

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday January 12, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

Whitney Barrat, President
Daniel Bonnet, Vice President
Sarah Langlois, Secretary (Absent)
Rhiannon Navin
Corey Galloway (Absent)
Beth Acocella
Lucille Renwick

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The November Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

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

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD;

Vincent Malefetano: 9 Fairview Place, New Rochelle

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made the following report:

After the year-end holiday recess, the WLS Board of Trustees will hold its first meeting of the New Year on Tuesday, January 31. The Board is expected to welcome and swear-in three new Trustees for a five-year term, replacing those trustees whose terms expired on December 31, 2022. The Board will also establish its various committees and approve their respective chairs and membership.

*The Board's Executive Team is expected to continue in its present composition for another year: **President Karen Zevin** of District 1 (Croton, Montrose, Yorktown); **Vice President Francis Okelo** of District 14 (New Rochelle); **Secretary Andrea Bober** of District 10 (Portchester, Rye Brook, Rye Town, Rye City); **Treasurer Edris Scherer** of District 4 (Lewisboro, Somers, North Salem).*

The Board will continue to monitor developments in various communities round the country affecting the policies and operations of the libraries (e.g. book banning, etc.).

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

No report was made.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ 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. After much delay, we were notified in September both grants had been approved by New York State. In late December, the checks for the Main (3rd Floor Renovation) and HCL (Air Conditioning) grants arrived. We have now started the processing of reconfirming our orders and costs associated with both projects.

+ 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 and his team (along with assistance from the library custodial staff) have since completed a more thorough examination of the facility demising walls and determined the extent of the work is far greater than the original estimation. Having obtained the Board's approval for the additional funds needed to complete this project, the project architect completed the project documentation necessary for the successful completion of the project. Upon completion of the bidding process, 2 vendors emerged as viable options regarding the award of the contract. After much consideration, the project architect has requested that the contract to be awarded to Gleason Powers (GP) for the fee of \$201,500 despite the other vendor providing a proposal that was \$1,950 lower in cost. The rationale for the GP recommendation was related to the architect's characterization of this firm as "most qualified and responsive during the bidding process." Much discussion ensued.

Whitney Barrat moved that Gleason Powers (GP) be awarded the Fire Stopping & Safety project for the fee of \$201,500, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

+ 2022 NYS Library Construction Grant: The library submitted 2 NYS Library Construction Grant applications in August 2022. The intention of the Main Library grant was to underwrite the installation of a series of sound absorbing acoustic reduction solutions throughout our noisy facility. The goal of the Huguenot Children's Library grant was to allow for the installation of storage solutions throughout the facility and will include enhancements to the basement relative to flooring, an upgraded kitchen

configuration and the installation of an exterior patio artist wall. Due to the submission of numerous WLS member library grant applications overwhelming the total grants funds available, all member library grant submissions received cuts in award amounts. Our grant applications were also given reduced funding amounts necessitating reconfiguration of both applications. On September 27, 2022, the WLS Board of Directors awarded the Main Library Noise Abatement Project \$175,591 in NY State Construction grant funds with a required library match of \$57,424 thus creating a total project cost of \$229,625. In addition, the WLS Board of Directors awarded the HCL Facility Improvement Project \$24,380 in NY State Construction grant funds with a required library match of \$24,380 thus creating a total project cost of \$48,760. Further analysis by New York State Library and DASNY staff will occur throughout the current fiscal year with confirmation hopefully obtained by June 2023. If this timetable is accurate, it is estimated that the grant monies will be made available to our library in October 2023.

+ Yiddish Book Discussion Grant: In October 2022, our library was notified that it was successful in its grant application from the American Library Association and the Yiddish Book Center (YBC) for a Yiddish book discussion effort. The intention of this grant initiative is to use translated Yiddish works to engage local communities in discussions on social issues such as immigration, displacement, and economic and political upheaval. Our program theme, “Stories of Exile,” will utilize narratives which grapple with questions of identity and belonging. Former Library Board member Haina Just-Michael, serving as volunteer book discussion leader, will receive training at the YBC in later January. Upon completion of training, Haina and library staff will meet to strategize “next steps” in this exciting program offering.

+ AARP Tax Return Program: This perennially popular free tax preparation and electronic filing program, as provided by a group of dedicated AARP volunteers, will return to assist our community (in our meeting room/theater space) on February 2nd and will continue through April 18. The hours for this service will be 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays with assistance only available through a “no reservation /walk in” basis only.

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends Book Store continue to provide the community with open hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Donations will be accepted with 2 small boxes/bags allowed per individual. The next Friends Board meeting is scheduled for February 14th at 1 pm and will be in-person at the Main Library

+ NRPL Foundation: The next January 19th Cocktails & Conversation event will be remote and features the noted legal journalist Dahlia Lithwick. The “Welcome to New Rochelle” program is scheduled for January 25th at 6:30 pm (and sponsored by the Foundation along with NRCA, NR BID, NR Fund for Educational Excellence organizations) and will focus on connecting with recently arrived downtown New Rochelle residents. The “Game On!” Foundation fundraiser is scheduled for March 10th with planning and sponsorship/ticket sales efforts moving forward. On March 11th the mini-golf course will continue to be located throughout the library and will be made available (at no cost) to the community for most of the day. More details will be shared in the future. The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for January 17th and will be in-person at the Main Library

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, to hereby approve the employment of Rocco Onorino, Library Page, effective January 27, 2023 at a salary of \$15.00 per hour, seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

Interviews for the Social Media/Videographer position are now underway. We are expecting to make an offer to a candidate later in January and hope to see the candidate begin work in February. The library is currently interviewing for the vacant hourly Children's Library Assistant position. We expect to make an announcement regarding the employment of a candidate(s) in the near future.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

The Children's Room fall programs ended in mid-November in order for the department to reset and prepare for the December Break programs that took place from the 27th to the 30th. Once those programs rolled around, nearly 700 patrons attended the 7 programs offered over the course of 4 days. 6 of those 7 programs brought in at least 100 kids and their caregivers.

We can also report that teens were also occupied and engaged in a myriad of programs from movie nights to making holiday bracelets and origami ornaments. The increasing popularity of the space is drawing teens from all over the county who are turning the teen room into a destination. A few clever and resourceful teens approached us about offering a peer tutoring program which we agreed to start in January. We know of several students who are interested in such a service. This initiative is an integral component (the third goal) in our strategic plan.

In the adult department, there is a deep and concerted effort to right size our collection. This maintenance project will identify materials to be weeded, discarded and/or replaced. As we move out of the pandemic and return to a new normalcy, we are focused on getting a collection that targets the evolving learning needs of our readers.

Public Libraries are the focus of challenges that threaten their place in our society's democracy. In order to protect ourselves from such challenges, we have begun work on a thorough and comprehensive collection development policy. This policy will be submitted to the board shortly for approval.

Lastly, as we look back at 2022 and compare it to 2021, we saw our growth in leaps and bounds. We see increases across several areas starting with library card holders, children and teen book circulation, reference desk transactions and program attendance. These positive figures speak to the place and purpose we realize in the lives of our users.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Budget Committee Chair Whitney Barrat reported that the Committee will meet on January 27th in order to begin the creation of the proposed FY 2023/24 budget. The Committee expects to provide an update of the status of this process at the February 9th Board meeting. The goal is for the Board to vote to adopt the proposed FY 2023/24 budget at the March meeting. Chair Whitney promised to provide the Board with detailed information about the possible budget scenarios prior to the February meeting along with

the opportunity to ask questions via email and in-person prior to and at the March meeting.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Rhiannon Navin commended the Community Relations staff for their successes in the previous month. She shared the following staff reports.

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

Highlights of BTOP Help & Learning Center January 2023

The BTOP room kicks off the new year by connecting our library patrons to many online community services including food support, employment, government benefits and online learning. Chromebooks and hotspots are popular with library patrons, 16 more devices being checked out in December and some patrons are seeking digital help with their devices. GED learners are signing up for the GED academy for online learning and practice tests and can now attend orientation sessions each month to help prepare adult learners to reach their goals.

- *Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin continues to assist individuals who are looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes and cover letters, completing online job applications, searching for jobs on the Internet, networking, and honing interview skills. Attendance has been robust.*
- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell is assisting with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan, Wednesday mornings 10-1pm.*
- *Community Outreach: Food Pantry visits continue at Isaac Young Middle school on 1/11/2023. Senior Housing visits will resume in February 2023.*
- *Notary Nights at the library is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 1/19/2023 @ 6:00-7:30 pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.*
- *Back by popular demand, the English Conversation Club is a volunteer-led program that offers English learners a chance to practice their English through chatting and conversation, on Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm through February. This popular class is seeking volunteers to help lead classes in March 2023.*
- *In-person Westchester Community College ESL classes for beginners for Winter/Spring 2023 resume at NRPL. Classes begin 1/19 and run until 5/4.*
- *Library patrons interested in becoming US citizens can attend New in-person Civic classes for the citizenship test on Saturday afternoons @ 1pm, led by experienced instructor/attorney Sonica Dixon.*
- *High School Equivalency (HSE) orientation sessions return to NRPL. Learn about the*

different pathways to getting a high school diploma and connect with free study resources. Second Saturday of each month, beginning 1/14/2023, 10:30-12:00 pm BTOP room.

- *Continuing to make community connections the BTOP room is partnering with NRHS and the Parent ENL program. The purpose of the program is to teach English to the parents of immigrant and refugee youth enrolled in the ENL program at NRHS. The program is led by Irene Reda, certified in ENL and will use the 3rd floor classroom Tuesdays and Thursdays, dates and times to be announced.*
- *The NRPL Lobby will host a variety of community information partners including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, AgeWell Healthcare, MVP Health Care and Peer Recovery Services of Onward Recovery. Rhiannon also shared the Marketing, Communications and Programming reports as created by Lisa Itzkowitz and Tobe Sevush:*

Rhiannon shared the community activities report as created by Community Relations staff Lia Itzkowitz and Tobe Sevush:

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 1/12/23

Marketing & Communications Update

Marketing Support

Supporting 20 January programs - via eblast, flyers, PR, website, social, etc (as appropriate)

Website

Met with M&M Design to discuss website updates needed now and began discussing ways to refresh website.

Virtual Programs

12/22 - It's a Wonderful Life

1/26 - Selling on eBay

2/1 - Breaking Color Barriers in Baseball (part of Black History Month programming)

Social Media/Design Coordinator

Two rounds of Interview with an impressive candidate. (You, Tom and Bobby can elaborate as much as you like.) Spoke to 2 references; will speak to a third hopefully later today. Plan to make an offer.

AARP

Will begin marketing 1/19/23 via flyers in Library, social media and eblast

AARP will set up on Tuesday, 1/31

Begin service, Thursday, 2/2 and run through Tuesday, 4/18

No appointments. Honor system

Require masks in theater and when helping clients

Partnering with School District

Met with Nate Adams (MBK), Latisha Burgos (MBK Board Member), Bobby and Ashley to discuss additional ways to engage children in literacy through joint NRPL/MBK programs (Bobby can speak more about this.)

NRPLF

Downtown Meet and Greet, Wednesday, 1/25

Finalizing plans for cocktail demo, library tours, library card signups, info tables. TARGETED to new residents of new buildings. Will work with buildings to invite attendees. Not a general, open event.

*Materials to promote event were provided to buildings early last week.
Tracking RSVP via email.
Game On Fundraiser/Family Fun day, 3/10 and 11.
Plans continue for this event*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Beth Acocella reported on the draft policy prohibiting adults - not accompanied or connected to children - in use of the children's library spaces at the Main and Huguenot Children's Library. Much discussion ensued.

Beth Acocella moved that the Adults in Children's Room Policy be approved as amended, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Whitney Barrat reported that a Committee meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary