

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday February 9, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo (Absent)

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

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

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo was absent but submitted this report as shared by Tom Geoffino:

The WLS Board of Trustees held its first meeting of the new year Tuesday, January 31, 2023, and took the following actions:

- *The Board constitutionally swore-in and formally welcomed two new Trustees for a full 5-year term ending December 31, 2027: **Robert Cartolano** representing District VIII (Bronxville, Eastchester, Pelham and Tuckahoe): **Karen Kelley** reelected for a second term and representing District XII (Peekskill). A just newly elected Trustee Matthew Weiss for District II (Briarcliff Manor, Ossining and Tarrytown) withdrew his appointment in order to take up a desired position with a local library. The Board is therefore searching for two new trustees, one replace Matthew Weiss and another to represent District V (Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount Pleasant and Pound Ridge).*
- *The present Executive Team of the WLS Board was reelected for a second and final one-year term: Karen Zevin (President), Francis Okelo (Vice President) Andrea Boder (Secretary) and Idris Scherer (Treasurer). Past board president Susan Morduch remains an ex-officio member of the Executive Team.*

- *The Board was reminded of the NYS Department of Library Development's requirement that, beginning January 1, 2023 each trustee, elected or appointed, of a public library or Indian Library must complete a minimum of two hours of trustee education annually;*
- *The Board received a report on the PLDA activities from the PLDA chair Yvonne Cech, Director of the John C Hart Memorial Library in Yorktown The board was also given an update on the WLS outreach and digital equity activities, by the respective WLS directors in charge of these programs.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whiney Barrat indicated that she and the Budget Committee are involved in the creation of a proposed FY 2023/24 Library budget. She expects it will be available for Board consideration prior to the vote at the April Board meeting. Whitney also highlighted the meeting's upcoming Strategic Plan update as presented by Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph.

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 placed our various orders and are waiting to begin the project with the removal of the 3rd floor carpet in mid-March – and the installation of the new carpeting.

+ 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 with the award made to Gleason Powers (GP) per the architect's recommendation and approval of the Board. Currently, our attorney is examining the draft AIA contract for issues prior to the execution of our agreement

+ 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, received training at the YBC in late January, and then met with library staff in order to begin the planning process. More details to follow.

+ CURE: The "5 Town, 1 Book" program as sponsored by CURE (The Coalition for Understanding Racism Through Understanding) is moving forward. 2023's theme" is an exploration of the life and work of Lorraine Hansberry. CURE will continue to offer programs in partnership with Sound Shore communities (New Rochelle, Larchmont, Rye, Harrison and Mamaroneck – along with Ms. Hansberry's hometown, Croton.) The programming series will begin on February 11th and finish at our library on April 15th with a program devoted to discussing the legacy of Ms. Hansberry as well as a "theatrical exploration of redlining." This program will be live in our theater and also will be live streamed for remote access.

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

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The first Trustee Handbook Book Club of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session

is Open Meetings Law (OML) and will include updates on how to incorporate OML into virtual board meetings. Participating in or viewing of one of these sessions, either “live” or as an archived recording, counts as 1.5 hours of trustee training that is eligible to meet the 2 hour per year requirement for trustee education. Additional workshops are located below:

- = **The Board-Director Relationship** (Tuesday, April 18, 2023 | 5:00-6:30pm)
 - = **Financial Planning & Budgeting** (Tuesday, June 20, 2023 | 5:00-6:30pm)
 - = **Strategic Planning** (Tuesday, August 15, 2023 | 5:00-6:30pm)
 - =**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access & Justice** (Tuesday, October 17, 2023 | 5:00-6:30)
- + 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 January 25th “Welcome to New Rochelle” program as sponsored by the Foundation along with NRCA, NR BID, NR Fund for Educational Excellence organizations was characterized as a great success with over 100 newly arrived downtown residents in attendance. The “Game On!” Foundation March 10th fundraiser is forging ahead with significant interest and support from the community. On March 11th the mini-golf course will remain located throughout the library and be made available (at no cost) to the community for most of the day. The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for March 20th 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 Jessica Hernandez, Children’s Library Assistant, effective January 30, 2023 at a salary of \$25.43 per hour, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

The Social Media/Videographer position will be filled by Geraldo Rodriguez. A graduate of Iona University, Geraldo has a degree in Broadcast Media. He currently works as a Staff Photographer and Social Media Manager for Iona University Athletics, and also freelances as a photographer/videographer. His start date will be February 16th.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

The NRPL staff ushered in the new year with the return of new and popular programs and services. We are also looking at 2023 as the year where life is a bit more normalized and people are excited to be a part of all that the library has to offer. Starting with our youngest set, Children’s room programs resumed the week of January 23rd with solid turnouts for all programs, especially the morning story times geared towards kids under 5 which drew over forty attendees. The Tween Club continues to slowly grow thanks to Ashley Bressingham’s concerted efforts. Loyal kids return to the program each week and bring new friends to join in on the fun, increasing attendance.

Susan Mackey went to the first focus group for STEM Tales, a grant we received with twenty other libraries. STEM Tales is working with librarians across the country, including Susan, to shape the curriculum for these programs. The series of workshops is set to debut in fall of 2024. Homework Help also returned with three tutors instead of one and has expanded from two days a week to five including Saturday. The Huguenot Children's library started the New Year with the NAHS (National Art Honor Society) Art Club on Monday afternoons, celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday with a special display. There was also a fun Pop-Up program - Bird Cafe, building our feathered friends a variety of bird feeders which many families enjoyed.

Teen services never cease to disappoint their followers. Tutoring services began this month. Three tutors provide one on one assistance to their peers in Math, Spanish, science, and English. We are looking to expand this program till May. For our creative teens, 3D printer night on Monday evenings is the draw. This month's project was a snowflake.

The Adult services team continue brisk business proctoring exams for real estate licensing. This month, there were fourteen. In addition to their day to day public service desk activity, the department is gearing up for the renovation of the 3rd floor. The funds were received, vendors contacted, quotes finalized and now gearing for construction which will begin this Spring.

The Help Center connects people to the library and community through a plethora of services including food support, employment, higher education and government benefits. In addition, the Help Center also facilitates the use of Chromebook and hotspots through demonstration and instructional support. It's a very active space and Denise's services are constantly in demand.

The New Rochelle Public Library is now listed as literacy program provider in the national Literacy Directory.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Budget Committee Chair Whitney Barrat reported that the Committee met on January 27th and begin discussions regarding the formulation of the proposed FY 2023/24 budget. Whitney detailed the challenges next year's budget scenario presents to the Board relative to inflationary increases tied to numerous non-discretionary expenses relating to utilities, security and staff wages and fringe benefits. Chair Whitney also acknowledged the need to look at the possibility of funding new positions to assist us in better serving our youth as well continuing to improve the poorly funded materials budget. Further discussion ensued. Chair Whitney summarized the conversation by declaring that the Committee's goal is for the Board to vote upon and adopt the proposed FY 2023/24 budget at the March meeting. Chair Whitney promised to provide the Board with detailed information about possible budget scenarios throughout the process 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/February 2023***

February is a fabulous month for connecting library patrons to many online community services including food support, employment, government benefits, tax help and online learning. Many of our patrons seeking tax help will need their 1099's from Social Security or unemployment and can get online assistance in the BTOP room. Patrons are taking advantage of NRPL Chromebooks and Hotspots. 24 devices were checked out in January, 16 Chromebooks and 8 Hotspots. A college transfer student recently used a NRPL Chromebook to zoom meet with a college counselor, with much success.

- *Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin continues to assist individuals looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes, cover letters, completing online job applications, searching for jobs on the Internet, networking, and honing interview skills and completing follow-ups. Attendance and sessions per month have been steady.*
- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell continues to assist with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan.*
- *The NRED monthly mobile food pantry is always a great chance to meet up with the community in addition to passing on information about library programs and free book giveaways. Next date is February 8, 2023.*
- *Notary Nights @ NRPL is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 2/16 from 5:30-7:30pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.*
- *The BTOP Help & Learning Center supports patrons who are continuing their High School Equivalency Exam (HSE) journey with HSE orientations the 2nd Saturday of each month, 10:30-12:00 pm, BTOP Room.*
- *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.*
- *The NRPL Lobby hosts a variety of community information partners including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, AgeWell Healthcare, United HealthCare and Peer Recovery Services of Onward Recovery.*
- *A job fair in collaboration with First Source Referral of New Rochelle and NRPL is planned for February 24, 2023. An uptick in the job market is an opportunity for residents to explore local jobs.*
- *The English Conversation Club, a volunteer-led class, offers English learners a chance to practice their English through chatting and conversation continues for 2 more Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30pm in February. We are currently looking for volunteers to lead the group for the spring.*

- *Civic/Citizenship classes continue with two more in-person sessions left in February. Patrons came in person to prepare for the Citizenship interview, with Sonica Dixon. A library patron recently attended their Oath Ceremony for US Naturalization this January and successfully completed the Naturalization process.*

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

January/February 2023 Programs/Events

General

Art Workshops:

Mini Memory Collage Workshop Jan 5 - 4 attendees.

Knitting workshops Jan 10 & 17 - averaging 9 students/class

Valentine Pop-Up Card workshop: Jan 3 - 1 attendee (on a freezing day)

Films:

NRPL Film Series, Jan 7 Screening of Gordon's War 12 attendees

New Rochelle Plays Hollywood- last of film series, Jan 8 The Crowd 12 attendees

Children's Theatre and Dance:

3 session acting workshop by Sandbox Theatre - Jan/Feb: average of 18 attendees

Bokandeye African Dance Troupe Workshop Series - 6-week intergenerational program on Saturdays in Jan/Feb - average of 22 attendees. This is being funded by ArtsWestchester and the Arts Alive Grant.

Yoga:

Yoga and Meditative Arts, Jan 10 & Jan 19 averaging 9 attendees,

Chair Yoga, Mondays & Wednesdays. Classes are averaging 14 attendees

The Wednesday instructor is leaving the area, so looking for a replacement. Current instructor will teach through the end of March.

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

Discovering your African American Heritage: Sat Jan 14. This was a hybrid program. We had 17 in person and 13 virtually attend

Supporting Characters: Staged Reading of 2 plays. Sun Jan 22. 40 attendees.

An Afternoon with Mikael and Robyn. Chamber Concert Feb 5. - 40 attendees.

Virtual Programs, January

(Note: Precise NRPL attendance numbers are difficult to determine, given programs are a joint effort of multiple libraries.)

Women and Money Roundtable: Wed, Jan. 11, 5 registrants (free program in partnership with multiple libraries)

Selling on EBay: Thurs, Jan. 26, 23 registrants; 14 attendees from New Ro (3 libraries - total across partner libraries: 96 registrants, 67 attendees)

Before Brooklyn: The Unsung Heroes Who Helped Break Baseball's Color Barrier Wed, Feb 1. 14 registrants, 8 attendees from New Ro (4 libraries - total across partner libraries, 23 attendees)

Westchester Breathes: 4 months, multi library virtual meditation program: New Rochelle, 11 attendees.

Coming Up....

In Person Programs/Event

Yoga and Meditation Feb 7 and 23

Harlem Blues and Jazz Band. As part of Black History Month Feb 10
Young Musicians of Westchester concert for 3rd graders from Columbus School. Feb 13
NRPL Film Series: Librarian Chris Poggiali will be showing “Abe Lincoln in Illinois”. Feb 14
Knitting Workshops: Feb 15 & 27
Bokandeye Final Performance: Feb 25
School Break events: Feb 21-Feb 24 will include Westchester Sandbox Theatre Performance and Music with Zev!

Virtual Programs

Valentines-themed Pastry Class taught by Chef Empress Vasquez, Thurs, Feb. 9
The History of the George Washington Carver Garden Club, Thurs, Feb 16 (presented by NRPL Archivist, David Rose, as part of Black History Month programming)

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

New Rochelle Meet and Greet for Downtown Residents Collaborative effort of NRPL, NRCA, NRPLF, NRBID, and NFEE to introduce new residents to NR organizations. Event held on January 25. Evening of food, drink, raffles and opportunity for community organizations to share info- and for residents from new buildings to meet residents from other buildings. Served as point person for NRPL. Event a big success with over 60 downtown residents in attendance, and 13 new card signups. Promotion done via new building concierges, providing another touchpoint for building relationships.

Yiddish Book Club Grant Haina Just-Michael attended training to facilitate Yiddish Book Club this spring/fall. Working on identifying and contacting book groups to participate.

Marketing support Managed promotion of 20 programs in January and 23 programs in February, including print, digital and press communications. Bundling programs together for promotion/greater impact (i.e. Black History Month, Vacation Week, Sunday Afternoon Concert Series, etc.)

AARP Tax Aide Program launched Feb 2 (32 returns prepared) and runs every Tuesday and Thursday, 9 am - 2 pm through April 18th.

Website Speaking with our current website design firm about upgrades to the current website, including better navigation, updated images, better use of the home page, etc. to understand cost implications. Reviewing other library sites for best practices. Identifying other website design options.

Community Relationship Building:

Met with **Monarch Coopers Corner Senior Living** representative to discuss opportunities for residents of this new facility (residents due to move in in April) to utilize the library, and get library cards. Also discussed how NRPL may be able to “bring the library” to the community by providing programming for the community at large, in the new Monarch space. Short term, Monarch employees have offered to run a few community programs at NRPL (before residents move in.)

New Rochelle Marketing: Marketing staff from approximately 12 New Rochelle organizations met to discuss upcoming events, and opportunities. In discussion with Iona College to do library card drive for students.

Continue to try to work with **NRBID** to identify and coordinate programs for collaboration. Packaging programs (Black History, Vacation weeks, etc.) to maximize impact and make more attractive for NRBID sponsorship and marketing efficiency.

Email marketing: Open rates regularly around 40%. Continue to grow and clean up the email list. Current distribution, 9054. Investigating how weekly eblast can be offered in Spanish.

***Social Media/Graphic Designer Position:** New hire, Geraldo Rodriguez, begins Thursday, February 16, 2023*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Lucille Renwick indicated collective bargaining negotiations are now underway between the Library Board and the Library Union.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Board President Whitney Barrat provided an update, in the absence of Chair Beth Accocela, regarding the Collection Development draft policy. This policy has been created by the staff and details the philosophy, process and areas of interest specific to the acquisition, access and withdrawal of print, non-print and electronic library materials. Whitney indicated that the Committee (and the Board) will further discuss this policy at its April meeting.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No members of the public asked to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary