

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday September 21, 2023**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

Whitney Barrat, President  
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 August meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made no report as the WLS Board did not meet in August.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

No report was made.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:

+ Busy Summer at NRPL: Our library witnessed an extremely active summer as our programming (for all ages, especially children and teens) and our Children's Summer Reading Challenge proved to be more popular than ever with our community. More details were provided in the Assistant Director's report.

+ 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 awaiting the architect 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 with work on schedule. It is hoped that this effort will be successfully concluded by the end of 2023.

+ 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 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.. 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.

+ 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 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 an outdoor program space in the Children's Garden area. The foundation along with library staff are in conversation with City officials regarding the status of our application. We expect to have more definitive information available to share at the October Board meeting.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Handbook Book Club of 2023 is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, at 5 PM. The topic of this session is Strategic Planning. "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:

=**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access & Justice** (Tuesday, October 17, 2023 | 5:00- 6:30 pm)

= **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 scheduled for October 10th at 1 pm and will be in-person at the Main Library

+ NRPL Foundation: The Foundation has announced its meeting schedule for FY 2023/24. All meetings are scheduled for our Main Library Lobby Meeting Room except for the Annual Meeting. See details below:

#### **2023**

Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup> (rescheduled to this date) – 7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m.

#### **2024**

Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> – Annual Dinner Meeting

#### **PERSONNEL REPORT:**

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the appointment of Joseph Cinquemani to the position of hourly Laborer (Custodial Services), effective September 5, 2023 at a salary of \$23.44 per hour, seconded by Fela Cortes and approved.

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the retirement of Rita Calandresa from the position of full

time Library Clerk (Technical Processing), effective August 31, 2023 at an annual salary of \$51,678, seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

#### ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

*Over 2300 people came to Children's programs at the Main Library during the month of August. A majority of attendees were from our afternoon Bubble Bus event on the 24th (225 people) and the Touch-a-Truck (350 people), where families got a chance to interact with police cars, fire trucks and other community vehicles and workers. It was great to see so many families participate in these special events and help us finish the summer on a high note. August was buzzing at the Huguenot Children's Library. Despite the heat and the intermittent rainy days, there were 1906 children and their caregivers attending twelve different programs. Besides patio play and programs, we noticed an increase in people coming into the library all day, appreciating the new air conditioning system and fun activities for them such as the dollhouse, building blocks, and a basket of puppets encouraging interactive play. It was truly gratifying seeing so many children reading books was wonderful. We also had a great patio crew this year who made it all happen and really engaged the children with their enthusiasm. The Summer Reading Challenge registered over 800 children at both Main and HCL. Children have until September 10th to present their game boards to the Children's Room in order to collect stickers, prizes and raffle tickets. The Teen Summer Reading program ended this month with a total of 83 teens signing up for the program. Eight participants finished all ten levels of the reading challenge; with three teens completing the bingo challenge. In total, we gave away 54 Summer Reading Grab & Go Bags; 34 beyond last year's numbers. There were about 250 entrants for our grand prizes which included Fortnite and Nintendo gift cards. Our Treasure Hunt was one of the most popular summer reading programs this month. Many teens took over an hour to complete the hunt and stayed for the full two hours to see who would receive the winning grand prize. The teens had a blast! We will repeat this program again next year. Another huge program was the end summer Pizza Party. Teens enjoyed a day outside in the library's garden hanging out with friends. The volunteer spirit was also in abundance – Fourteen teens put in a total of over 104 hours of community service hours.*

Much discussion ensued.

#### BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Corey Galloway posed a question about the current status of the Fund Balance. Answers were referenced in relation to the Financial Report as distributed at the Board meeting.

#### 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:

***September 2023 Highlights- BTOP Help & Learning Center***

*Many patrons are busy with the return of school and all that autumn brings. September is an active month at the NRPL and the BTOP Help & Learning center has many busy days helping patrons with using devices, job search help, completing online applications, expanding their benefits, setting up email accounts and connecting to a variety of community resources. The increase of patrons borrowing devices continues, as hotspots prove to be most popular. 38 hotspots, 19 Chromebooks and 9 iPads were checked out in August.*

- *Library patrons continue to prepare with experienced Job Readiness Coach Rebecca Mazin, who assists with online job applications, writing or editing resumes and job interview skills every Tuesday evenings from 5pm-7:45pm.*
- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell continues to assist with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan on Wednesdays, 10:00am-1:00pm.*
- *The NRPL Lobby will host to a variety of community partners including Onward Recovery/Independent Living Services, Family Services of Westchester (FSW) and LAZ will host a Customer Appreciation Day, Thursday 9/14 from 3-5pm in our lobby/library lot, to answer questions about parking machines & Parkmobile app.*
- *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 September with two hour classes on Saturday, 9/9 & 9/23 from 1-3pm in the second floor conference room. Experienced instructor, Sonica Dixon, will lead the classes and advise on current USCIS applications.*
- *Digital learning classes, that build digital literacy skills and confidence, are coming to the Computer Lab this fall. Classes include Internet Basics, Computer Basics and Cyber Security Basics. Dates for English classes are Tuesdays, 9/19, 9/26 & 10/3. Spanish classes are Thursdays, 9/21, 9/28 & 10/5, from 6:00pm-7:30pm. These classes are from a grant with the Public Libraries Association along with AT&T, which is working to help libraries and their communities close the digital divide.*
- *The NRPL is hosting the opening meeting of the New Rochelle Council of Community Services on Wednesday, 9/20 @ 12pm. The lunchtime meeting will include opening remarks by the NRPL Library Director, Tom Geoffino.*
- *The NRPL is working with community partners on climate and sustainability awareness by highlighting local resources and literature on sustainability resources from 9/18-9/22 in the NRPL during Climate Week in our library lobby.*

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

**Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 9/21/23**

## **AUGUST/SEPTEMBER PROGRAMS/EVENTS**

### **Art Workshops/Gallery:**

- **Parks & Rec Camp exhibit:** August 22-September 6. Reception August 31st. 30 attendees

### **Yoga:**

- **Gentle Evening Yoga, weekly, Mondays through August 28, average attendance, 10**
- **Chair Yoga, Wednesdays only through August. Classes averaged 18 attendees /session**
- **Twice weekly chair yoga, meeting both Mondays and Wednesdays, resumed in September**

- **Childrens**

- **Calpulli summer workshops: Final week and Performance**

Attendees	week 6
5-7 year olds	15
8-13 year olds	26
Adults/Teens	14

- **Bubble Bus Pop Up (rescheduled from Summer Reading Kickoff party due to inclement weather), August 24, 225 attendees**
- **Touch a Truck Day: Closing of Summer Reading Challenge August 26, 300 attendees**
- **Rhodes Piano Workshops: September/October: 6 weeks of group piano instruction for ages 5-11. Class filled to capacity (8).**

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

- **International Music and Dance Series: 6 Tuesday evenings**
  - August 8 -Japanese Folk Dance Institute of NY - 97 attendees
  - August 15 - Calpulli Mexican Dance Group - 200 attendees (outside)
- **Film celebration with Chris: Enter the Dragon (50th Anniversary) September 22nd, 14 attendees**
- **Friday Night Concert Series: Wayne Henderson, September 8th, 95 attendees**
- **Tutti Bravi Productions Musical: Thomas Paine: Common Sense, September 9th & 10th, 85 & 60 attendees**
- **Film Noir series with Chris: Out of the Past, September 16th, 16 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....**

**Art Workshop: Scratch Art September 22**

*NYS Citizens Preparedness Workshop September 26*

*Knitting club begins late September. We have a teen club and an adult club*

*Lou Del Bianco Presentation: Out of Mount Rushmore's Shadow Oct 1st*

*Rhodes Piano lessons continued for children*

*Fire Prevention Workshop October 10th*

## **MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

### **Email highlights:**

- *Average open rate in August reached an all time high of 57%, which is 6% higher than the previous month and is 17% higher than the industry average.*

### **Social Media Highlights**

- *Obtained 85 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,450, a 25% increase year over year. Obtained 22, for a total of 3,317, a 24% increase year over year.*
- *Website visits via Google increased 9.4% compared to last month, and 31% over last year.*

### **Program Marketing Management**

- *Supported promotion of 15 fall programs through print and digital media, PR and community outreach*
- *Created process to streamline collection of promotional information for NRPL programs and services*

### **Community Relationship Building:**

- *Exhibited at New Rochelle Street Fair (9/10). Attendance picked up as the weather cleared.*
- *Meet the Teacher Nights (9/12 - 9/). Arranged for NRPL presence at 8 Meet the Teacher Nights/Back to School Events. Thank you to Children's for staffing most events.*
- *Increasing connections with teachers directly to share program information.*
- *National Voter Registration Day, 9/19, Invited LWV to table at NRPL.*
- *Continue to collaborate with Healthy Yards New Rochelle.*
  - *Met with HYNR leadership to discuss how they can assist in improving plantings in Children's Garden*
  - *Invasive Plants virtual program planned for 10/24*

## **FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:**

No report was made.

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:**

No report was made.

## **POLICY COMMITTEE:**

Committee Chair Fela Cortes indicated that the Policy Committee has begun to consider a revision to the existing Room Reservation Policy. Staff has provided a revised version for Board consideration. Fela expects to present this revision, including Committee changes, at the October meeting for Board consideration.

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 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick  
Secretary