

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

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The January Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Chuck Burke moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

The February Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Beth Acocella and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo presented the following report:

The Library Advocacy Day, celebrated this year on Wednesday March 2 was very successful. It was notably attended by virtually all our local political representatives who expressed their full and continuing support for the libraries in our Westchester County, noting the important part these libraries play in the life our communities. On their part, the library representatives expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the representatives for their support, and hoped that every effort would be made to resist consistent defunding of public libraries but to maintain and increase State budget allocations for the libraries, especially the library construction aid. The representatives were encouraged to visit the libraries in order to see for themselves the wonderful construction and other improvements being made by several libraries, and the great use being made by patrons of their local libraries. State aid money is therefore being very well utilized by the libraries.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat reported that the draft Strategic Plan/Needs Assessment is now complete and will be publicized and made available to the New Rochelle community during the week of April 3rd – 9th, National Library Week. She thanked everyone contributing to this effort, including Board members, library staff and New Rochelle residents as well as the consultants Public Works Partners.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

- + Library Operations: Staff have begun to characterize activity levels as slowly but steadily beginning to increase. As documented in earlier reports, 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 within the next week.
- + 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: This project continues to edge closer to completion. Minor electrical components are the remaining outstanding elements to be received by our library. Time frames for the finalization of most outstanding items are now estimated to be sometime in April.
- + 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 continues to work 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: The renovation of the Main Library children's bathroom is complete. This project transformed 2 tiny, dark and uncomfortable restrooms into 1 (more spacious) ADA Compliant family friendly restroom. Additionally, we were able to reinstall a water fountain (bottles only) in the children's room. (We will also reinstall water fountains on the 2nd and 3rd floors within the next month.)

+ 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 March 29th and will address the topic of Policies and Risk Management.

+ AARP Tax Preparation Service: As of March 3rd, the AARP Tax-Aide Service (our extraordinarily popular volunteer AARP service is fully booked and cannot accept new appointments. Residents interested in availing themselves of free tax assistance are now asked to call 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277) for information on other locations that are taking appointments. At this point in time, AARP is uncertain when/if they will be able to once again be able to accept appointments prior to the ending of the 2022 tax deadline.

+ 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 virtual keynote site (our theater will allow for attendees to participate in this program) 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. 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.

+ Library Mask Mandate: Given NY State and Westchester County withdrawal of the mandatory mask mandate (along with extremely state and local minimal infection rates), the Board discussed the possibility of relinquishing the mandatory mask mandate for staff and patrons. Much discussion ensued. It was the sense of the Board that, as of March 14th, the wearing of masks inside NRPL facilities would be optional per the preferences of each individual. Library theater usage will also no longer require masks but will enforce populating the space with no larger than 50% capacity at any point in time. The Board declared that these revised regulations are subject to modification per current conditions and circumstances.

+ Karen Allen Bequest: The Library was the very fortunate beneficiary of a bequest from one of its most faithful and effective volunteers, Karen Allen. Ms. Allen spent many devoted years as a Local History and Archival Center volunteer assisting in a variety of tasks and functions. In the future, the organization intends to recognize Ms. Allen in gratitude for her work and generosity. In the context of this situation, President Whitney Barrat also discussed the need for our library to create an approved “Naming “Policy in relation to similar circumstances.

Chuck Burke moved that the Allen Bequest Partial Receipt and Release be approved, seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

Daniel Bonnet moved that the Allen Bequest Donor/Donee Agreement be approved, seconded by Chuck Burke and approved.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

David Torres dtorres@wlsmail.org

PERSONNEL REPORT:

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

+ the resignation of Amanda Burgos, full time Library Assistant (Circulation Services), effective February 2, 2022, at an annual salary of \$51,873

+ the employment of Evonne Collier-Pearson, hourly Library Clerk (Circulation Services), effective August 31, 2021 at a salary of \$19.66 per hour.

Seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

Second interviews (in-person) have been completed for the 4 Assistant Director finalists with a meeting scheduled on March 18th to discuss the candidates. Tobe Sevush has been appointed to the Programming Coordinator position. 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:

Chair Chuck Burke recapped the four alternative budgets as created by the Budget Committee for Board consideration. Budget Scenario 1 calls for an increase of 7.56% over the current year's budget. Budget Scenario 2 shows an increase of 4.19%. Budget Scenario 3 calls for a 3.31% increase.

Chuck characterized the Budget Committee's efforts as challenging as given the following non-discretionary increases. The factors influencing this budget increase (as it impacts on each of the 3 budget options) is as follows:

- + Sizable full time salary increases which is a blend of contract mandated increases, (salary increases for all staff -union and non-union) as well as parallel increases in other salary related accounting lines.
- + Escalating medical insurance costs due to the pandemic and its aftereffects.
- + Significant increase in our payment to the New York State & Local Retirement System

The 7.56% budget option (Scenario 1) provides for the non-discretionary increases as previously detailed as well as the creation of Librarian I (Children's Services) position focused on outreach with elementary schools and families. This budget also allows for increases in programming and collection development funds. The 4.19% (Scenario 2) budget eliminates the proposed new Librarian I position and places the Library Assistant

(Circulation Services) position on hold but retains the proposed programming and collection development increases along with level funding for all other accounting lines. The 3.31% budget option (Scenario 3) mirrors Scenario 2 budget option but eliminates the programming and materials budget increases.

Chuck Burke indicated that the 4.19% budget option (Scenario 2) was the recommended option the Board should adopt but, given the absence of 3 Board members, asked the Board to table the vote until the April Board meeting.

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:

- *Search coach sessions with Rebecca Mazin continue Tuesdays from 5-8 pm and had a successful Teen Job Search program, where teen attendees are encouraged to bring their resume and cover letter for review.*
- *BTOP Help & Learning center sessions are on the rise, with many patrons needing assistance with unemployment benefits, snap recertification and housing information and the road to citizenship questions.*
- *Westchester County Health Care Navigator, Elizabeth Blackwell, is in-person on every Wednesdays 10am-2pm @ NRPL. Appointments available (914)336-0925*
- *An increase in students for Civic/Citizenship classes at NRPL has made for lively sessions. The BTOP center is supporting students who don't have computer access with laptops in the library. Civic/Citizenship classes are virtual on Thursdays in March @ 6pm. Register on our NRPL calendar.*
- *NRPL Community Outreach/Info. Session at the monthly IEYMS mobile food Wednesday, 3/9 @ 4pm-5pm. Library information, free book giveaways and more.*
- *Continued Lobby tabling sessions with non- profits, Project Hope/People USA and Urban Strategies Head Start Program.*
- *The BTOP Help & Learning Center supports the transition for students who are continuing their High School Equivalency Exam (HSE) journey. The personalized learning program from WLS, GED Academy, is available for library patrons along with a study coach. English or Spanish. Continued tutoring sessions with a volunteer math coach on Fridays.*

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

Email marketing: continuing to build targeted email lists by requesting registration for most adult programs; using targeted lists to promote select programs (i.e. attendees at 2 past jazz concert received email about upcoming Jazz concert.) Program attendance always below registration (the nature of free programs), but registrant names continually used to build overall email list.

+ FEBRUARY PROGRAMS (as of 2/11)

Continuing to explore the value of virtual programs by partnering with other libraries (keeping cost low) to try a range of offerings.

Crochet Your Own Scarf, Feb 11 (10 registrants; 5 participants) Rio taught participants how to crochet a simple scarf.

Wayne Henderson Concert, Feb 12, 60 attendees

African / African American Folklore with Donna Washington (Virtual) - Storytelling, Joint program with 4 other libraries in celebration of Black History Month. 12 registrants; 6 attendees

Financial Literacy for Teens, workshop postponed due to weather. Program had 13 registrants.

Registrants were not Teen room regulars, so this program is reaching a different group. Key is to get registrants to be attendees! Plan to hold during April break, date TBD **Chair Yoga** - gets a consistent following of 8-10 people/week with 13-14/session in recent weeks.

+ MARCH PROGRAMS

Crossword Coach, March 1, 17 registrants; 7 participants. Small but very engaged group who really enjoyed the program.

Cooking with Rinku (Virtual), March 3, 17 registrants. First of 5-week cooking series.

Partnering with 3 other libraries. Participants came in and out, but hit about 35 at max. 9 additional NR patrons registered since first session

Songcatchers Concert, March 6 - about 25 attendees

Yoga and Meditation, March 8. 20 registrants; waitlist 10, attendees 11

+ GALLERY

NRAA Circle Art Show, through March 19

NRCA Ragtime Exhibit, March 20 - April 2, 2022

+ COMING UP:

Global Jazz Community All Star Female Band, March 12, 2022 - 33 registrants to date **Back in the Bronx (Virtual)**, March 13, 2022, 169 registrants to date

Film Series: On the Basis of Sex (in celebration of Women's History Month), March 17, 2022

Kenn Morr Concert, March 26

Five Towns. One Book Discussion with *The Sum of Us* author Heather McGhee. Current plan is author will be virtual with live and remote audience

+ MISC:

Summer Programs with BID: Met with Karel Littman to discuss summer programs. BID committed to co-fund several programs, beginning this summer.

June 11, 2022: Bloom and Grow Kickoff

NRPL:

- Seed planting activity for children

BID:

- Seed giveaway, Bookmarks impregnated with seeds

- Entertainment - Lady on Stilts

Other ideas for BID: Plant exchange, plant cocktails

+ June 25, 2022: Summer Reading Kickoff: Oceans of Possibilities

NRPL:

- Summer Reading Sign up with Book Give-a-way
- Ocean in a Bag craft activity
- Other activities? Goldfish toss? Fish give-a-way?
- Pout-Pout Fish costumed character for photo opps
- Teen Activity

BID:

- Sparkle tattoos
- Balloons/photo area
- Instagram Frame/props
- Bubble Guy

July 14, 28, 8/11, 8/25: Thursday Nights Family Fun in the Park - Family Entertainment BID to co-fund entertainment geared to families. Picnic meals available from downtown restaurants.

Outdoor events with theater as back up

July 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9, 16, 2022: International Music and Dance Capitalize on the success of past programs. BID to co-fund entertainment (performances in theater)

Juneteenth:

Attended the first planning meeting for Juneteenth events on June 18 - 20. Exploring potential Library programs including family art project to lead up to the weekend's quilt making activity, re-screening of Leveling Lincoln, music or dance performance.

Meeting Needs of Spanish Speaking Community

Meeting with Mariana Jusefj 3/11 to better understand how NRPL can further engage Spanish speakers. What are they looking for at the library (beyond children's programs?)

New Rochelle Marketing Cohort Meetings -

First of what will hopefully be monthly meetings with marketing professionals from various NR agencies. First meeting included representatives from the City of New Rochelle, CSDNR, Montefiore, BGCNR, Iona. Great forum for sharing information and ideas to help promote all we each do across all segments of NR, and coordinate efforts to minimize overlap of key programs. Next meeting will hopefully be in person, hosted at NRPL.

"Building" LEGO Program for Children's Room

Utilized Volunteer New York portal to create donation opportunity. Response has been very strong.

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat indicated that the Library was planning to move forward with the installation of Dale Zheutlin murals overlooking the Lawton Street entrance. The appearance will be similar to the Zheutlin murals currently facing Memorial Highway.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary