Rye, Harrison and Mamaroneck) hosting a program to discuss this book and its implications. Our library is scheduled to serve as the keynote site on March 27th in order to host the author Ms. McGhee in the Zoom meeting format.

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends Book Store continue to provide the community with open hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The February 4th and 5th Winter Book Sale was characterized as a modest success despite inclement weather conditions. Donations continue to be accepted with 2 small boxes/bags allowed per individual.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for March 21st. Planning is growing in activity in anticipation for the May 12th Foundation Guardian Gala event.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Second interviews (in-person) have begun for the 4 Assistant Director finalists. The Programming Coordinator position has been accepted by candidate Tobe Sevush. She will begin work on March 16th. The Librarian II (Children’s Services) Bilingual position was approved by the Civil Service Commission at its January 26th meeting. It is now open and being advertised by Civil Service with extra advertising in local, county state and national job sites with attention especially given to Spanish and Black library job sites.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Committee member Whitney Barrat indicated that the Budget Committee will take place on February 23rd.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Tom Geoffino shared the community activities report as created by Community Outreach Coordinator Denise Link:

- *Job Search Coach Stories: A Job Search participant with a fashion degree who had graduated during the pandemic reached out to announce that she was thrilled after her first day of work in a new job as a Media Coordinator.*

- *A long time Job Search participant who had been looking for an admin role, had done some holiday work, obtained a receptionist job in a dental office where they are training her. Civic/Citizenship participant*
- *A long time Civic/Citizenship participant who a year ago began her Naturalization Process at NRPL received her Citizenship and will apply for her U.S. Passport.*
- *Westchester County Health Care Navigator, Elizabeth Blackwell, is in-person on every Wednesdays 10am-2pm @ NRPL. Civic/Citizenship classes are virtual; on Thursdays @ 6pm. register on our NRPL calendar. ESL classes continue @ NRPL, still spaces left. More info. LibraryESL@sunywcc.edu 914-606-6607.*
- *NRPL Community Outreach/Info. Session at the monthly IEYMS mobile food Wednesday, 2/9 @ 4pm-5pm.*
- *Continued Lobby tabling sessions with non- profits; Project Hope/People USA and Urban Strategies Head Start Program.*
- *New for 2022: NYS GED Testing Program. The BTOP Help & Learning Center supports the transition for students who are continuing thei*

Tom also shared Marketing & Communications Coordinator Lisa Itzkowitz's report:

Email marketing, average open rate in January, 29% (has been trending up from 12-13% in July) Building targeted email lists by requesting registration for most adult programs; working to "clean up list" by deleted contacts who have not opened emails in over 2 years. Adding to base with new library card holders.

- **January programs**

***Film Series**, relaunched NRPL Film series with [Chris Poggiali](#), 16 attendees at first session, screened indie film Loose Ends*

***Crossword Coach** (Virtual), 14 participants. Follow up survey received positive response, offering again in March and April*

***Chair Yoga**, consistent following 6-10/week - for many, this is their only access to yoga/meditation. Have contracted with instructor to run through May*

***Researching Your New Rochelle House**, 140 registrants; 89 participants include CE Latimer*

***Yoga and Meditative Arts**, avg, 10 participants/session (3 sessions). Invited Angela back to do 2 sessions/ month, March - May*

- **February**

***Film Series**, in Celebration of Black History month, Scott Joplin*

***Cornelius Vanderbilt: The Last Tycoon** (Virtual Lecture), 15 participants from New Ro. Joint program with multiple libraries; 143 total participants*

Coming up....

***Crochet Your Own Scarf**, Feb 11 (10 registrants) This was originally a teen program, but interest was low so Rio offered the supplies, and her talent, to run a workshop for adults.*

***Wayne Henderson Concert** (utilizing FB boost to help promote)*

African / African American Folklore with Donna Washington (Virtual) - Storytelling, Joint program with 4 other libraries.

Financial Literacy for Teens, Feb 25, workshop led by My Money Workshop financial literacy educators.

Misc.:

Great Migration & Memorial Highway Exhibit: *Worked with Anne Zahner, of Harvard Advanced Leadership Program, to bring the exhibit to the Winter Lumen Gallery. On display through March 3.*

NRED Black History Month Celebration: *Coordinating with Westchester Association of Black Educators to have book display in conjunction with authors who are participating in CSDNR celebration.*

Ajkun Ballet - *NRPL is giving Ajkun access to the theater for rehearsals at no charge (as they could not use NRHS this year). In return, they will do a final dress rehearsal for local school children, on April 8. Trinity will send 20 5th graders. Reaching out to Columbus and Jefferson to see if they would be interested.*

Our Children, Our Artists - *The art exhibit will return this May. In touch with Deepak Marwah and staff.*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Tom Geoffino reported that the Staff Collective Bargaining Memorandum of Agreement is scheduled to be signed by CSEA and Board leadership in the near future.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat indicated that the draft Strategic Plan/Needs Assessment is nearing completion with final comments expected from staff, Foundation and Library Board members. Additional input regarding data points and images will be made available to the PWP consultant team by staff for inclusion in the final documents.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No public discussion took place.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary