

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday March 23, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The February Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Lucille Renwick moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Corey Galloway and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo had no report.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat indicated that she and the Budget Committee are recommending Board consideration (later in the meeting) regarding 2 suggested budget options for the proposed FY 2023/24 Library budget.

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. Relative to the 3rd floor Renovation Project, our various vendor orders are in place with Phase 1 calling for the removal of the 3rd floor carpet – and the installation of the new carpeting - now underway. Our goal is to complete this project by September 2023. The vendor for the HCL Air Conditioning Project has ordered the AC units and is currently seeking to obtain permits from the City Building Department.

+ 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. Our attorney approved the draft AIA contract and so both parties will execute the document within the next week. In the meanwhile, GP is working on creating a project schedule and the appropriate submittal documents.

+ 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 began on February 11th and will 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 take place “live” our theater and will also 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. Our AARP volunteers report that tax prep activity has been strong but have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Handbook Book Club of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session is The Board-Director Relationship. 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:

= **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)

+ Adult Services Office Renovation Project: The Adult Services Office has not been upgraded since the opening of our facility in 1978. The space is outmoded, tired and unpleasant for staff and does not serve the current and future needs of the Adult Services Department relative to personal or meeting space, ergonomics or technology. Library staff have worked with vendors to renovate this space in order to create a functional and attractive worksite for staff and visitors. This new office configuration will involve new furniture, LCD lighting, enhanced power and low voltage options, floor covering and wall paint. Lucille Renwick moved that Adult Services Office Upgrade Project be approved at a cost of \$64,154.59 seconded by Daniel Bonnet and approved.

+ E-Rate Grant Matching Request: For the 3rd consecutive year, our library has received E-Rate funding for a variety of technology components (basic maintenance, licenses, broadband services, internal connections -switch and internal connections- UPS.) The total amount of this grant is \$75,101.86 but our required matching amount is \$19,386.02

(20% of the total grant award - to be taken from the Library Fund Balance) This request was unfortunately submitted to the Board with virtually no lead time due to the vendor's inexplicable delay (despite our IT Head's repeated requests) in transmitting the grant contracts. Much discussion ensued. Whitney Barrat moved that Adult Services Office Upgrade Project be approved at a cost of \$64,154.59 seconded by Beth Acocella and approved.

+ 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 April 11th at 1 pm and will be in-person at the Main Library

+ NRPL Foundation: The "Game On!" Foundation March 10th fundraiser achieved great success with over 200 attendees enjoying a fun and sporty night. On March 11th the mini-golf course remained in place throughout the library and was made available (at no cost) to the community for most of the day. It is estimated that over 500 people (most of our "golfers" were exuberant young families...) participated in this effort. The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for May 15th and will be in-person at the Main Library

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Lucille Renwick made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, to hereby approve the employment of Geraldo Rodriguez, Social Media/Videographer, effective February 16, 2023 at a salary of \$58,707 per year, seconded by Sarah Langlois and approved.

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the New Rochelle Public Library Foundation Board, to endorse the selection of Douglas Gould to serve as a member of the New Rochelle Public Library Foundation Board, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

BTOP Help & Learning center sessions and attendance continue to be brisk. Denise Link, BTOP's resident expert assists patrons with a bevy of needs. They include unemployment benefits, SNAP recertification, housing information and technology issues. Patrons came in droves for assistance with their tax forms and accessing their 1099s. BTOP's clientele also utilized the services of the job coach, health care and digital navigator. Denise also facilitated numerous Chromebook and hotspot lending interactions.

The Children's Room remains a bustling place starting with morning preschool and afternoon school-age programming. The morning programs consistently draw around 30-50 people per program, six days a week, including Saturday's Yoga. The large attendance numbers during December vacation week proved not to be an anomaly as February vacation week programs drew similar numbers. We had 660 attendees to those February vacation programs, where families saw performances presented by Robert the Guitar Guy, Zev Haber, the Sandbox Theatre, Baby Fingers signing and Greenburgh

Nature Center's animals. Staff led, in house programs (a forest-themed puppet show and snow globe craft) were met with equal enthusiasm and drew large crowds, especially the snow globes, which had over 100 participants.

It was FebruBeary at the Huguenot, a celebration of all things bear which translates into decoration and themes for programs. We saw a dip in attendance as is the norm when the park becomes too cold, but the attendance at popular programs (Baby Rhyme Time, STEAM, and Yoga) remained strong. The NRHS Honor Society's Art Club saw a nice increase in attendance but the scheduled Science Club had to reschedule for March due to the snow.

The teens also had a very active month. February's varied programs included Trivia Tuesdays using Kahoot, Black History month and Valentine's Day themed arts and crafts. Rio, our teen librarian, also collaborated with the Westchester Library system to offer college coaching for parents and their teens. Rio also impressed her library colleague from Mount Vernon Public Library with our space and roster of programs. Our teen space and services is exemplary in the region and beyond.

The members of the Adult Services Department were immersed in a flurry of activity as well. Librarians continue to carefully maintain their collections. Chris reports that film DVDs have to become obsolete, they continue to be checked out constantly. Annick reports that Spanish language cookbooks and books about parenting teenagers are most popular. David continues to oversee the 300s and the mystery wedding project undertaken by our part-timers, Maureen and Bill. Larry is assisting a researcher inquiring about New Rochelle's Friendship Train. He has also produced a list of local authors for an upcoming event in April. Tricia is completing the last phase of the postcard project.

The strategic plan implementation has begun. Teams for each of the goals were formed., They are now meeting to develop ideas, partnerships and tracking their objectives and milestones. This cross collaborative effort is resulting in more creative and stronger team members.

Finally, our circulation supervisor reports that 46% of New Rochelle residents are cardholders. While we are impressed with this number, our goal is to increase that percentage every year.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat detailed the two alternative budgets as created by the Budget Committee for Board consideration. Budget Scenario 1 calls for an increase of 6.56% over the current year's budget. Budget Scenario 2 shows an increase of 6.87%. Whitney characterized the Budget Committee's efforts as extremely challenging given the unavoidable and contractually mandated following non-discretionary increases. The factors influencing this budget increase (as it impacts on each of the budget options) is as follows:

- : + Sizable full time salary increases which is a blend of expected contract mandated increases, (salary increases for all staff -union and non-union) as well as parallel increases in other salary related accounting lines.
- + Escalating and significant medical insurance costs.

+ Increases in our PASNY (or electricity) account due to long delayed increases not previously acknowledged in past budgets.

+ Contracted services are witnessing increases in relation to necessary wage increases for the library's reliable security guards. Rates have been raised in the past two years, but we did not previously budget for this in order to try and stay within the tax cap.

The 6.56% 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 a modest increase in our materials budget in order to remain current with new and innovative information. The 6.87% (Scenario 2) budget duplicates the Scenario 1 budget option but calls for a larger salary increase for staff.

Chair Whitney indicated that the both budget options were acceptable to the Budget Committee but encouraged Board member to engage in additional dialogue and questions in order to better understand the budget requests and its impact on the community. Much discussion ensued.

Whitney Barrat moved to adopt the 6.87% (Scenario 2) as the proposed FY 2023/24 budget, seconded by Corey Galloway and unanimously approved.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION, FRIENDS AND HUGUENOT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE:

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

Highlights of BTOP Help & Learning Center March/April 2023

Tax assistance at the NRPL is in full swing, as the deadline for filing draws near. The BTOP room continues to assist the AARP tax volunteers, by providing critical online information for patrons to obtain necessary documents from other Government agencies, to complete their tax return. The BTOP room helped welcome a very special school visit from the NRHS English New Language class, students who are new to our New Rochelle community. 21 high school students received library cards, explored our website and took a tour of the building. The group were most impressed with the Teen Room, quickly making themselves comfortable with the books and activities. The students used their cards at the self-check out and enjoyed their library goodie bags. The NRED completed a successful Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration Event at the library. Families with children eligible for Pre-K and Kindergarten were able to complete forms necessary for the new school year in the fall. Tutoring sessions for the online GED Academy, digital literacy and adult literacy sessions are on the rise. Patrons are making appointments to learn more about their smartphones, laptops, and how to access important online

services. Chromebooks and hotspots devices are gaining popularity and new circulating iPads will soon be available for NRPL library patrons.

- Library patrons continue to prepare for their job search with experienced Job Readiness Coach, Rebecca Mazin, who assists with online job applications, writing or editing resumes and job interview skills every Tuesday evenings from 5pm-7:45pm.
- Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell continues to assist with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan on Wednesdays, 10:00am-2:00pm.
- The NRPL Lobby was host to a variety of community information resources including Urban Strategies Head Start Program, NR Youth Soccer and Onward Peer Recovery
- Community Outreach for March 2023 included a visit to the NRED mobile food pantry at IEYMS and the Columbus School Resource Fair.
- Notary Nights at the library is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 4/20 @ 6:00-7:30 pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.
- The English Conversation Class, a volunteer-led program that offers English learners a chance to practice their English through chatting and conversation, continues on Saturdays @ 12:00 pm throughout May.
- In-person English as a Second Language classes at NRPL with Westchester Community College continue through early May 2023. ESL courses for summer 2023 to be announced.
- Civic/Citizenship classes resume on Saturdays @ 1:00pm in April. Classes have been extended for patrons who have their interview test coming up in May and June.

Rhiannon also shared the report as created by Marketing, Communications and Programming staff members Lisa Itzkowitz and Tobe Sevush.

FEBRUARY/MARCH PROGRAMS/EVENTS

General

Art Workshops:

- ***February Valentine Pop-up Workshop*** Feb 3 - 1 attendee (it was a freezing day)
- ***March Folk Art Workshop*** Mar 3 -3 very engaged women
- ***Knitting workshops*** Feb 15 & 27, March 8 & 15 - averaging 9 students/class

Films:

- ***NRPL Film Series, February 14 Screening of Abe Lincoln in Illinois*** 6 attendees
- ***New Rochelle Plays Hollywood: Body and Soul, March 12,*** 20 attendees
- ***NRPL Film Series: March 14 screening of Shanghai Express,*** 1 attendee
- ***Zonta Club Film Series: As part of Women's History Month - Films by women from Women Making Movies: 1st film, Wonder Women on Mar 16,*** 7 attendees

Children's Theatre and Dance:

- ***Young Musicians of Westchester concert for 3rd graders from Columbus School. Feb 13*** - 130 attendees

- **Bokandeye African Dance Troupe Workshop Series** - 6 week intergenerational program on Saturdays in Jan/Feb - average of 26 attendees. This is being funded by ArtsWestchester and the Arts Alive Grant.
- **Bokandeye Performance** - Feb 25 - 110 attendees
- **Music with Zev!** For school break week: 60 attendees
- **Westchester Sandbox Theatre Performance** for school break: 115 attendees
- **Robert the Guitar Guy** for school break: 90 attendees
- **Greenburgh Nature Center** for school break: 115 attendees

Yoga:

- **Yoga and Meditative Arts**, Feb 23, Mar 7 & 21, average 14 attendees/session
- **Chair Yoga**, Mondays & Wednesdays. Classes are averaging 15 +attendees /session
 - New Wednesday instructor, who is bi-lingual, will begin in April, taking over for Erica Itzkowitz

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- **Harlem Blues & Jazz Band**: Fri Feb 10, 75 attendees
- **Ward Acres Community Garden Seed Swap**, March 2, invited Lincoln Garden, 20 attendees
- **Karen S. Allen Memorial Concert** - Sat Mar 4, 35 attendees
- **Mini Golf at the Library**, Saturday, March 11, 500 + attendees
- **Dialagos Duo Brazilian Music Concert, March 11**, 50 attendees

Virtual Programs, February/March

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

- **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)
- **"I'll Have What She's Having"**, Thursday, March 9, Partner program with 5 other libraries, 26 attendees (New Rochelle)
- **Confronting Hate**, Wednesday, March 15, Partner program with 4 other libraries, 9 attendees (New Rochelle)

Coming Up....

In Person Programs/Event

- **Yoga and Meditation** April 6 & 20
- **Doggie Delights** (presented by Monarch Coopers Corner), March 21
- **Zonta Club Film Series: Films by women from Women Making Movies: Mar 23 & 30**
- **Kenn Morr Concert: Sat Mar 25**
- **Elizabeth Coley Fox archive exhibit and lecture: March 19-April 1 with lecture on Mar 26 by David Rose**

Virtual Programs

- ***Author Talk: Mr. B: George Balanchine's 20th Century by Jennifer Homans (Virtual), Partner program (partner with 7 other libraries) , arch 27***
- ***Understanding Pesticides : Protecting Your Health and Your Yard (Virtual), Collaboration with Healthy Yards New Rochelle, Partner program (2 other libraries), March 29***

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

NRPL Game On Fundraiser - Served as NRPL point person, assisting with all aspects of event execution in the Library facility. Event very successful with over 200 engaged attendees. Nature of the event had attendees moving through all three floors of the Library, discovering areas they had never seen! NRPLF exceeded fundraising goals for this event

NRPL Day of Mini- Golf - Coordinated open mini golf event at NRPL (Day after Game On Fundraiser, utilizing the mini golf set up for that event.) Event marketing across multiple channels with great success, including pre-event mention on News12. Over 500 people attended, many who were new to the Library.

Marketing support Managed promotion of 30 NRPL programs in March including print, digital and press communications.

AARP Tax Aide Program

Report from AARP New Rochelle Tax Aide Coordinator, Tim Oberg:

February Stats: Our numbers are way up from last year. During the month of February, we filed 225 returns this year compared with 60 last year. Last year was primarily by appointment compared to this year's first-come-first-serve model. I have not factored Q&As into the totals. However, comparing us to 2019, which was the last year we operated for a full tax season without covid, our 225 corresponds to 325 completed returns. We had one snow delay this year and one in 2019. We worked the same number of days in both years.

I think we should wait to see if this is a trend or a reaction to taxpayers having to learn that we are back. We can all help by telling others that we are available, particularly between the hours of 12 and 2.

During the last three years, many taxpayers found alternative ways to complete and submit their returns when we could not help them.

- *Some went to paid preparers. When I look at their prior year returns I see bills in the \$200 to \$300 range which is a lot for many of our clients.*
- *Others did their own returns using tax prep programs or paper forms. Many of these taxpayers will stick with the do-it-yourself option now that they have done it once.*
- *Others did nothing which we know because our prior year's return totals are up from 2019.*

Each morning I ask the group of arriving taxpayers how many are returning and how many are new to our program. An unscientific estimate is that about 20-25% are new.

This year we have required all taxpayers and volunteers to wear face masks. There has been total compliance and I am not aware of any serious issues.

Community Relationship Building:

- *Continue to work with **NRBID** to identify and coordinate programs for collaboration. **NRBID** will support April Vacation Week programs with \$900 contribution*
- *Met with Community member Joe Andrews regarding holding an **HBCU College Fair** at Library on November 4. Joe coordinating with schools.*
- *Met with **Commissioner of Development, Adam Salgado** to discuss opportunities for partner programs in Ruby Dee park/inside Library, May - October. Continuing discussions to determine feasible programs.*
- *Member of citywide **Juneteenth** planning committee. Juneteenth programs will take place throughout the month of June. NRPL will host children's paper quilting workshops at Main and HCL, Drumming workshop/performance, jazz concert, and potential storytelling program.*
- *Member of **Earth Day** citywide planning committee. Sustainability event taking place in Anderson Plaza, Saturday, April 22, 12:00 - 4:00 pm. NRPL will have an outreach table at this event.*
- *Finalizing dates for series of programs with **Healthy Yards New Rochelle**, beginning with a virtual program on Pesticides.*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Chair Beth Accocela and Board President Whitney Barrat addressed the importance of our proposed Collection Development Policy specific to the "blueprint" it provides the New Rochelle community regarding the philosophy, process and areas of interest relative to the acquisition, access and withdrawal of print, non-print and electronic library materials. President Whitney thanked Elizabeth Joseph and library staff for their successful efforts in the creation of this document.

Lucille Renwick made the motion to accept the Collection Development Policy, seconded by Corey Galloway and approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No members of the public asked to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary