

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday January 11, 2024**

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 (absent)
Tatiana Infante
Fela Cortes

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino
Jean Manning
Yesika Torres
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. David Mener

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The December 14th meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Dr. David Mener had no report as he has not yet attended a WLS Board meeting. David expressed his appreciation regarding his appointment to this position and promised to serve New Rochelle and the Westchester community with dedication.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat deferred her report till later in the meeting.

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. We

continue to evaluate the architect's responses from the Teen Enclosure bid. 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 unable to establish 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: *As of the last billing cycle, which ended December 31st, 2023, the Contractor is indicating the following percentages complete:*

+ *3rd Floor: 95%, 2nd Floor: 90%, 1st Floor: 85%, Basement: 25%*

From a billing standpoint, not including the three allowances, this reflects approximately 60% of the work. This percentage is consistent with the SIA's last inspection on January 2nd, 2024, which had the work at 61% complete. After the completion of the repairs, the gypsum board repairs will continue and all of the prep and painting of the access areas.

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 nearly complete, with the painting of the interior as the last item on our agenda. It is our expectation the HCL project will be complete in early February 2024. The pre-planning for the Main Library Noise Abatement Project has advanced with the expectation that this project will start in February/March 2024. Our anticipated completion date for the Main Library Project will be March 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 previously approved a \$250,000 grant allocation for this project. Funds are expected to arrive in the near future (upon execution of the contract) with completion mandated to occur by December 2025. In addition, Foundation, Library Board and staff representatives are engaged in talks relative to the issues surrounding the implementation of the project. Once the issues have been fully articulated, the Foundation will reach out to the City of New Rochelle for clarification regarding the contractual issues in question. The city’s response will allow us to continue to move forward with this exciting project. Another important aspect relates to the status of non-functional tanks long buried in the Children’s Garden space This space was analyzed, via magnetic imaging, by our vendor in order to ascertain the status of the space with the vendor report indicating that 2 large tanks (possibly still filled with water?) are currently buried (adjacent to each other) in the space. The vendor has shared its removal/remediation options with us and we are now have possession of 2 additional vendor bids regarding the removal/remediation of the tanks.

+ AARP Tax Return Program: This perennially popular free tax preparation and electronic filing program, as provided by a group of dedicated AARP volunteers, will return to assist our community (in our meeting room/theater space) on February 1st and will continue through April 11th. The hours for this service will be 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays with assistance only available through a “no reservation /walk in” basis only.

+ Trustee Handbook Book Club 2023: The next Trustee Institute continuing education opportunity is entitled Tools for Transforming Library - Municipality Relationships and will be held on March 6th at 4:30 pm to 7:30 at WLS HQ in Elmsford. This session is eligible to meet the 2 hour per year requirement for trustee education.

+ 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 through 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 are planning to witness the installation of the improved desk/storage elements as well as enhanced lighting and the upgrade of the flooring/walls. We fully expect to complete this project in February. Grant monies will be utilized for this effort with no contribution from library operating funds.

+ 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

9th 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. A future Cocktails & Conversation event will likely be scheduled in March/April. Details to be announced.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the appointment of Rehan Paracha to the position of hourly page (HCL), effective December 12, 2023 at a salary of 16 per hour, seconded by Lucille Navin and approved.

Tom Geoffino announced that our Library, after an exhaustive search effort, happily hired hourly Librarian Florence Simunyola to the recently created full time Librarian (Children's – Outreach Services) position. She will start in February with the Board Resolution approving this decision to be considered at the February 8th Board meeting. The Circulation Department is currently interviewing candidates for an hourly Clerk position. Department Head Milton Cobb reports that the candidate pool, is strong and deep – interviews are now underway with the expectation that the position will be filled in February 2024.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat indicated that the Search Committee is expected to launch, within the week, the Consultants RFP to assist in the Library Director search.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph provided an update on the status of our current Long Range Plan (LRP.) Thanks to the hard work and dedication of library staff, we have made good progress in meeting our 5 Goals as detailed in our plan: Facilities, Technology, Partnerships, Diversity & Outreach, and Archives. Elizabeth indicated that while much has been accomplished in relation to realizing the future success of the LRP, more work toward meeting these goals will certainly occur in the future.

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Corey Galloway indicated that he will call a Committee meeting in the near future in order to begin the process of the creation of a draft Library budget for FY 2024/25.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION AND, FRIENDS COMMITTEE:

Rhiannon shared the community activities report as created by Community Outreach Coordinator Denise Link:

BTOP HELP & LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS OF DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024

The BTOP room kicks off the new year by connecting our library patrons to many online community services including food support, employment, government benefits and online learning opportunities. Adult learners interested in getting their High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE) are signing up for the GED academy for online learning, practice tests and can now attend HSE orientation sessions each month to help prepare adult learners to reach their goals. Borrowing technology is gaining popularity with NRPL's patrons and Hotspots take the lead for most checked out devices. Patrons checked out 372 Hotspots, 239 Chromebooks and 30 iPads from Dec. 2022- Dec. 2023. NRPL is doing its share to assist individuals in our community in gaining access to and effectively using digital technologies.

- **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, Tuesday evenings, 5-7:30pm, BTOP Room
- **County 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 each month, with NRPL giving away books and information about library programs. Next food pantry visit: January 10th @ 4:00pm.
- **Notary Nights** at the library is the third Thursday of each month. Next date is 1/18/2024 @ 6:00-7:30 pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.
- Westchester Community College **ESL Classes** for beginners for Winter/Spring 2024 resume at NRPL. Classes begin 1/18 and run until 4/30/24.
- Library patrons interested in becoming US citizens can attend **Civic/Citizenship classes** for the citizenship test/interview on Saturday afternoons @ 1pm, led by experienced instructor/attorney Sonica Dixon. First Information session: January 6, @ 1:00pm, 2nd floor conference room.
- High School Equivalency (**HSE**) **orientation sessions** help patrons learn about the different pathways to getting a high school diploma and connect to free study resources. Last Saturday of each month, 10:00-12:00 pm BTOP room. Next session: 1/27/2024
- The NRPL Lobby will host a variety of **Community Information Partners** including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program and Peer Recovery Services of Onward Recovery.

*The BTOP Room will once again take part in the Hudson Valley Digital Navigator Program, provided in part by the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council and WLS. **Digital Navigators** are trusted guides who work together to build the skills necessary to meet with patrons/clients and help them with their tech needs. Anyone in need of assistance with using a device, securing free or low-cost internet service or accessing*

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, 1/11/24

DECEMBER/JANUARY PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- *Gallery exhibit: NRAA Adolph Green Exhibit 12/10-1/13/24*
- *Adult Art Workshop December 15, 5 attendees*

Yoga:

- *Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Average attendance, average of 23 -25 participants/class*
- *Gentle Evening Yoga, December 18, 14 attendees; January 4, 15 attendees*
- *NEW. Qi gong, Friday, January 5, 22 attendees*

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts:

- *Interactive playreading, Creating Theater in the Curve, Dec 21, 5 attendees*
- *True Crime Film Series with Chris: BlackKlansman, January 6 14 attendees*
- ~~*Documentary Film Series begins Jan 7, Maya Angelou Reflections of a Blessed Soul,*~~
~~*_____ attendees-Postponed to 2/25 due to weather*~~

Coming Up....

- *2 Knitting Clubs 1/12 and 1/26*
- *Art exhibit by Cedric Lucas (author/illustrator)*
- *NRPL Author Talk, Reggie Marra, 1/18*
- *6 week Bokandeye Workshop series beginning 1/20*
- *2nd of Documentary Series: Presumption of Guilt, 2/4*
- *Rescheduled Maya Angelou Documentary, 2/25*

Virtual

- *Healthy Yards New Rochelle, How to Start a Native Plant Garden, 1/24*

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Email highlights:

- *Average open rate in December was 54 % , which is 13% higher than the industry average.*

Social Media Highlights

- *Obtained 5 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,562 and 15 new Facebook followers for a total of 3,715 an increase.*
- *Website visits via Google increased 3.6 % compared to November.*

Program Marketing Management

- *Supported promotion of 37 December programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications, and community outreach.*

Community Relationship Building:

- *Meeting with Parks & Rec and members of Ward Acres Conservancy in the New Year to explore StoryWalk concept for Ward Acres and/or other New Rochelle locations*

Miscellaneous

- *Promoting Best of Westchester nomination through eblast and social media*
- *Met with representatives of Koios to explore opportunity to obtain Google Ad Grant*
- *Met with Bob Kelly, Off the Path Eclipse Ambassador to discuss potential pre-eclipse program to educate patrons about April 8 Total Eclipse.*
- *Exploring outreach opportunity with CSDNR at their new Deep Dive Saturdays program*

FINANCE, TREASURY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Lucille Renwick summarized the 4 Year (FY 2023/24 to FY 2026/27 collective bargaining agreement as endorsed by the Personnel Committee, Union Negotiation Team and library staff.

Highlights include:

- + Salary increases of 2.5% for years 1 and 2 with 2% increases for year 3 and 4
- + 6% increase in Employee Benefit Fund over the 4-year contract span
- + Enhanced staff compassionate leave and clothing allowance for custodial staff
- + Clarification regarding Christmas/New Year's Eve leave language
- + Modifications to Compensatory and Vacation Leave accrual and usage

Lucille also reported that the superseded/antiquated/ irrelevant contract language will be deleted or modified per agreement with the Committee and the Union Negotiation Team.in the near future.

Lucille Renwick made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the FY 2023/24 to FY2026/27 Collective Bargaining Memorandum of Agreement, seconded by Rhiannon Navin and approved.

Further discussion ensued regarding the proposed salary increase for the full time non-union staff (Tom Geoffino, Elizabeth Joseph, Jean Manning, Lisa Itzkowitz and Tobe Sevush) The sense of the Board was to provide these staff members with the same salary increases as the full time Union and hourly staff will receive over the 4-year duration of the collective bargaining agreement. Other related personnel matters will be addressed in the near future.

Lucille Renwick made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Board of Trustees does hereby award the same features as detailed in the FY 2023/24 to FY2026/27 Collective Bargaining Memorandum of Agreement to the full time non-union staff (Tom Geoffino, Elizabeth Joseph, Jean Manning, Lisa Itzkowitz and Tobe Sevush) seconded by Whitney Barrat and approved.

POLICY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Fela Cortes reported that the joint Board Policy/staff committee met in relation to the issues of the room rental fee and hardship waiver options as recommended by the Board at its December Board meeting. After much conversation, the Joint Committee recommended that the Board adopt the following fee structure for the rental of the library theater and meeting room spaces:

THEATER/MEETING ROOM (TOGETHER)

For Profit: \$200 (up to 4 hours)

Non-Profit: \$150 (up to 4 hours)

MEETING ROOM (ONLY)

For Profit: \$75 (up to 4 hours)

Non-Profit: \$50 (up to 4 hours)

Fela Cortes again thanked the Joint Committee members for their diligent work in this effort. Discussion ensued.

Fela Cortes moved that the Room Reservation/Application Policy relative to the revised fee structure be adopted per Policy Committee recommendation, seconded by Tatiana Infante and approved.

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD:

No member of the public spoke.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick
Secretary