

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday May 4, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo (Absent)

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

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

WLS REPORT:

No report was made.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat expressed her hope that all registered New Rochelle voters will vote on May 16th in relation to the proposed FY 2023/24 Library budget and the Trustee election for the 2 vacancies – as well as participation in decision-making in relation to the New Rochelle School District proposed FY 2023/24 budget and vacant School Board positions.

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 complete. Painting is now underway and our amazing custodial staff are currently assisting in the installation of the 3 new study rooms and 2 new conference rooms. Our furniture vendors have indicated that we can expect to see the delivery and installation of new furniture and shelving in June/July. . Our goal continues to be the completion of 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 has completed its working with the architect and has created a project schedule and the appropriate submittal documents. GP is now in contact with the building Department in order to facilitate the issuance of the necessary Building Permit.

+ 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 complete with Community Relations staff articulating their pleasure in its attractive and more efficient renovated space.

+ Adult Services Office Renovation: The project work is well underway. Furniture has been ordered and vendors engaged to upgrade the flooring, wall coverings, electrical services, low voltage and interior lighting. Our custodians are working with their usual positive energy, intention and ingenuity in order to prepare the space for the next steps. Completion of the project is expected to occur in July 2023.

+ NRPL Annual Report: The Annual Report for our library, as submitted to the New York State Library thru the auspices of WLS, was shared with the Board for their consideration. Jean Manning continued her hard work in pulling together the voluminous and diverse statistical, financial and narrative information depicting activity levels for the recently completed previous year – with an assist this year from Elizabeth Joseph. This document was shared with the Board for their formal approval. The request was made to share this report in advance relative to next year’s Board vote of approval. Whitney Barrat moved that the NRPL Annual Report be approved, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Handbook Book Club of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session is Financial Planning & Budgeting. 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:

= **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 continues 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 15th and will be in-person at the Main Library. The FY 2023/24 grant request for the Main and HCL was reviewed. Discussion ensued. Whitney Barrat moved that the FY 2023/24 Foundation Grant request be approved, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved. The Foundation will begin examining the library’s Main and HCL FY 2023/24 Grant request at the May meeting and will be voted upon at the June 13th annual meeting.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

No report was made.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

April saw a period of high activity for our public service departments. Our staff engaged in multiple projects resulting in enriching experiences for our patrons and staff.

With the anticipation of a new interface of the catalog, staff attended training and discussed ways to enhance the patron experience through the addition of hyperlinks to our most popular resources - room reservations and events calendar.

Adults:

The department continues to be busy with proctoring exams and maintaining study room reservations. The librarians are also active in library programs such Local Authors Day featuring Susan Moorhead, our resident poet and Chris Poggiali, who helms the film discussions. We are also working on developing a skills inventory to understand our training needs and creating systems to better engage prospective technology class attendees.

Children:

Morning story times continue to draw families from all over the city. Stories are read, songs are sung, games are played resulting in happy children and caregivers. In addition, we offered circus themed programs during spring break, Brazilian martial arts classes for preschoolers and school aged children and bilingual story times.

HCL offered a Science of Spring program featuring the NRHS Science Honor Society and Girls Who STEAM. Pop up program, making family scrapbooks exceeded our attendance expectations.

Teens:

The month started out strong with our annual Video Game Tournament Week which brought in 51 contestants during Spring Break. The most attended tournament was Smash Bros. Ultimate. Capping that week was the Meet with a College Coach program with WLS' Amy Gonzalez attracting 13 sets of parents and teens. I believe the presence of Joe Andrews from the New Rochelle School District helped with attendance. Amy will come back in May for an Applying for College program.

Our Easter Giveaway had a whopping 40 entrants! This is our biggest giveaway so far with many teens vying for the basket of candies. The two winners were Jhaden Jones and Christian Valdevinos, both of whom regularly come to the library. Due to the huge response, future giveaways will have at least one basket of candies. Our next giveaway will begin May 1 for AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Heritage Month.

Lastly, for National Poetry Month, we welcomed Westchester County's two Youth Poet Laureates, Alexa Murphy and New Rochelle's own Harmony Hopwood, to speak and workshop with our tween and teen patrons. It was an inspirational hour.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Chair Whitney Barrat made no report but referenced the Public Budget Hearing recently concluded earlier in the evening.

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
April 2023 Highlights***

Spring is a season when the world seems to come back to life and when the library patrons return to the NRPL. The BTOP Help & Learning center is busy connecting our library patrons to many online community services including food support, employment, government benefits, online learning and digital literacy.

- *Chromebook and Hotspot devices are gaining popularity with patrons, with 47 devices checked out in April; 30 Hotspots and 17 Chromebooks. These devices help our patrons with job searching, telehealth and connecting to community resources.*
 - *Adult literacy and GED learning through the GED Academy is gaining attention at the NRPL. All patrons with a Westchester library card can join the GED academy to improve their reading and writing skills or prepare for the GED, all for free.*
 - *English Conversation Club now meets on Monday evenings from 6:30-7:30 pm. This group is popular with English learners, who enjoy the informal setting of a conversation circle.*
 - *Summer session registration has begun for ESL classes with Westchester Community College @ NRPL. Classes in-person begin 7/11.*
 - *Citizenship classes will meet for a double sessions in May on 5/20 & 5/27 from 1:00- 3:00pm. Participants are preparing for their Naturalization interview/exam.*
 - *May 2023 marks a year since Notary services began at the NRPL. Thanks to Corey Link for volunteering his services, Notary Nights continues on May 19th @ 6:00-7:30 pm and throughout the summer.*
 - *The Job Coach offers one to one guidance throughout the job searching process every Tuesday from 5:00-8:00pm. Attendance has been robust, as patrons are preparing with interview practice time and resume writing.*
 - *The county Health Care Navigator provides enrollment assistance to individuals or families who would like help applying for health insurance through the NYS Marketplace, every Wednesday, 10:00-1:00 pm.*
 - *Spring is the season of community outreach and a time to connect with our community partners including an outreach at NR's first Earth Day Event and the Alzheimer's Association, Adopt Clean Energy and Congressman Bowman, all visiting NRPL in April and May.*
- 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.

APRIL PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 5/4/23

APRIL/MAY PROGRAMS/EVENTS (4/11 - 4/30)

General

New Rochelle Art Association Dermot Gale Memorial Awards Show

They had over 70 pieces of art in our gallery and the show was very well received.

Knitting Workshops: April 12 & 19. 8 & 4 attendees respectfully

Adult Art Workshop: Collage class, April 14, 7 attendees

Citywide SustainableNR Earth Day Celebration at Anderson Plaza, 4/22. NRPL had presence sharing card applications, and Library info.

Children's Theatre and Dance:

Young Musicians of Westchester Concert for 4th graders from Columbus Elementary School, April 24, 130 4th graders and teachers

Capoeira Saturday classes (Children's will provide attendance numbers)

Yoga:

Yoga and Meditative Arts, April 20, 8 attendees

Chair Yoga, Mondays & Wednesdays. Classes are averaging 13-16 +attendees /session

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

Five Towns: One Book, CURE Program, April 15, 60 attendees

Sunday concert series featuring: Hudson Valley Chamber Musicians, April 16, 42 attendees

Holocaust Remembrance Day film screening of Zaida, 4/18 with Q&A by Elena Procaro-Foley from Iona University and Kathy Zalta a second generation survivor. 32 very engaged attendees

Meet the Authors, 4/29 17+ local authors will be here to speak with our patrons about their books and their journey to becoming published. We had about 25 patrons come in to speak with authors. Unfortunately, the weather was miserable and this impacted the turnout.

Virtual Programs, April/May

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

Gene Kelly: Singing and Dancing in the Rain, April 27, 22 attendees in total; 4 from NRPL attendees

Viva la Vida: Frida Khalo Program, May 2

How to Get Started in Amateur Astronomy with the Westchester Amateur Astronomers, May 3

Coming Up....

In Person Programs/Events

Our Children Our Artists exhibit: lower schools, May 4-14, upper schools; May 19-June 1st

Cinco de Mayo workshop and performance, May 5th

Adult Art Workshop on Van Gogh, May 5th

Bill Wurtzel - fun with food (closing out children's book week), May 6th

Final Sunday Concert, Elijah and the Not for Prophets, May 7th

HCL 25th Birthday Celebration, May 20

New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film, The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio, May 21st

Sewing Program Launch, classes start May 23 for 3 consecutive weeks. Adults 12-2 and teens 4-6

NRPL Film Series with Film Librarian, Chris Pogialli presents Searching, 5/27

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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

Social Media highlights:

With the Social Media coordinator position filled in mid-February, our social media activity has ramped up, resulting in more than double the level of engagement on Facebook and Instagram in the past month. Our coordinator is also building out a content calendar, including 2-3 posts/day/platform, highlighting upcoming events, images from past events, and Library programs, services, heritage/celebration days and more.

Email highlights:

Our email distribution list continues to grow, with the addition of new library cardholders and program attendees. Open rates steady around 41%. Testing use of remain feature for latest email. Response rate up to 50%, though watching unsubscribe/spam reports.

Launched Learn to Sew @NRPL program to the community via PR, newsletter mention, flyers to community. Interview on WVOX set for May 8.

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

AARP Tax Aide Program finished on April 18.

588 returns prepared (vs. 870 in 2019; 25% decline)

Also assisted with 132 in person inquiries and 193 phone inquiries

*Total assists: 913 (higher as returns may have been for a couple vs. single)
Who they are not seeing vs. past: Elderly white women
As the season progressed, they did see more members of Black minority community.
Saw a few members of the Hispanic community, consistent with past experience.
Saw fewer young people. Historically, saw students from Monroe college
Through the end of March, New Rochelle had the highest number of returns prepared. Final numbers to be provided.*

ARPA Grant

Exploring possibilities for second tranche ARPA grant application.

Community Relationship Building:

*Met with NRPD Detective Melissa Diniz who manages social media for the department.
Discussed various roles of Community Relations department*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Committee Member Whitney Barrat indicated that no report was currently available but requested that Committee members be ready to receive draft policies relating to room reservations, Internet access and donation/naming protocols in the near future.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No members of the public asked to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary