

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday June 8, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

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

The May Public Budget Hearing 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 made the following report.

The WLS Board of Trustees, at its last meeting on May 30, 2023, noted that the New York State Budget 2023-2024 which was approved by the legislators on May 3, 2023 maintained its allocation for the libraries at the same level as the 2022 allocation:

- *\$99.6 million in statewide Library Aid;*
- *\$34 million in statewide Library Construction;*
- *\$176,000 statewide from the “Love Your Library Fund” which is expected to be the final year this allocation will be available.*

The approved budget also included: a) Authorization of Library Construction over 50% for projects in the economically disadvantaged and distressed communities extended through March 31, 2026; b) Civil service reform via expansion of continuous recruitment.

It may be noted that this “flat” budget represents a slight reduction in overall purchasing power due to the impact of inflation and the rising costs that are anticipated in the coming year.

The WLS Board is committed to assisting to the extent possible the migrants and asylum seekers in Westchester County. WLS has registered as an organization willing and able, in cooperation with the public libraries (including our own New Rochelle Public Library), to assist new arrivals as needed. WLS participated in a recent seminar hosted by Westchester County on the migrant/asylum seekers situation in our region. Currently about 30 families are being housed in a hotel in Yonkers, and their basic needs are being addressed by the County and a handful of local nonprofit organizations. The County is working with New York City to identify unmet and anticipated needs.

Following a question raised by a Trustee concerning the Division of Library Development (DLD) involvement in the Mount Vernon Public Library and the Mamaroneck Public Library, and what were triggers that would bring about such an involvement. It was noted that, to the extent that it was known, DLDs involvement with an individual public library normally occurs when an action was related to the checkpoint or deadline based in the Education Law. In these situations, the DLD works with the public library system (WLS) and the public libraries in question to correct the issue, e, g. the submission of an approved annual report, or maintaining the minimum standards, etc.

The WLS has approved and swore-in a trustee candidate to represent a District V (Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount Pleasant and Pound Ridge) He is Anthony Amiano. He has experience as a Board of Education trustee.

The WLS Board of Trustees has 15 members who serve a 5-year term for a maximum of two terms. At the end of each year, the terms of three trustees expire, unless renewed for a second 5-year term. The terms of the following three trustees expire at the end of this year December 31, 2023:

- Edris Scherer, representing District IV (Lewisboro/South Salem, North Salem and Somers). She served remarkably well as the Board’s treasurer;*
- Maureen LeBlanc, representing District VIII (Larchmont, Mammorocek and Scarsdale). She served as the Chair of the Finance Committee;*
- Francis Okelo. representing District XIV (New Rochelle). He served and chair of the Board’s Strategic Plan Committee and is currently the Board’s vice president.*

Among other issues the WLS Board plans to consider in the coming months are: encouraging closer cooperation and working relationship between the WLS Board and the library boards and their staff; the growing and very disturbing trend of book banning and how best to address it.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

President Whiney Barrat expressed her appreciation to the New Rochelle community regarding the vote on May 16th and the successful passage of the proposed FY 2023/24 budget proposal. She also welcomed Tatiana Infante and Fela Cortes to the Board as its

newest members effective July 2023 and additionally thanked retiring Board members Sarah Langlois and Daniel Bonnet for their devoted service to the library and the New Rochelle community. Whitney encouraged Sarah and Daniel to continue their connection with the Board and its work in meeting the needs of the community. Other Board members (and the Library Director) expressed their appreciation for Sarah and Daniel's work during their tenure as Trustees.

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 of the 3rd floor area is also complete. Work regarding the installation of the additional study rooms and conference rooms continue. The new Information Desk is now in place along with the installation of the new lower shelving units. Adult Services staff (thanks to hard work of our Page staff) is supervising a significant relocation of our various collections (fiction, graphic novels, large print, etc.) in order to provide a more intuitive arrangement of these collections. Our goal continues to adhere to the expectation that this project will be complete by September 2023. The HCL Air Conditioning Project is now complete with the successful installation of the 3 ductless mini splits on the three floors. Staff and patrons are reacting positively to the enhanced cool air environment and the relative quiet of the operating 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. The New Rochelle Building Department is now in possession of the permitting documentation with ongoing dialogue in play between all parties. We are hopeful the permits for this project will be issued by the end of July with work to begin in August.

+ 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. According to WLS, the New York State Library and DASNY staff have basically approved the recommended awards with confirmations likely to be announced in September 2023. If this timetable is accurate, it is estimated that the grant monies will be made available to our library in October/November 2023.

+ Adult Services Office Renovation: The project is successfully moving forward. Recently installed carpeting and painting are in place with furniture on order and vendors engaged to upgrade the electrical services, low voltage and interior lighting. Completion of the project is expected to occur in July 2023.

+ 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)

+ 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 annual Foundation Board meeting is scheduled for June 13th and will be in-person at a local restaurant. The Foundation will consider endorsing the library's Main and HCL FY 2023/24 grant request per Library Board approval. On June 1st, the Foundation's Cocktails and Conversation (C & C) series successfully hosted noted Manhattan romance author Elinor Lipman with the next C & C event scheduled for June

22nd featuring New Rochelle native Jonathan Rosen and his acclaimed book “The Best Minds”, much of which took place in New Rochelle.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

No report was made.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

Children’s Room:

The Children’s Room celebrated Children’s Book Week with a food-themed event called Feast of Fun. Children had the opportunity to learn about the process of making picture books from author/illustrator Bill Wurtzel, met the Hungry Caterpillar, and decorated cookies. A total of 110 people attended the event. Community partnerships are actively sought and established. We recently welcomed fifty individuals from Jefferson Elementary who came to support the school’s Read-a-thon. Our library staff read a bilingual story and informed them about the benefits of owning a library card, as well as the various activities we provide for children and families. The Read-a-thon concluded with the creation of contact paper bookmarks using the Ellison Die-cut machine. Our librarians, Susan Mackey and Ashley Bressingham, thoughtfully organized our newest program, Sensory Story Time, based on a patron’s request. This program was a tremendous success and will now be a permanent addition to our schedule starting this fall. The Huguenot Children’s Library wrapped up its spring programs, including Baby Rhyme Time and STEAM Along with Toddler. We also held the final NRHS Honor Society Science after-school program. Despite the inclement weather, HCL’s 25th Birthday Party on May 20th drew approximately 400 people. Families enjoyed entertainment from Peppa Pig and Paw Patrol, as well as a balloon twister, tattoo artist, DJ Smithy boy, craft projects, and cake! We are grateful to the Foundation and our volunteers for their assistance in making it a wonderful event.

Teens:

Amy Gonzalez from WLS presented a Preparing for College program on Saturday, May 20. Four attendees, including one of our teen volunteers and his mother, participated in the program. We are currently planning a specialized one-on-one drop-in session. In celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 24 teens participated in our Happy AAPI Giveaway. This month’s winners were Jose Orajuela (a regular and former teen volunteer), Demi Carter, and Imaad Uzan. We received several comments in our suggestion box that reflect the positive environment created by our teen librarian, Rio, and her colleagues: “I love going here!”; “Hi, I like your teen room. It makes me feel safe”; “Never change, stay open and be a place for kids to come and be themselves”

Adults:

Our librarians undertook the challenging task of cleaning out the Adult Services office as part of the ongoing adult services renovation. The third-floor renovation project is progressing well, with minimal disruption to our patrons. The carpet has been replaced,

and the painting is nearly complete. We have started installing the new study rooms, and we expect the remaining new furniture to be delivered and installed in June. The project is scheduled to be fully completed by mid-July. Brian successfully updated and reassigned Dewey numbers for the entire score collection. Additionally, he expanded the score collection using funds from the foundation grant. The collection now looks impressive and has received positive feedback from patrons. One individual was specifically looking for guitar scores, while another was a fellow Westchester librarian with a music background who happened to visit our library. He commended our collection, mentioning that every time he requests a score via interlibrary loan, it comes from NRPL. He is currently collaborating with WLS to improve the inventory accuracy of this special collection. In May, we proctored thirteen exams, most of which were for Real Estate U.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

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 May/June 2023

Summer 2023 is almost upon us and the BTOP Help & Learning center has been busy helping our library patrons find community resource information, critical online support for food, job search and increase their digital literacy. The BTOP room invites all library patrons to learn more about their phones and devices, email basics and navigating the internet. During the month of May, 51 devices were checked out, 27 Hotspots and 25 Chrome books. iPads are ready to circulate and were recently used by our teens for a Teen Trivia program.

- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell continues to assist with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan.*
- *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, Tuesdays @ 5:00 pm.*
- *Outreach tabling by our community partners in our lobby includes Urban Strategies Head Start, Alzheimer's Association, Adopt Clean Energy and Westchester-Putnam Career Center Network.*
- *Notary Public services continues this summer with sessions on Thursdays @ 6:30 pm*

6/22, 7/20, 8/17 in the BTOP room.

- *A chance to make community connections continues with NRPL outreach and information sessions during the NR City's Eats and Info event at Lincoln Park and Flowers Park in May. June Pride celebrations in Ruby Dee Park will include NRPL, with library information and free giveaways. The monthly IEYMS mobile food pantry will be Wednesday, 6/14@ 4pm-5pm, with NRPL information and library goodies.*
- *Library information sessions have been scheduled for the senior residence at 50 Sickles Ave. in June. Topics include: What can you get with an NRPL Library Card, Email Basics, Smartphone tips, Navigating the internet and Internet Safety.*
- *Summer ESL classes with Westchester Community College will continue in July and August 2023.*
- *The BTOP center supports the transition for library patrons who are continuing their High School Equivalency Exam (HSE) journey. The personalized learning program from WLS, GED Academy, is available for library patrons along with a study coach. Orientations sessions every month, second Saturday, 10am-12pm.*

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

MAY/JUNE PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 6/8/23

MAY/JUNE PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- **Adult Art Workshop on Van Gogh, May 5th**, 14 attendees
- **Our Children Our Artists lower schools' reception May 10th**, at least 200 in attendance with teachers, head of the Arts Programs and the Superintendent of Schools
- **Our Children Our Artists upper schools' reception May 24th**, at least 150 in attendance with teachers, head of the Arts Programs and the Superintendent of schools
- **Sewing Program Launch. May 23, May 30 and June 6th.** The program is a huge success. The classes filled to capacity, with 40 people on each waiting list (one adult class/one teen class.) Planning for the next set of classes to begin this fall, including evening or Saturday class.

Films:

- **New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film, The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio, May 21st.** 15 attendees
- **NRPL Film Series with Film Librarian, Chris Pogialli presents Searching, 5/27,** 12 attendees

Yoga:

- **Yoga and Meditative Arts, May 11th**, 9 attendees
- **Chair Yoga, Mondays & Wednesdays.** Classes are averaging 10-14 +attendees /session

- **Children's:**

- **Bill Wurtzel - fun with food (closing out children's book week), May 6th,**
- **Pre-School Fun and Fitness in collaboration with Montefiore WIC program, 19 attendees. This program, in place prior to the pandemic, has been reinstated and will run monthly at NRPL.**
- **HCL 25th Birthday Celebration, May 20, 300 attendees**

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- **Cinco de Mayo workshop and performance, May 5th. The workshop had 6 attendees. The performance had 135 attendees.**
- **Final Sunday Concert, Elijah and the Not for Prophets, May 7th. 70 attendees**

Virtual Programs, May/June

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

- **Viva la Vida: Frida Kahlo Program, May 2, 9 attendees**
- **How to Get Started in Amateur Astronomy with the Westchester Amateur Astronomers, May 3, 7 attendees**
- **Safe Haven: Gay Life in 1950's Cherry Grove, June 14**

Coming Up....

- **Voting Rights Exhibit in the space outside of Community Relations Offices**
- **Juneteenth Exhibit in the Winter Lumen Gallery**
- **Juneteenth History Out Loud with Color collage workshop June 8th**
- **Juneteenth Drumming workshop and Performance with Kazi Oliver - June 15th**
- **Juneteenth Jazz Concert: Global Jazz Community All Star Women Band - June 17th**
- **Pride Art Workshop for children- June 12th**
- **Pride Film - Bros - June 13th**
- **Pride Drag Story Hour - June 17th**
- **Summer Reading Kickoff Party- June 24th**

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Marketing support Provide support for 30 NRPL programs in May/June including print, digital and press communications. May was particularly busy, engaging over 700 people (including children).

Email highlights:

- *Investigated providing capability for patrons to translate weekly email into Spanish and learned that if a person has their browser set to another language, they are receiving our emails in that language.*
- *Implemented auto remailing of weekly eblast to non-openers, increasing average open rate to 49% in May vs. 43% in April. No impact on unsubscribes or SPAM reports so far.*

Website Highlights

Website visits increased 39% year over year. This is likely due to the increase in links to the online calendar from weekly eblasts.

Lobby/Second Floor Monitors

The refurbished monitors in the lobby, behind the 1st floor information desk, and on the second floor are now being populated with information. CR staff will get training to learn the full capabilities of the program that supports the content creation.

***Launched Learn to Sew @NRPL** program to the community via PR, newsletter mention, flyers to community and radio interview. News 12 picked up the story which led to huge demand for the classes, which hold 10 students/class.*

***HCL "Birthday" Party** Despite inclement weather, families came out for the big birthday party. Program took place in and outside the building, using multiple tents to shield volunteers and guests from the weather. The festivities included crafts, air tattoos, balloon twister, chalk drawing, character visits, NRPD visit, DJ, cake, and goody bags. Special guest Ed Pasciuti had the honor of blowing out the candles on the cake.*

***ARPA Grant** Working with NRPL Foundation to gather information for a grant application seeking funds to create outdoor activity space in Children's Garden. Applications due June 30.*

Community Relationship Building:

- *Attended Lincoln Park outreach event. Spent time with NRPD Detective Melissa Diniz who manages social media for the department, as well as serving as LGBTQ Police Liaison.*
- *In contact with multiple members of NR Development Team to identify opportunities for NRPL to participate in Summer Sizzle Concert series (Saturday evening concerts in Ruby Dee Park, May 26 - September 30) signature events for families. NRPL will have a presence at the first "signature event", the NR Pride Fair, on July 10.*
- *Reaching out to partners to learn about planned events so NRPL can complement, and not compete with other programs planned for downtown.*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

Amy Tietz	41 Disbrow Circle
Barbara Crane	1255 North Avenue
Wendy Phelps	1273 North Avenue
Katie Frailoi	7 Popular Avenue
Vince Malefitano	9 Fairview Place

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Langlois
Secretary