

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday October 12, 2023**

Corey Galloway, Board Vice President, called the meeting to order at 7:32p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The September meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Rhiannon Navin moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Beth Acocella and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made the following report:

- *At its last meeting on Tuesday September 26, 2023, the WLS Board of Trustees made a final review of the WLS Employee Handbook and formally approved it. The Handbook is basically an internal document for use by the WLS management and staff, and it covers general employee information, such as employee compensation and benefits, insurance, job performance, separation process, retirement, etc.*
- *WLS has a line of credit arrangement with the Toronto Dominion Bank, which allows WLS to borrow up to \$500,000 unsecured for a period of one year. The financial arrangement is renewable every year. To date, WLS has not used any part of this facility, but it continues to feel that it is a good and convenient facility to have -- just in case. The Board has approved an extension of this facility for another year.*
- *The WLS Board accepted and approved the PLDA Grants Committee recommendations on the allocation of the State Aid for the Public Library Construction Aid Program for FY2023/24 State Budget, which contains a total of \$34*

million for the libraries in the State. WLS share of this amount is \$1,605,184 which is available to the 12 libraries which to date applied for a construction aid, including our New Rochelle Public Library.

- The WLS Executive Director's Report for September 2023 is available. It contains useful information and updates on various activities of the organization.*
- The Nominating Committee of the WLS Board of Trustees will meet on October 24, 2023 to consider the nomination of Dave Mener as the next WLS representative, replacing Francis Okelo who has decided not to continue for a second term. The Committee is expected to approve this nomination and recommend it to the full Board for formal approval.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat praised retiring WLS Board Trustee Francis Okelo for his fine service to New Rochelle and the Westchester library community. She also highlighted the arrival of incoming WLS Board Trustee David Mener to fill the position previously held so ably by Francis. Tom Geoffino reaffirmed the success of Francis given his numerous contributions as a WLS Board leader - both as Committee Chair/member and officer. He also welcomed David in his new role with the WLS Board as the New Rochelle representative.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Busy September at NRPL: Both Main and HCL facilities experienced tremendously busy "back to school and work" levels of activity in our 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.

Specifically, we are still awaiting the architect's Teen Enclosure bid document to be shared with prospective vendors – and their responses. Tied to this project is the installation of the 2 smaller conference rooms adjacent to this area. At this point in time, we do not have a scheduled completion date but expect to be able to forecast closure of the project once the Teen Enclosure 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 is now underway. Project Architect/Manager Doug Emilio made the following report:

As of September 30th, the overall project completion based on dollar value (not including allowances for unforeseen conditions) is approximately 19%, with 85% of the third-floor fire-stopping work being completed. Since then, the contractor has started working on the second-floor repairs. APS and the SIA continue to inspect the work at the appropriate intervals. Three concealed conditions have been identified on the third floor, and the contractor is preparing a cost proposal for that additional work for consideration.

+ 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 conversations have begun in relation to the planning and implementation of each project. We are hopeful the HCL project will begin in November with the Main Library project likely to start in January 2024. We expect each project will be concluded by June 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. Next steps include magnetic imaging of the proposed exterior area in order to ascertain the status of the underground area. Simultaneously, Foundation, Library Board and staff representatives will be constituted in order to function as a Committee in relation to decision making regarding the selection of the project contractor and other relevant project issues.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Handbook Book Club of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session is **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access & Justice**. “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. Additional workshops are located below:

= **Financing & Managing Construction Projects** (Tuesday, December 19, 2023 | 5:00-6:30 pm)

+ 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. We are beginning the process of renovating the 1st Floor Friends Office space in order to greatly improve the desk/storage area as well as 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 yet to be scheduled but will likely take place in early December. Details will be shared once available.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting will be held on October 24th in our Main Library Lobby Meeting Room. As a part of the Arts Fest celebration, the Foundation will sponsor a “Coffee, Confections and Conversation” event on October 21st at Town House Restaurant featuring author Emily Franklin discussing her highly regarded new Isabelle Stewart Gardner biography, The Lioness of Boston.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

No report was made.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

The Children’s room staff transition from the summer to fall was swift.

Both morning preschool and after school programs resumed at the end of September. The Main library and Huguenot saw the return of many familiar faces and several new ones.

The Children's Room initiated their "class visit" season welcoming 150 students and educators to the library. During these visits, librarians provided valuable information about the library and stressed the importance of owning a library card. They conducted engaging tours of the room, distributed library cards, allowed students to explore and borrow items from the collection, and even organized an exciting scavenger hunt,

enabling children to discover various areas and materials within the room. More class visits are scheduled for October and November.

Our dedicated Children's staff, along with other departments, set up tables at six elementary schools' back-to-school/parent-teacher night events to promote the library's services and register people for library cards. We estimate that we engaged with approximately 400 members of the community, showcasing children's programs and a plethora of library services.

Hispanic Heritage Month celebration commenced with two family art activities and a Mariachi band performance. These events drew over 200 attendees, making it festive and memorable.

At the Huguenot, patrons eagerly embraced our fall programming and were delighted to discover that we now offer two programs specifically designed for babies: Baby Rhyme Time and Baby Fingers. We are increasingly focusing on our very young audience in our program offerings. Additionally, we introduced StoryArt on Wednesdays, which has already gained popularity among patrons who enjoy art projects related to stories. Our patrons were thrilled to welcome back favorite programs like Dawny Dew and Yoga Tots, and we took advantage of the last sunny days on the patio for some outdoor programs.

The fiction collection has never been in better shape and the staff involved are to be commended. David, Chris and the pages moved all of the paperbacks to the third floor. David and Maureen continue to work on weeding the collection. The plan is to keep new paperbacks on the first floor and older paperbacks on the third floor. Chris is also weeding the book-on-CD collection. He expects the collection to be reduced by half when he's done. Annick is continuing to weed the Spanish language collection, and in doing so she's gained insights into the interests of our Spanish-reading community: Gabriel Garcia Marquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude has gone out 66 times in the past 5 years! (a replacement copy is on order). Anything related to finance and self-improvement guides; circulation is in the double digits in these categories. Health books, particularly Women's Health are heavily used. The highest circulating book in this area was one on Menopause without Medicine; alternative medicine guides in general had the highest circulation stats. Sadly, books on Domestic Violence and leaving abusive relationships are among the high stats as well. (as an aside, we recently learned that the Pace Women's Justice Center has opened an office in the new Family Court building here in New Rochelle). Kira's review of the cookbook section revealed a disinterest in lasagna making but a growing popularity of Spanish and Caribbean cooking.

Chris demonstrated our new online learning product: Peterson's test prep to the librarians. Everyone was reminded to let patrons know about this new resource when asking for test prep books. He is currently revising the flyer to highlight more of the vocational test prep and will set up a table at the job fair the library will be hosting with the Westcop on October 26th. There will be computers so that attendees can see what Peterson's has available. Peterson's is off to a good start, there were 2 unique users in August and 32 in September.

Larry worked with Daniel, Roy, Lisa and Geraldo on the public launch of Newspaper Index and Subject Heading Index with availability online through our website. Eleven

*jpeg*s were sent to an architectural firm researching the restoration of the NR Train Station.

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:

***October 2023 Highlights
BTOP Help & Learning Center***

October brings Fall into action and the BTOP room action is continuing to provide information and assistance for community members to learn to use critical online services through internet-enabled devices and have access to digital literacy training. The Help & Learning center enables and encourages self-sufficiency, participation, recommends resources and checks back with the patron over time to ensure they are able to reach their goals. NRPL's "Borrow Technology" program has served over 500 patrons in its first year and once connected, our patrons can better participate in lifelong learning offered by the library.

- *Library patrons seeking employment prepare 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 assists 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 the League of Women's Voters, Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, Abbott House- Foster Care Recruiting and Onward Recovery Services.*
- *Patrons can get their documents notarized for free during our monthly Notary Nights, every third Thursday of the month @ 6pm. Upcoming dates are: 9/21, 10/19, 11/16 & 12/21.*
- *Civic/Citizenship classes return this October with two hour classes on Saturday, 10/14 & 10/28 from 1-3pm in the second floor conference room. Experienced instructor, Sonica Dixon, will lead the classes and advise on current USCIS applications.*
- *Bilingual Medicare Advisor, Mercedes Stagnaro, will be available to answer questions about the basics of Medicare coverage options, in the BTOP Help & Learning Center on Mondays from 10am-12pm through open enrollment months, October and November.*

- *Fall ESL classes with Westchester Community College continue in October, with morning classes 9:15am-12:15pm.*
- *A Job fair, in collaboration with our local community partner WestCop, is scheduled for October 26, 11:00 am-3:00 pm at NRPL. This positive job market is an opportunity for community members to explore and meet local employers from different industries.*
- *BTOP Outreach opportunities with “Back to School” sessions continue with the Alternative High School Resource Fair at the Huguenot Academy on 10/4. Great opportunity to meet families and network with local community partners.*
- *Recent Digital literacy classes offered in English and Spanish were well attended and the next PLA digital Learning classes will be offered in Winter 2024.*
- *The digital learning continues with classes offered through WLS and Stem Alliance. “Tech for Success” is a 15-hour program that allows you to earn a Chromebook. Classes start 10/16 and will be taught by the Stem Alliance team.*

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 10/12/23

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- *Adult Art Workshop - September 22nd, 15 attendees*
- *Knitting Club - teen workshop September 28th, 5 attendees, Adult class canceled due to heavy rains.*
- *NRAA 108th Juried Show - October 1 - 29.*

Yoga:

- *Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Classes averaged 14 - 16 attendees /session*

Children's:

- *Rhodes Piano Workshops: October: 6 weeks of group piano instruction for ages 5-11. Class filled to capacity (8).*

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- *NYS Citizens Preparedness Workshop September 26th, 20 attendees*
- *Lou Del Bianco Presentation: Out of Mount Rushmore's Shadow Oct 1st, 15 attendees*
- *Film Noir with Chris: Out of the Past September 16th, 16 attendees*
- *Author Talk: Ernesto Mestre-Reed, author of “Sacrificio”, 20 attendees*

Virtual Programs, September/October

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

- *Dream Analysis, 9/13, 13 attendees*
- *Immigration and the Lower East Side, 9/14, 16 attendees*

Coming Up....

Fire Prevention Workshop October 10th
Teen Knitting Club October 12th
Adult Knitting Club October 13th
Sewing Classes return - October 14, 21 & 28
Michael Powers Blues Concert October 13th
Eclipse Event (children's craft and eclipse viewing glasses distribution), October 14
Alexander McCabe Cuba Bella Concert October 14th
New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film Series, October 15, The Clock
Rhodes Piano lessons continue
Film with Chris The Narrow Margin, October 17th
Arts Fest events: October 20-22 (2 art workshops, 2 Concerts, a play for children on Frida Kahlo)
Halloween events October 28th: Creepy Crawly Critters for children, Ghosts in the Wind presentation for adults with David Rose
Tutti Bravi Production monologues October 29th
Day of the Dead Performance by Calpulli Mexican Dance Group November 2nd
Young Musicians of Westchester Concert November 5th
C. Damon Carter Art Exhibit November 7-26th.

Virtual Programs

- *Managing Common Invasive Plants in Westchester (in collaboration with Healthy Yards New Rochelle), 10/24*

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Email highlights:

- *Average open rate in September was 53%, which is 14% higher than the industry average.*

Social Media Highlights

- *Obtained 22 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2472, a 24% increase year over year. Obtained 17 new Facebook page likes, for a total of 3,631, a 33% increase over last year.*
- *Website visits via Google remained flat compared to last month.*
- *Ran Library card sign up month social media campaign (posts 2x/week) throughout the month of September, highlighting benefits of a NRPL card, and encouraging card sign ups.*

Program Marketing Management

- *Supporting promotion of 32 October programs through print and digital media, PR and community outreach.*
- *Organized interactive lobby program - Blind Date with a Banned Book - for Banned Books Week (10/1 - 7). Banned books were wrapped in plain paper with the reason the book was banned noted on the cover. Patrons had to guess the book.*
- *Creating Year-End Review (newsletter) for Friends of NRPL to send to membership*

Website

- *Continuing evaluation of vendors to build new website and additional digital products*

Community Relationship Building:

- *Meet the Teacher Nights (9/12 - 9/21) resulted in over 400 interactions with parents/students at 8 schools; 70 adult card applications, 105 youth card applications, and 44 newsletter signups.*
- *Serving on committee organizing New Rochelle community program celebrating the Bicentennial of Lafayette's 1824-25 Farewell Tour through America, which included a stop in New Rochelle. An exhibit in the Lumen Winter Gallery and a community wide festival (in Ruby Dee Park) is planned for August 18, 2024 in collaboration with American Friends of Lafayette, Paine Cottage, Huguenot and New Rochelle Historical Association, City Historian, Parks & Rec, Chamber of Commerce, NRBID.*

Tom Geoffino also highlighted this Sunday's film, The Clock as part of the "New Rochelle Plays Hollywood" series as well as Library Archivist David Rose's October 28th program, Ghosts in the Wind, featuring historic photos of New Rochelle in the 20th Century.

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:

No member of the public spoke at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick
Secretary

