

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday April 13, 2023**

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

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino  
Jean Manning  
Yesika Torres  
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The March Meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo had no report.

- *At its last meeting on Tuesday March 28, 2023, the WLS Board of Trustees unanimously approved the appointment of Ms. Alice Joselow to represent District II which comprises the libraries of Briarcliff Manor, Ossining and Tarrytown. The search, however, is still on for a suitable candidate to represent District V: Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount pleasant and Pound Ridge.*
- *Because it takes seriously the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, the Board decided that all its Board members should undergo a periodic training and be fully informed on the WLS policy on this matter. Incidentally, all WLS policies are located on the WLS website.*
- *Like all our libraries and other institutions in the state, the Board is still waiting anxiously for the NYS legislature to pass the Budget for FY2023, which was due on April 1, 2023.*
- *The Board was informed by the WLS Executive Director that the Mount Vernon Library was making good progress in meeting the NYS Department of Education with*

*regard to the timely submission of reports to Albany. While not yet fully aware of the details of the problem, the Board expressed grave concerns at the recent media reports regarding alleged financial mismanagement at the Mamaroneck Library. It expressed the hope this unfortunate situation would soon be resolved so the Library can continue to serve its patrons without interruptions.*

- *The Board is in the process of reviewing the implementation by the various WLS units of the of WLS Strategic Plan which it approved last year.*

Tom Geoffino highlighted the recent completion of sexual harassment training for all full and hourly library staff. He also shared the “talking points” regarding our library’s financial controls. Created in tandem with Administrative Assistant Jean Manning with input as provided by President Whitney Barrat, Tom detailed a strong system of “checks and balances” involving various library staff, Library Board members, our Library /School District Treasurer and its office team in support of the library as well as ongoing and annual auditing scrutiny (both efforts are derived from different firms) as employed by the School District.

#### PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

President Whiney Barrat indicated that the library staff is moving forward in its work towards ensuring our recently adopted Long Range Plan is in alignment with current and future actions. She also expressed her appreciation and support of the financial oversight and control system in place in relation to library finances.

#### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Renovation) and HCL (Air Conditioning) grants arrived. Relative to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Renovation Project, our various vendor orders are in place with Phase 1 calling for the removal of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor carpet – and the installation of the new carpeting - now complete. Next steps include the installation of the additional study and conference rooms with painting to follow. Our goal is to complete this project by September 2023. The vendor for the HCL Air Conditioning Project has ordered the AC

units and has successfully obtained permits from the City Building Department. Work will commence upon receipt and scheduling of the units.

+ 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. With the execution of the AIA contract, GP is working with the architect in order to create 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.

+ Community Relations Office Renovation: The office renovation is nearly complete with Community Relations staff happily anticipating moving back into its attractive and more efficient "new" space.

+ Adult Services Office Renovation: The project work is underway. Furniture has been ordered and vendors engaged to upgrade the flooring, wall coverings, electrical services, low voltage and interior lighting. Completion of the project is expected to occur in early July 2023.

+ AARP Tax Return Program: This perennially popular free tax preparation and electronic filing program, as provided by a group of dedicated AARP volunteers, will complete its 2023 service to the community Tuesday (April 18<sup>th</sup>) Despite the resumption of the popular "no reservation /walk in" service model, activity has decreased slightly. It is hoped that we will return to pre-pandemic service levels in 2024.

+ 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)

Another continuing education option is the following in-person event “Office of Attorney General Letitia James Presents: **Charities Symposium – Doing Well While Doing Good**” scheduled for May 17, 2023, from 1 PM-4:30 PM at Westchester Community College. The event is free but registration is required. Participation will fulfill the annual 2-hour trustee education requirement.

+ 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 June 13th at 1 pm and will be in-person at the Main Library

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup> and will be in-person at the Main Library. The Foundation will begin examining the library’s Main and HCL FY 2023/24 Grant request once the Library Board has weighed in regarding the proposals.

#### PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, to hereby approve the employment of Natalie Damian-Valencia, Page (Children’s Room), effective April 3, 2023 at a salary of \$15 per hour, seconded by Sarah Langlois and approved.

#### ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

*The following report outlines the activities and events that took place at the Children’s Room and Huguenot Children’s Library in March. The report includes information on adult services, program attendance, circulation numbers, community outreach efforts, and teen volunteer activities.*

*We recently discovered that while 45% of New Rochelle residents are card holders, there is a zip code in our city that could benefit from greater outreach. That zip code, 10805 sizable in geographic area but underrepresented in the library’s usage and engagement is now an area we will target with more outreach.*

#### Children’s Room

*March was a busy month for the Children’s Room, with weekly program attendance and circulation numbers robust. In particular, the Saturday offerings proved to be successful. Yoga had an attendance of around 30-40 attendees each Saturday, while the live owl presentation from Volunteers for Wildlife had over 100 attendees on one Saturday*

*afternoon. The Capoeira series of workshops, which continue until May, had a promising start at the end of March and had about 60 participants learning the Brazilian martial art.*

*The Children's staff also made visits to the community, attending a Parent Workshop at Ward Elementary and a Columbus Cares Resource Fair. Both events were heavily attended by New Rochelle's Spanish-speaking community.*

#### Huguenot Children's Library

*March was also a busy month for the Huguenot Children's Library, with the graphic novel section being the hot spot at the children's branch. The young readers section followed, and picture books were always popular. Unfortunately, the Animal Tales with Lavanya Misra was canceled due to an illness in the family. However, other programs saw good attendance, such as the homeschooling group visit and the Wiggle and Giggle with Dawny Dew session, which is always a big hit. Efforts are being made to boost the chess club as attendance has been waning.*

#### Adult Services

*Librarians have started meeting with their Strategic Plan teams.*

*First phase of the 3rd floor renovation project is complete. New carpet is installed. Old shelving has been removed. Next steps: building study rooms, enclosing the teen room, painting, delivery and installation of new furniture. Scores collection has been shifted to its new permanent location. Brian continues to update and reassign Dewey numbers for the entire score collection (approximately 3/4 way through the collection). Larry and Patricia continue to work on digitizing local history clippings.*

#### Teens

*The library received a class visit from a local school composed of new teen immigrants. Denise, our community services specialist received the students and school staff, gave them a tour of the library and the Teen Room, and helped them sign up for their own library card. The teens were given a welcome bag with goodies and spent some time hanging out in the teen room, which they found amazing. Denise and the staff hope to have more visits such as this in the future.*

*The teen volunteers from last month continued to serve this month and put in over 179 hours of community service hours. In total, 26 teen volunteers came in to help, and 13 teens applied to volunteer this month.*

#### Conclusion

*March was a busy and successful month for the Children's Room and Huguenot Children's Library. The staff made efforts to reach out to the community, and the teen volunteer program was successful. It is hoped that efforts will be made to reach the zip code with a population smaller than 10801 but larger than 10805 in the future.*

#### **BUDGET COMMITTEE:**

Chair Whitney Barrat highlighted the proposed FY 2023/24 budget as endorsed by the Library Board at its March meeting. This budget requests an increase of 6.87% over the current year thus calling for an increase of \$417,724.69 in the tax levy. Per the City Finance Commissioner, this increase will translate out to an annual tax increase of \$24.07 for the "average" New Rochelle taxpayer. Whitney characterized the Budget

Committee's efforts as extremely challenging given the unavoidable and contractually mandated non-discretionary increases comprise over 75% of the total increase.

The factors influencing this budget increase 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.
- + Non- discretionary (yet essential) increases in this budget provide for the creation of a Librarian 1 position charged with outreach to our elementary school age population and an extremely modest increase to our materials budget in order to allow the library to keep current with the rapidly increasing popularity of expensive electronic resources.

#### 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 evening 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.

## **MARCH/APRIL PROGRAMS/EVENTS**

### **General**

- ***NRPL Film Series:*** April 1 screening of *A Raisin in the Sun*, 14 attendees
- ***Zonta Club Film Series:*** As part of Women's History Month - Films by women from *Women Making Movies: March 23, Sisters Rising*, 14 attendees;  
*Councilwoman*, 10 attendees

### **Children's Theatre and Dance:**

- ***Doggie Delights*** (presented by Monarch Coopers Corner), March 21, 18 attendees
- ***April School Break***, seven circus-themed programs, April 3 - 7, all programs very well attended (Children's will provide attendance numbers)
- ***Capoeira Saturday classes*** (Children's will provide attendance numbers)

### **Yoga:**

- ***Yoga and Meditative Arts***, April 6, 8 attendees
- ***Chair Yoga***, Mondays & Wednesdays. Classes are averaging 12 +attendees /session
  - New Wednesday instructor, who is bi-lingual, began in April, taking over for Erica Itzkowitz

### **Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:**

- ***Kenn Morr Concert***, March 25, 30 attendees

- **Elizabeth Coley Fox archive exhibit and lecture:** March 19-April 1 with lecture on Mar 26 by David Rose, 25 attendees for lecture and reception.

### **Virtual Programs, March**

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

- **Author Talk: Mr. B: George Balanchine's 20th Century** by Jennifer Homans, March 27 Partner program with 4 other libraries, 4 attendees (New Rochelle)
- **Understanding Pesticides: Protecting Your Health and Your Yard (Virtual)**, March 29, Presented in collaboration with Healthy Yards New Rochelle, 26 attendees

### **Coming Up....**

#### ***In Person Programs/Event***

- **New Rochelle Art Association Dermot Gale Memorial Awards Show**  
*They have over 70 pieces of art in our gallery which is a significant increase from the past few months.*
- **Knitting Workshops:** April 12 & 19.
- **Adult Art Workshop:** Collage class, April 14
- **Five Towns: One Book, CURE Program,** April 15
- **Sunday concert series** featuring: Hudson Valley Chamber Musicians, April 16
- **Holocaust Remembrance Day:** Screening of film, Zaida, with moderator for Q & A
- **Young Musicians of Westchester Concert for 4th graders from Columbus Elementary School,** April 24.
- **Meet the Authors,** 17+ local authors will be here to speak with our patrons about their books and their journey to becoming published, April 29

#### ***Virtual Programs***

- **Gene Kelly: Singing and Dancing in the Rain,** April 27
- **Viva la Vida: Frida Khalo Program,** May 2
- **How to Get Started in Amateur Astronomy** with the Westchester Amateur Astronomers, May 3

### **MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**Marketing support** Managing promotion of over 30 NRPL programs in March/April including print, digital and press communications.

**Training New Social Media Coordinator** Working with new hire (Geraldo) on social media content, graphic design, website updates and posting events to local calendars to expand reach for NRPL events.

**HCL "Birthday" Party** Working with NRPLF on planning 25th "birthday" party for HCL

**Yiddish Book Club:** Refining composition of "Stories of Exile" program

**AARP Tax Aide Program** continues to run successfully. Last date for assistance is April 18. (We will get the final report from AARP after the final date.)



**Library Marketing Professionals Meeting:** *Initiated meeting of Library Marketing professionals across WLS. First meeting scheduled for April 24.*

**Community Relationship Building:**

- *Coordinating with WIC Program at Montefiore to offer a monthly Preschool Fun and Fitness class, once/month, beginning in May.*
- *Continue to work with **NRBID** to identify and coordinate programs for collaboration. Currently discussing support for the Cinco de Mayo program and International Music and Dance Festival.*
- *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. Managing plans for NRPL outreach at a sustainability event taking place in Anderson Plaza, Saturday, April 22, 12:00 - 4:00 pm.*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Tom Geoffino reported that a staff committee consisting of Tobe Sevush, Lisa Itzkowitz, Ed Roddy, Elizabeth Joseph (and himself) have created a draft Room Reservation Policy and submitted it to Board President Whiney Barrat. It will be shared with the Policy Committee in the near future for their consideration.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No members of the public asked to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois  
Secretary

