

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

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

BOARD MEMBERS

Whitney Barrat, President
Corey Galloway, Vice President (absent)
Lucille Renwick, Secretary
Rhiannon Navin (absent)
Beth Acocella
Tatiana Infante
Fela Cortes

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

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

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made the following report:

- *At its last meeting on Tuesday October 24, 2023, the WLS Board of Trustees meticulously reviewed the proposed WLS operating budget for the year 2024, prepared by the Budget Committee. The proposed budget took into account the following assumptions: i) No increase in funding from New York State, II) The possibility that funding from the Westchester County beyond 2023 levels may not materialize, iii) Technology fees charged to the libraries are expected to remain essentially at the current level, and iv) All vacant positions in 2023 will be filled before the beginning of the new year.*
- *The proposed operating budget projects a total revenue of \$7,3 million or 4.7% over the current budget. The main sources of this revenue include funds from the NY State (\$2,705,200 or 37%); Westchester County (\$1,500,300 or 20%); member libraries (\$2,718,000 or 37%); other sources (\$417,500 or 6%). Total expenses are expected to be \$7.9 million or 7.6%. These expenses are planned to support the following main activities: i) Member library services (\$4,799,206 or 59%); ii) Direct patron activities (\$2,008,528 or 25%) iii) Administration (\$1,173,146 or 15%) and iv) Other expenses (\$122,250 or 1%). WLS currently holds over \$2.8 million in Reserve Cash and Cash equivalents. The reserve and the unrestricted assets will be used, as necessary, to bridge the projected budget gap.*

- *The WLS Board will do a last minute review of this proposed operating budget before formally approving it at its next meeting on Tuesday November 28, 2023.*
- *The WLS Board accepted and approved the recommendation of the Nominating Committee for two new trustees of the Board: i) Barbara Tepper to represent District IV (Lewisboro, North Salem and Somers) and, ii) David Mener to represent District XIV (New Rochelle). The new trustees will be sworn-in at the next meeting of the Board, and ready to begin their 5-year term of service on January 1, 2024. The Board warmly congratulated the two new nominees and welcomed them into the WLS Board of Trustees.*

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

Judi Duncan 71 Norelo Ave. New Rochelle

PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat highlighted the impressive background and qualifications of the prospective Foundation Board member, Lucia Speight. Fela Cortes made the motion, upon the recommendation of the New Rochelle Public Library Foundation Board, to endorse the selection of Lucia Speight to serve as a member of the New Rochelle Public Library Foundation Board, seconded by Tatiana Infante and approved.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:
 library. All of our diverse populations are utilizing our library for various activities.
+ 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 HCL Air Conditioning Project was completed prior to the beginning of warm summer weather and provided cool, quiet and energy efficient air for staff and patrons. The Third Floor Renovation Project has witnessed significant project activity with only a few final yet crucial elements requiring completion before the project can reach closure. Currently, the architect’s Teen Enclosure bid document was shared with prospective vendors and so we await their responses. Additionally, tied to this project is the installation of the 2 smaller conference rooms adjacent to the teen enclosure area. At this point in time, we still do not have a scheduled project completion date but expect to be able to forecast closure of the project once the Teen Enclosure bid has been awarded.
+ 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 has made significant progress. Project Architect/Manager Doug Emilio made the following report:
Work is nearing completion on the second and third floors. As of October 31st, 2023, the overall project completion is at approximately 27% complete, not including general conditions and allowances, while the tracking of actual work is at approximately 31%

complete. We have requested an updated construction schedule from Gleason Powers to better understand the scheduling of work for the first floor and basement.

+ 2022 NYS Library Construction Grant: The library successfully 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 (HCL) 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. The grant funds arrived in early October and we have made significant progress in the completion of HCL project with the replacement of the foundation façade complete and the expected installation of the basement flooring during Thanksgiving week. It is our expectation the HCL project will be complete in January 2024. The pre-planning for the Main Library project is underway with the expectation that this project will start in January/February 2024. Our anticipated completion date for the Main Library Project will be Spring 2024.

+ 2023 NYS Library Construction Grant: Submitted in August 2023, the Main Library Noise Abatement Phase 2/ Library Wayfinding Project grant application will reduce the noise level throughout every floor of the New Rochelle Public Library by the installation of sound absorbing panels in the Business Opportunity Center, and Center Stair Well (Phase 1 witnessed last year's approval of a grant that will address noise issues located in the Lobby - including its 3 atriums- and the Teen Room.) as well as install appropriate and uniform wayfinding/signage throughout the facility. . Given the now nearly complete scope of interior renovations, the need to install a system of an appropriate, inclusive and uniform wayfinding/signage system is crucial in order to guide patrons in the most efficient usage of our facility and its multipurpose resources. On September 19th, the WLS Board of Trustees fully endorsed the PLDA recommendation to fully fund the entire \$144,692 cost of the project will be with our NYS grant allocation totaling \$108,519. The Foundation will need to provide a match of \$36,175. Through the Foundation FY 2024/25 annual grant award. Also submitted simultaneously in August 2023, the Huguenot Children's Library Restroom Improvement Project grant application. is seeking to implement a series of necessary restroom improvements, due to heavy ongoing usage and code modifications, located on the first floor and basement. On September 19th, the WLS Board of Trustees fully endorsed the PLDA recommendation to fully fund the entire \$68,000 cost of the project will be with our NYS grant allocation totaling \$48,000. The Foundation will need to provide a match of \$16,000 through the Foundation FY 2024/25 annual grant award. "Next steps" in the grant process will witness examination of the grant by DASNY and the New York State Library. We are hopeful the grant award announcements will be made in Summer 2024 with the grant funds to arrive in early Fall 2024.

+ ARPA Grant: In May 2023, our Foundation, in partnership with library staff, submitted an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) \$275,000 grant application to the City of New Rochelle for funding to create a permanent outdoor program space in the Children's Garden area. The City Council recently approved \$250,000 grant allocation for this project. Funds are expected to arrive in December with completion mandated to occur by December 2024. On November 6th, the magnetic imaging of the proposed exterior Children's Garden area was analyzed by the vendor in order to ascertain the status of the

space. The imaging technology was able to determine 2 large tanks are currently buried (adjacent to each other) nearly 3 feet in the Children's Garden space. The vendor will share its removal/remediation options with us in the near future. Simultaneously, Foundation, Library Board and staff representatives are in the process of forming a Committee relative to the selection of the project contractor and other relevant project issues.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Handbook Book Club (THBC) of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session is **Financing & Managing Construction Projects**. "Live" participation of one of these sessions, counts as 1.5 hours of trustee training that is eligible to meet the 2 hour per year requirement for trustee education. The 2024 THBC program is about to begin with the initial workshop information detailed below:

= **Problem-Solving Strategies for Library Boards and Staff** (Wednesday, January 10, 2024: 6:30 – 8:00 pm)

+ Friends of NRPL: The Friends Book Store continue to provide the community with open hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. No donations are being accepted until January 2024 due to the Friends Office renovation We are moving forward in relation to the renovation of the 1st Floor Friends Office space and have ordered improved desk/storage elements as well as planning for enhancing lighting and upgrading the flooring/walls. Grant monies will be utilized for this effort with no contribution from library operating funds. The next Friends Board meeting is scheduled for December 12th.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting will be held on November 20th in our Main Library Lobby Meeting Room. The Foundation recently sponsored another successful Cocktails and Conversation" event on November 16th at Alvin & Friends featuring author Kamili Bell Hill discussing her book, Happy Plants, Happy You!

PERSONNEL REPORT:

No report was made.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

October highlights at the Main Library were filled with exciting events and activities. To start, a live "Creepy Crawly" animal encounter took place the Saturday before Halloween, attracting a crowd of eighty people. Attendees had the unique opportunity to get up close and personal with fascinating creatures such as a tarantula, scorpion, snake, owl, and other creepy critters.

One standout event was the preschool music program "Tune Bugs" (formerly known as "Let's Groove with Lisa") led by Lisa Schulman. Lisa has become a beloved figure at our library over the past year, garnering a dedicated following for her delightful program. In October, her last three sessions each drew an impressive 80-90 attendees.

In October, class visits to the library were in full swing, with children's librarians hosting 17 additional classroom visits. These visits introduced 584 students and

teachers to the library's offerings, and many students received their first library cards, marking a significant milestone.

HCL's programs were bustling throughout October, offering a wide range of activities for all ages. Young patrons enjoyed two programs designed for the very young: "Baby Rhyme Time" and "Baby Fingers." Meanwhile, old favorites like "Yoga Tots" and "Dawny Dew" continued to be appreciated by our community. Highlights included the return of Lavanya Misra with her cozy and STEM-friendly "Nature Tales" program. Additionally, a local author and illustrator, Sean Flanagan, presented his new book, "Sam's Unboring Adventure," in an engaging book talk. To foster creativity, the Arts Fest had children creating their own inventions with ArchForKids, making it a memorable and hands-on experience for all involved.

The library's presence at the Westcop Job Fair provided an excellent opportunity to showcase Peterson's vocational prep, a versatile tool designed to assist individuals in preparing for various career-related exams and advancing their career prospects. The attendees were thoroughly impressed with this valuable resource and eagerly registered for library cards, with a notable emphasis on those studying for the firefighter exam.

Annick has successfully completed the weeding of the Spanish language collection and has now turned her attention to the 900s section. Once the weeding of the 900s is complete, our plan is to integrate the oversized collection with the regular-sized books, with assistance from our part-timers, Sandra and Maureen. Meanwhile, Chris has finished the weeding process for the CD audiobooks, and the entire collection has been relocated to the back wall of the first floor. We are currently awaiting the installation of additional shelving; after which we will initiate the process of shifting the DVD collection. Weeding of the DVD collection is an ongoing endeavor. Brian is managing the substantial donation of music CDs. To date, we have successfully added 460 new CDs to our collection. Some of these CDs have been generously donated to The Friends, and approximately 300 more are awaiting transfer to WLS for cataloging.

During Banned Books Week, we engaged in several exciting initiatives. We compiled lists of banned books for the newsletter, set up a captivating display on the first floor, and our librarians manned a table in the lobby. As part of our efforts, librarians took turns hosting a "Blind Date with a Banned Book" in the lobby. Additionally, we worked with teen volunteers for create buttons supporting reading banned books craft.

Annick's Brown Bag book club gathered for another meeting, drawing new faces. They delved into Isabel Allende's "Long Petal of the Sea," for a meaningful discussion.

In our ongoing commitment to showcasing diverse literary treasures, we highlighted "Books in Translation" with a dedicated display on the 3rd floor and shared a list in the newsletter. As Halloween approached, we curated compelling

lists and displays for DVDs, horror fiction, and nonfiction, ensuring that the spirit of the season was embraced by our community. Additionally, we celebrated Italian-American Heritage month, contributing to our ongoing commitment to diverse programming.

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:

BTOP HELP & LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS OF OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2023

October was a busy month and the frenzy of Fall continues in November at the Help & Learning Center. The BTOP room provided guidance to many patrons who use critical online services for food support, heating assistance, education, employment, childcare, and government benefits. As election season nears, patrons are seeking assistance with election poll worker training for work with the Board of Elections. GED learners are signing up for the GED academy for online learning and practice tests. Many patrons are tapping into our community partner services; free legal advice from Hudson Valley Justice Center, who offers direct representation and advice on eviction prevention. A collaboration with our community partner WestCop resulted in a successful job fair this month. Participants were able to connect and meet local employers from different businesses. All of the digital literacy classes during October and November were well attended and patrons had positive feedback. The PLA digital classes, in English & Spanish, will resume in Winter, 2024. The "Tech for Success" classes, with WLS & Stem Alliance granted participants a free laptop for attending the intense workshop.

- *Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin continues to assist individuals looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes and cover letters, searching for jobs on the Internet, networking and completing follow ups. Attendance and sessions per month have been robust.*
- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell is assisting with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified healthcare plan, every Wednesday afternoon.*
- *Medicare Walk-in counseling continues at NRPL during open enrollment on Mondays, 10am-12pm, with Bilingual Medicare Advisor, Mercedes Stagnaro.*

- *Community Outreach: Food Pantry visits resume at Isaac Young Middle school on 11/8. It is a great opportunity to boast about library programs and connect with families needing community resource information.*
- *Notary Nights at NRPL is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 11/16 @ 6:30pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.*
- *English as a Second Language classes continue at NRPL. Westchester Community College offers ESL courses for beginners four mornings a week through December 2023.*
- *November is Diabetes Month and representatives from Montefiore Diabetes Education Center will be in the lobby in November to provide information about, and answer questions related to the Montefiore Diabetes Education program.*
- *Civic/Citizenship classes wrapped up in person classes for 2023. Instructor/Attorney Sonica Dixon will advise on current USCIS applications by appointment only and in-person classes will resume January 2024.*
- *New Rochelle Council of Community Services is presenting a Symposium on Affordable Housing at NRPL on 11/16/23. The one-hour panel presentation and audience discussion will bring together experts and representatives of organizations who are on the front lines of this issue to inform the community and raise awareness.*

Rhiannon shared the Marketing/Communications/Programming report as created by Marketing/Communications Head Lisa Itzkowitz and Programming Head Tobe Sevush:

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 11/9/23

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- *Teen Knitting Club October 12 & November 2, 2 attendees,*
- *Adult Knitting Club October 13 & November 3, 4 attendees*
- *Sewing Classes October 14, 21 & 28*
Adults - 10 and teens - 9 for each class
- *Adult Art Workshop October 20th, 12 attendees (part of ArtsFest)*
- *New Rochelle Art Associations 108th Juried Open Show as part October 1-October 29*

Yoga:

- *Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Classes continue to be very well attended, with attendance often exceeding 20 participants*

Childrens:

- *Rhodes Piano Workshops: October: 6 weeks of group piano instruction for ages 5-11. Each class filled to capacity (8)*
- *Eclipse Event (children's craft and eclipse viewing glasses distribution), October 14, 21 attendees*
- *Create a flower/crown/boutonniere, 47 attendees*
- *Teatro Sea Performance - The Colors of Frida, 55 attendees*
- *Halloween Creepy Crawlers with Greenburgh Nature Center, 80 attendees*

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- *Fire Prevention Workshop October 10th, 6 attendees*
- *New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film Series, October 15, The Clock: 20 attendees*

- *Film Noir with Chris: The Narrow Margin* October 17th, 4 attendees
- *Michael Powers Blues Concert* October 13th, 100 attendees
- *Alexander McCabe Cuba Bella Concert, October 14th*, 68 attendees (part of Hispanic Heritage Month events)
- *Impetus concert* October 20th, 45 attendees (part of ArtsFest)
- *Young Musicians of Westchester concert, October 21st*, 38 attendees (part of ArtsFest)
- *Ghosts in the Wind presentation for adults with David Rose, October 28th*, 45 attendees
- *Tutti Bravi Production monologues* October 29th, 95 attendees
- *Day of the Dead Performance by Calpulli Mexican Dance Group* November 2nd, 150 attendees
- *Young Musicians of Westchester Concert* November 5th, 58 attendees

Virtual Programs, October

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

- *Managing Common Invasive Plants in Westchester, 10/24*: 17 attendees

Coming Up....

Gallery exhibit: C. Damon Carter presents 'Monsters, Flowers and Friends, November 7-27

New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film Series Lonely are the Brave, November 12

Young Musicians of Westchester Concert for Columbus School, November 14

Adult Art Workshop November 17

Wine and Cheese for local residents and Ray Blue Music concert, November 17

Sing Your Heart Out Concert, November 19

Film Noir with Chris, November 25

Knitting Club, December 1

Young Musicians of Westchester Concert, December 2

Supporting Characters Play Readings, December 3

Rocky Middleton Jazz Concert, December 8

Film Noir with Chris, December 9

Virtual Programs

- *Great British Baking Tour, 11/28*

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Email highlights:

- *Average open rate in October was 55 %, which is 16 % higher than the industry average. Our email distribution list is now 10,300, resulting in over 5,600 patrons opening our e-blast each week.*

Social Media Highlights

- *Obtained 38 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,512, a 22.5% increase year over year. Obtained 25 new Facebook page likes, for a total of 3,221, a 14.4 % increase over last year.*
- *Website visits via Google remained flat compared to last month.*
- *Planning social campaigns for Staff Picks 2023, and reinstatement/expansion of What Are Your Reading Wednesdays to all patrons. (We ran this campaign for kids this summer.)*

Program Marketing Management

- Supported promotion of 32 October programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications and community outreach.
- Continuing work on Year-End Review (newsletter) for Friends of NRPL to send to Friends membership

Website

- Working on cleaning existing website content. Will reach out to staff soon for input.

Community Relationship Building:

- Hosting exclusive wine and cheese, and art exhibit viewing for downtown residents on Friday, November 17 before the Friday Night Concert (which is open to the public.)
- Exploring Storywalk in new spaces (Ward Acres)
- Rudy Rocs Ruby, a collaborative celebration hosted by NRPL, City of NR/Parks & Rec, NRBID, and Chamber of Commerce, will take place on Sunday, December 3

Misc Programs

- Adding Qi-gong to wellness program offerings, beginning in January, 2024
- Planning Teen Resume Writing Workshop with WLS, January/February 2024
- Planning another Financial Literacy workshop for teens (originally presented in Spring 2021 and well received) and exploring program for children and adults, to offer during Financial Literacy Month in April 2024
- Coordinating with NRPL Archivist David Rose for monthly newsletter/social media content from NRPL Photography Collection beginning in January 2024
- Planning for Library Lover's Month, February 2024, to solicit "love letters" from patrons, for display in library during February.

Lucille Renwick raised the issue of achieving stronger linkage with New Rochelle's 2 Middle Schools and New Rochelle High School. She suggested that library staff seek to partner with the Youth Council, Young Achievers and other teen groups in order to better integrate this underserved population into our library's programs and services. Tom highlighted the great work Teen Librarian and her staff have accomplished over recent years -and invited Board members to participate in the upcoming library tour with School Superintendent Corey Reynolds in order to share idea, etc. Whitney Barrat recommended that the library explore the possibility of sponsoring high school student focus groups for more direct feedback regarding the library and its programs and services as well as exploring other issues of interest and concern.

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Fela Cortes reported on 2 minor policy modifications as recommended by library staff and endorsed by the Policy Committee. The first change involves an alteration of the

fine structure regarding the return of our electronic (Chromebook, iPad, Wifi hot spot) devices. Essentially, staff want to waive fines for late return if it occurs during the first week preceding the due date in order to encourage sustained/enhanced loan of the technology. The new fine structure will be \$5 per day with a maximum fine of \$25 per device. Pending a lack of holds on the devices, automatic renewals will occur and the loan period will become 6 weeks in total. The second change recommended by library staff and endorsed by the Policy Committee affirms the crucial importance of building and maintaining a local author collection and defines the criteria for inclusion of such works as determined by library staff as well as its appropriate location and its desire to grow the collection primarily by non-purchase means.

Fela Cortes moved that the Technology Loan rules be modified per library staff and Policy Committee recommendation, seconded by Tatiana Infante and approved.

Fela Cortes moved that the Local Author guidelines be modified as contained in the library's Collection Development Policy per library staff and Policy Committee recommendation, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick
Secretary