

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday December 14, 2023**

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

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Francis Okelo

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The November 9th meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Corey Galloway and approved.

The November 27th Special meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be approved as amended, seconded by Fela Cortes and approved

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Francis Okelo made the following report:

- *The Westchester Library System (WLS) held two meetings back-to-back on Tuesday November 28, 2023, as follows: a) The 64th Annual Meeting of the WLS and, b) The Regular Meeting of the WLS Board of Trustees.*
- *The WLS Executive Director Terry Kirchner welcomed the participants to the 64th Annual Meeting of the WLS, and gave an overview of the activities of the organization during the year 2023, essentially referring to the member library services, direct patron services, and certain key administrative and personnel issues. The Meeting considered and approved the Minutes of the its last annual meeting of November 29, 2022. The Annual Meeting next formally approved the nomination of three new trustees to a full term ending December 31, 2028: Barbara Tepper representing District IV (South Salem, North Salem, Somers); Maureen LeBlanc representing District VIII (Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Scarsdale); David Mener*

- representing District XIV (New Rochelle). A decision will soon be taken on a trustee representative for Yonkers which is still a vacant seat. There being no other business, the Chair adjourned Annual Meeting.*
- *The Regular Meeting of the WLS Board had a brief agenda which was disposed of fairly quickly. The Board adopted the WLS 2024 Operating Budget; received reports from the Board President and the WLS Executive Director, and heard Committee reports, mainly from the Finance Committee and the Nominating and Board Development Committee, and finally a PLDA report from the Yorktown Library Director Yvonne Cech. The adjournment of the meeting was followed by an informal reception to thank and bid farewell to the retiring trustees.*

NB. This briefing note marks my last report to the Library Board as I'm retiring from the WLS Board of Trustees at the end of this month, December 31, 2023.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat praised the contributions of retiring WLS Board member Francis Okelo and cited his outstanding success as a Board member and officer for WLS as well as his efforts in keeping the NRPL Library Board in the information/consultation loop regarding WLS issues and activities. Whitney also welcomed the arrival of Dr. David Mener as the newly appointed WLS Trustee representing New Rochelle.

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 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 responses are being analyzed by the architect and his team. 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 are still working towards 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: *the fire barrier restoration project continues to make progress. The Contractor reported that, as of Dec 8th, the work completed is as follows:*

- *Third Floor is 95% complete*
- *Second Floor is 90% complete*

- *First Floor is 70% complete*
- *The cellar is 15% complete*

The Gleason Powers completion date, I believe it is still the end of January. We need time for final inspections and then patching and painting

+ 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 completion of the basement interior painting and installation of the basement flooring. Work is underway in relation to the modification of the 1st floor desk and the reconfiguration of 2nd floor desk and closet storage. 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 February/March 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) in the Children's Garden space. The vendor has shared its removal/remediation options with us and we are now actively soliciting additional vendor bids on the removal/remediation of the tanks. In addition, 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 Friends December 12th Board meeting witnessed the approval of the Friends 2024 \$74,000 budget. The funds will be used for programs involving children, teens and adults throughout 2024 and will include support for vacation week programming efforts as well as summer program offerings.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting will be held on January 16th in our Main Library Lobby Meeting Room. The Foundation continues to plan for the May 9 2024 3rd Guardian. Gala to be held at the Greentree Country Club. Honorees will include Nancy Paulsen, Jacqueline Woodson, Emma Straub, Chris Selin, Tom Geoffino and Donna and Bob Young, The Young Companies and the JRY Foundation. Ticket sales and sponsorships will be actively pursued starting in January 2024.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the appointment of Dana Peters to the position of hourly Laborer (Technical Services), effective November 16, 2023 at a salary of \$42,972.96 per year, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the salary increase of all Library Pages (see list of Pages below), as a result in the rise of the 2024 New York Minimum Wage effective January 1, 2024, seconded by Corey Galloway and approved.

	CURRENT	MINIMUM WAGE	INCREASE
Damian, Natalie	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
DeNicolò, Dawn	\$15.25	\$16.25	\$1.00
Johnson-Smith, DeAra	\$15.20	\$16.20	\$1.00
Moraga, Urania N.	\$16.30	\$17.30	\$1.00
Ochoa, Evelyn	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
Ouammou, Malak	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
Varghese, Leena A.	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
Onorino, Rocco	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
Rossi, Mia	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
Paracha, Rehan	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00
VACANT	\$15.00	\$16.00	\$1.00

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph made the following report:

We are making significant progress towards our strategic plan goals through proactive engagement with key community stakeholders. Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph been represented the library in two major collaborations: The New Rochelle Family Court Childcare Advisory Committee and the New Rochelle Afterschool and Summer Learning Partnership.

Furthermore, following the board's recommendations, we have contacted New Rochelle High School Principal Valerie Simpkins Cadet and the Youth Council. Both organizations have enthusiastically agreed to promote the library's teen programs and services. In addition, we have developed a program charter for a teen advisory board that will consist of teens from various public and private middle and high schools. This board will play a crucial role in shaping the library's offerings for teens.

Engaging Young Minds

November saw a surge in program attendance, with over 1,400 people participating in various activities. Morning preschool programs remained popular, while our Tune Bugs music classes, led by Lisa Schulman, continued to attract large crowds. Due to high demand, we even moved these beloved classes to the auditorium in November.

The Children's Room also welcomed numerous visitors, hosting eighteen more elementary class visits and serving an estimated 951 people. During these visits, children explored our diverse collection, borrowed materials, and learned about our services.

Our Pajama Party, held at the beginning of the month, proved to be a major success. Featuring a musical presentation from Canticos creator Susie Jaramillo, cookie decorating, and a visit from Llama Llama Red Pajama, the event drew over 200 excited attendees.

Renovation Updates at the Huguenot Children's Library

While most programs at the Huguenot Children's Library concluded in November, Baby Fingers and the Art Club will continue into December. The month also saw significant changes due to ongoing construction and renovation funded by state grants. These improvements include:

- *New masonry work on the building's exterior*
- *A complete basement renovation with a new floor and paint*
- *Upcoming updates to storage and seating areas*
- *Installation of additional shelving and storage areas for staff on the upper floor*

Gearing Up for Change

As Sue Braunstein prepares for her retirement on December 15th, we met with her to discuss a smooth transition. We developed a process document and a job description has been drafted for a contract employee to ensure the continued success of the library's valuable clippings files project.

Sharing Knowledge and Celebrating Culture

Throughout November, the library created engaging displays and reading lists to celebrate various events and holidays. Patrons enjoyed themed displays for Veterans Day, Native American History Month, Thankfulness, and November, featuring both books and DVDs. Additionally, a special 3rd-floor display honored the memory of renowned author A.S. Byatt who passed away in November.

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 NOVEMBER 2023

BTOP Help and learning center saw a rise in patrons needing assistance with critical online support services including Medicare advice, Healthcare enrollment, job search, SNAP benefits, food support, unemployment and heating assistance. Technology borrowing at NRPL is also up, with 66 devices checked out in November including 44 Hotspots, 17 Chromebooks and 4 iPads. Navigating through NR community resources just got easier when using the New Rochelle city website/local resources: <https://newrochelleny.com/1715/Local-Resources> This Resource Guide of organizations serving New Rochelle residents is vital to connecting our community to local resources.

- *Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin continues to assist individuals who are looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes and cover letters, completing online job applications, searching for jobs on the Internet, networking, and honing interview skills. Attendance has been robust. Tuesdays, 5-7:30pm*
- *Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell is assisting with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan, Wednesday mornings 10-1pm.*
- *Community Outreach: Food Pantry visits continue at Isaac Young Middle school on 12/13//2023. Library card sign up, giveaways & More.*
- *Notary Nights at the library is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 12/21/2023 @ 6:30 pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.*
- *Westchester Community College ESL classes for beginners for Fall 2023 will break for the holidays on 12/22. The ESL classes will resume in Winter/Spring 2024 starting January, 1/18- April, 4/30.*
- *Civic classes for the citizenship test will resume in 2024 beginning with an Information Session on January, 1/6/23, on Saturday afternoons @ 1pm, led by experienced instructor/attorney Sonica Dixon.*
- *High School Equivalency (HSE) orientation sessions return to NRPL. Learn about the different pathways to getting a high school diploma and connect with free study resources. Last Saturday of each month, next session on 12/30/2023, 10:30-12:00 pm BTOP room.*
- *The NRPL Lobby will host a variety of community information partners including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, HealthyPlus Healthcare and Peer Recovery Services of Onward Recovery.*
- *BTOP Outreach includes the monthly visit to the Mobile Food Pantry at Isaac Middle school-12/13, along with attending the in-person meeting of the NR Community Network meeting at the New Rochelle YMCA 12/5.*
- *The NRPL hosted a successful Symposium on Affordable Housing this past month. The one-hour panel presentation and audience discussion brought together experts and representatives of organizations who are on the front lines of this issue to inform the community and raise awareness.*
- *The NRPL hosted a seminar on Understanding Medicare on 12/5. Participants had their Medicare questions answered and had an opportunity for individual counseling.*

- *English as a Second Language classes at NRPL will break for the holidays after 12/22 Westchester Community College offers ESL courses for beginners four mornings a week and will resume January 1/18/24 through April, 4/30/24, for 2 sessions.*

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, 12/14/23

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- ***Gallery exhibit: C. Damon Carter presents 'Monsters, Flowers and Friends, November 7-27.***
- ***Adult Art Workshop November 17, 5 attendees***
- ***Adult Knitting Club December 1, 9 attendees***

Yoga:

- ***Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Average attendance, average of 23 -25 participants/class***
- ***Gentle Evening Yoga, November 13, 13 attendees***

Childrens:

- ***Young Musicians of Westchester concert for 2nd Graders from Columbus School, November 14, 120 attendees***

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- ***New Rochelle Plays Hollywood Film Series, November 12, Lonely are the Brave: 35 attendees***
- ***Yiddish Book Club, November 14, 11 attendees and December 5, 6 attendees***
- ***Ray Blue Band Concert November 17, with wine and cheese reception targeted to residents of downtown buildings 14 attendees (and 6 new NRPL card apps) -Wine & Cheese); 95 concert attendees***
- ***Sing Your Heart Out Concert, November 19, 120 attendees***
- ***Film Noir with Chris: The Big Heat, November 25 and The Killing, December 9, 34 and 14 attendees respectively***
- ***Young Musicians of Westchester concert, December 2, 45 attendees***
- ***Supporting Characters Play Reading December 3, 35 attendees***
- ***Rocky Middleton Concert, December 8, 90 attendees***
- ***Rudolph Rocs New Ro, Collaborative community program (with Parks & Rec, Chamber, NRBID) in Ruby Dee Park, December 9, 1000+ attendees***
- ***Copland House Concert, December 10, 25 attendees***

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

- ***Great British Baking Tour. 11/28 30 attendees***

Coming Up....

Adult Art Workshop - holiday cards workshop, Dec 15

Interactive playreading, Creating Theater in the Curve, Dec 21
NRAA Holiday Market, Dec 16 & 17
Children's Programs all week for school break
Qi Gong added to our Wellness programs, Friday mornings Jan and March
True Crime Film Series begins Jan 6, BlacKkKlansman
Documentary Film Series begins Jan 7, Maya Angelou Reflections of a Blessed Soul
NRPL Author Talk, Reggie Marra, Jan 18

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Email highlights:

- *Average open rate in November was 59 %, which is 18% higher than the industry average. Our email distribution list is now 10,300, resulting in over 6,000 patrons opening our e-blast each week. The highest ever open rate for our weekly e-blast on Constant Contact was 63%, on November 2.*

Social Media Highlights

- *Obtained 45 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,557, a 23.7% increase year over year. Obtained 29 new Facebook page likes, for a total of 3,250, a 15.4 % increase over last year. Total number of Facebook followers increased to 3,700 an increase of 32 over the previous month.*
- *Website visits via Google were down 10% compared to October.*
- *Running posts for Staff Picks 2023.*
- *Planning to reinstate "What Are Your Reading Wednesdays" for children, and expand to adults beginning in January.*

Program Marketing Management

- *Supported promotion of 25 November programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications and community outreach.*
- *Finalized NRPL Newsletter which was mailed to Friends of the NRPL (approx 350), with a year-end appeal from Amy Tietz, was mailed on December 12. Additional copies are available at the libraries.*

Marketing Communications

- *Created first draft of "Welcome to the New Rochelle Public Library" pamphlet to be distributed to new NRPL cardholders when they receive their card. May also be used at outreach events as appropriate.*

Community Relationship Building:

Meeting with Parks & Rec in the New Year to explore StoryWalk location possibilities.
Researching panel costs/vendors.

Miscellaneous

- *Attended NRPL Foundations gala meetings on November 9 and November 30. Looking for unique library experiences to offer as part of silent auction.*
- *Met with the new Director of Hugh Doyle Center to discuss how best to provide complementary programming. Exploring options (concerts, art classes, cooking) for afternoon programs at NRPL. Potential exists for seniors to be transported to library for programs.*

- *Met with Detective Diniz from NRPD. She offered to coordinate Narcan training for staff, as well as safety walk through with the new Lieutenant - after the new year. Also discussed getting another AED for the library through a local organization which provides AEDs (Butterflies for Jodie.)*
- *NRPD officers will also return to Teen Room during vacation week to play video games with teens.*
- *Reached out to Parks & Rec/City to see if they have set any dates for 2024 events. (Unlikely to hear back about this until after new years.)*

Tom Geoffino singled out Lisa Itzkowitz, Geraldo Rodriguez, Tobe Sevush and other library staff in their successful creation of the December newsletter that pictorially summarized many of the most popular 2023 library activities, programs and services. Additional conversation ensued regarding additional approaches in relation to the circulation of this publication throughout the community.

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Chair Corey Galloway thanked Tom Geoffino and Jean Manning for their work in transitioning the library's banking affiliation from HSBC to M&T Bank. Tom, in turn, thanked Corey and the Finance Committee for its work in this effort, especially in relation to the identification of M&T as the most appropriate candidate for this affiliation.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Fela Cortes reported on the proposed revisions to the Room Reservation/Application Policy. This effort was initiated by staff and reflects the special dedication of Ed Roddy, Tobe Sevush and Lisa Itzkowitz as well as the contributions of Elizabeth Joseph and Tom Geoffino. Thanks also to the insights of the Policy Committee as Chaired by Fela and includes Lucille Renwick and Beth Acocella. The changes to this document required significant thought and conversation relative to a thorough reexamination of the policy (and the appending application form) that had not been significantly altered in nearly 20 years. Fela highlighted the wide variety of changes as recommended and detailed the increases in room rental, staff overtime, piano and "extra" technology fee enhancements. In particular, Fela re-emphasized that the facility/staff fees had been static for 20 years and – even with the increases as proposed – are still far less expensive than other community options and neighboring libraries. Much discussion ensued. Whitney Barrat requested that the joint Board/staff committee revisit the issue of dual room rental pricing for non-profit and business clients and the possibility of adding language for fee waiver due to hardship.

Fela Cortes moved that the Room Reservation/Application Policy be modified per Policy Committee recommendation with the understanding that modifications relative to the

room rental fee and hardship waiver options be considered by the Joint Committee and be brought back for Board consideration, seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No member of the public spoke.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick
Secretary