

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday May 5, 2022**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The April Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo presented the following report:

In the last few weeks, the WLS Board has been busy working on the following issues:

- *Revision of the WLS Bylaws;*
- *Revision of the WLS Whistle-blower protection policy;*
- *Preparation and submission of the WLS annual report to the New York State for 2021;*
- *The situation with regard to the Mount Vernon Public Library: assisting the library in preparing and submitting its 2020 annual report to the State, and its library registration application to the NYS Library Division of Library Development; formal approval of the transfer on a temporary basis of the Central Library from MVPL to the Peekskill Field Library;*
- *Approval by the WLS Board of \$465,000 requested by the WLS IT to be added to the Capital Budget for the replacement of the current library hardware with the new network infrastructure design for the benefit of the participating member's libraries.*

I will provide a fuller background briefing on each of these issues as soon as the WLS Board has completed action on them.

Tom Geoffino also reported on the following issues:

- The ongoing 2022 Trustee Handbook Book Club zoom program will continue with the next session (PR and Advocacy) scheduled for June 14th.
- The following message as detailed by WLS on April 20th was shared with the Library Board and the New Rochelle community:

*The WLS network was the target of a Ransomware attack last week. The security measures in place were able to prevent the brunt of the attack. **No patron data was compromised as a result of this attack.** Due to the nature of the public computers they were easier to exploit. Although WLS has removed the most visible elements of the Ransomware and the machines may appear to be usable, we feel it is pertinent to do a full computer restore due to the sophisticated nature of this attack. We are working quickly to make sure all public machines are safe for patron usage. Therefore, we are leaving most of the public computers offline until a member of the WLS team can perform the necessary tasks. The main goal of WLS is to protect and provide a safe internet environment for all its patrons. Thank you for your understanding and patience during this time.*

Discussion ensued.

- Additionally, the status of Mount Vernon Public Library (MVPL) as the designated WLS Central Library and other challenges facing MVPL was a topic of discussion. Francis Okelo summarized the situation and the steps the WLS Board and its Executive Director are engaged in relative to this difficult state of affairs.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat reminded the New Rochelle community that May 17th will have the opportunity to participate in the election regarding the Library's FY 2022/23 draft budget proposal along with the need to fill the vacant Library Trustee. Whitney "humbly asked for community support" regarding the May 17th election.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Library Operations: Staff are witnessing increased general activity levels are but steadily beginning to increase. As documented in earlier reports, teen room, study/conference room Wi-Fi and computer usage continue to be strong. In-house and remote Adult programming along with Children's preschool programming are in place and are frequently drawing many interested participants. Additionally, our wide array of social service efforts are meeting with significant community support and interest.

+ 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 in the near future. 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 is on the cusp of completion. It is expected that we will apply to close out this grant prior to June 30, 2022.

+ 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 examine the facility status with his team and library staff in order to better understand the circumstances surrounding the demising walls prior to the creation of the project construction drawings.

+ 2022 Prospective NYS Library Construction Grant: The library is exploring the possibility of applying for 2 NYS Library Construction Grant in August 2022. The Main Library grant will provide for the installation of a series of sound absorbing acoustic reduction solutions throughout our noisy facility. The Huguenot Children's Library grant will likely allow for the installation of storage solutions throughout the facility and may possibly include other yet to be determined elements.

+ 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.

+ AARP Tax Preparation Service: In 2022, our amazing AARP Tax Preparation partners reported that they prepared and electronically submitted 260 returns for library patrons and worked additionally with 240 patrons in relation to a variety of IRS tax issues. All parties are hopeful that 2023 will see a return to the original service model that provides for drop-in service. This model will allow for the tax preparation team to assist far more patrons than the appointment model employed in 2022 due to the pandemic.

+ May 21st Library Budget and Vote: The library sent out letters to local neighborhood associations and other civic groups seeking the opportunity to present the FY 2021/2022 budget request. To date, we have received only 1 invitation to speak. This lack of interest is similar to 2021, we believe this lack of interest is attributable to the pandemic.

Currently, only 1 candidate (Rhiannon Navin) is campaigning for the Board seat vacated by Chuck Burke. The library election budget flyer will be mailed to all registered New Rochelle voters following the May 5th Budget Hearing

+ CURE: The "5 Town, 1 Book" program as sponsored by CURE (The Coalition for Understanding Racism Through Understanding) ended on March 27th with the keynote program featuring author Heather McGhee discussing her book, The Sum of Us. The program was virtual but was hosted by our library with viewing available in our theater as well via Zoom. In late April, CURE staff met with Sound Shore library administrators in order to review this year's "5 Town, 1 Book" effort. 2022 was characterized as a success with nearly unanimous positive participant reviews but attendance declined, especially in relation to the keynote address. Goals for next year include obtaining County funding for the 2023 program with the added objective of increasing the program to include Westchester County as a whole. Relative to the selection of the 2023 5 Town

Book, preliminary conversations are focusing on noted teen poet and author Jason Reynolds.

+ 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 May 16th. Excitement is growing in anticipation of the May 12th Foundation Guardian Gala event.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

No report was made.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

No report was made in the aftermath of the earlier Public Budget hearing held earlier in the evening.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

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

The Help &; Learning Center continues to meet with patrons one to one with all their online information and resources needs.

- *As April came and went, many patrons needed assistance with social security concerns, creating accounts with NYS benefits, including SNAP, unemployment claims and credit reports.*
- *The Chrome books have been circulating regularly and some patrons have been receiving coaching and tutorials on its use.*
- *Literacy and math coaching continues, as two more students have joined the math coach for GED math prep.*
- *The NRED monthly mobile food pantry is always a great chance to meet up with the community on May 11th, from 4:00pm-5:00pm, in addition to information on library programs and free book giveaways.*
- *Our job coach and health care navigator are busy in the library each meeting with patrons and providing support and information.*
- *Outreach tabling by other organizations in our lobby includes Urban Strategies and People USA/Project Hope.*
- *Our Job fair in collaboration with First Source Referral of New Rochelle was a great success. The positive job market is an opportunity for residents to explore local jobs, with over 75+ people in attendance.*

- *A chance to make new community connections at New Rochelle High School happens on May 12, at their Community Resource Night, from 6:30pm-8:00pm*

Tom also shared Marketing & Communications Coordinator Lisa Itzkowitz and Programming Coordinator Tobe Sevush's joint report:

Email marketing: *Open rates continue to exceed 30%. Last week's (April 28) eblast had the highest open rate to date, 35% (surpassing high of 34% rate on 4/14)*

Summer Print Newsletter: *Summer print newsletter in development for July distribution.*

Website: *Lisa and Nikki met with our website designer to discuss best practices. Lisa evaluating short term and long term potential updates, and associated expenses.*

April/May Programs

- **Martial Arts Movie Marathon**, April 23; 20 attendees (3 consecutive Martial Arts Films, curated by Chris Poggioli.)
- **Songcatchers Volunteer Concert**, April 24; 137 attendees
- **Be Money Smart (Financial Literacy Workshop for Teens)** April 30; 11 attendees. Workshop (run by My Money Workshop) received excellent feedback from participants. Exploring additional opportunities for financial literacy workshops for teens, and adults.
- **"Acting Shakespeare"**, May 1; 25 attendees, (co-sponsored by the New Rochelle Council on the Arts)
- **Chair Yoga** (mid-day, 2x/week) and **Yoga and Meditative Arts** (evening, 2x/month) continue to have consistent and strong following each session (10 - 16 participants.)

Coming Up:

Art Gallery

Our Children, Our Artists Art Exhibit. Elementary school exhibit, May 5 - May 14; Middle and High School exhibit, May 20 - June 2

Lincoln Corridor Exhibit, June (as part of Citywide Juneteenth celebration.)

New Rochelle Art Association exhibits, July/August

Programs/Events

- **Mindfulness Meditation**, May 12, 19, 26, Virtual program in collaboration with partner libraries
- **Freedomland USA**, May 14; Lecture and presentation of memorabilia from famed Bronx amusement park
- **Soundshore Chorale Spring Concert**, May 15
- **Sing Your Heart Out Rehearsals Begin**, May 16; The popular adult singing program, led by Robert Puleo, returns for the spring/summer season. Weekly rehearsals to culminate in a final performance on July 16.
- **Manzanar National Historic Site Lecture**, virtual program in recognition of AAPI Month, May 18
- **Women's Jazz Ensemble** (rescheduled from March), May 22
- **Film Series, Helter Skelter**, June 4
- **Citywide Juneteenth Celebration** - NRPL events:
 - **Pre-Juneteenth Paper Quilt Making Workshop**, June 9
 - **Gospel Choir performance**, June 17 (Friday evening)
 - **Bokandeye African Dance Troupe** workshop and performance, June 20

MISC:

- *AARP concluded their Tax Aide program at NRPL on April 14. They prepared approximately 260 returns and advised an additional 240 people with non-return issues. All help was on an appointment only basis, which proved to be difficult to administer. It's AARP's hope to return to the no appointment system of previous years, as they were able to help far more people under that system.*
- *After months of discussion, NRBID agreed to provide \$15,000 to The Friends to fund co-sponsored NRPL/NRBID programs.*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No member of the public spoke.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat reported that the Strategic Planning Steering Group was scheduled to meet on May 24th.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary