

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Thursday February 8, 2024**

Whitney Barrat, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:31 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

Dr. David Mener

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The January 11th meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Lucille Renwick and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Dr. David Mener made the following report:

At the WLS meeting November 28th 2023:

+ Election of New Trustees:

*District IV: South Salem, North Salem, Somers to be represented by Barbara Tepper
(term ending 12/31/2028)*

*District VIII: Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Scarsdale to be represented by Maureen LeBlanc
(term ending 12/31/2028)*

District XIV: New Rochelle to be represented by David Mener (term ending 12/31/2028)

+ Currently WLS is looking for a candidate to represent Yonkers District

+ Election of WLS Officers occurred:

President: Susan Morduch

Vice President: Nishat Hydari

Secretary: Anthony Amiano

Maureen LeBlanc was appointed for the office of treasurer.

+ 5-year lookback at Revenues and Expenditures showed similar net revenue year over year.

+ *Executive Director presented the Westchester County 2024 budget, which was approved by the board of legislators in Mid December 2023. WLS received an allocation of \$ 1,343,125 for 2024, an increase of \$ 63,494 from 2203*
+ *New York State- Library Advocacy Day February 7th 2024. Governor Hochul's Executive budget included an increase in library operating aid to \$ 102.1M*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Whitney Barrat reported that the Search Committee is analyzing responses regarding the Consultants RFP regarding the Library Director search. Whitney indicated a candidate for this project will likely be selected within the next 2 weeks.

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 are continuing to evaluate the architect's responses from the Teen Enclosure bid and are actively exploring alternative solutions to achieve our project goals. 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 are unable to establish a scheduled project completion date but expect to be able to forecast closure of the project once the Teen Enclosure component has a solution in place.

+ 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 nearly complete. Project Architect/Manager Doug Emilio made the following report:

- *Gleason Powers (GP) is finishing up the basement fire barrier repairs.*
- *They are going back to the upper floors and finishing hard-to-reach areas.*
- *The special inspector is due back this coming Tuesday, and they will have a lot of conditions to observe and sign off on.*
- *GP is working on administrative paperwork for field modifications (they are called Engineering Judgments or EJs).*
- *I'm meeting Jay on Wednesday, the 21st of February, to go over any remaining open issues.*
- *That remaining open work, if and when approved, will be performed and then inspected, which should be two weeks after my site visit with Jay.*
- *Once all the work is done, we will notify the building department and submit a report with evidence of the completion.*

- *After the DOB signs off on the repairs, GP will then execute the plater repairs and painting work.*

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 successfully completed the HCL Construction Upgrade project and closed the grant.

The pre-planning for the Main Library Noise Abatement Project is complete. The project will move forward according to the vendor schedule as detailed below:

- *Material will arrive at our office on 01/29*
- *All materials will be cut by 02/19*
- *Our shipping team will package/crate and load these into the U-Haul box truck the week of 02/19 - 02/23*
- *The installation team will drive down on Sunday and begin to install on Monday 02/26 – Friday 03/01.*

Barring any unforeseen complications, we expect to complete the project on March 1st.

+ 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 atriiums- 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 have engaged in talks relative to the issues surrounding the implementation of the project. The outcome of these conversations resulted in the clarification of a variety of issues involving all interested parties, with the Foundation reaching out to the City of New Rochelle requesting clarification regarding the contractual issues in question. To date, we have not yet received a response from the city. Once this matter has been rectified via the city's response, the Foundation and our library will be able 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 a 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. In anticipation of this work, we are investigating the process our vendor will need to address relative to utilizing the Library South parking lot in relation to the removal 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, is underway and assisting our community (in our meeting room/theater space) 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. Once again, donations are being accepted by the Friends as the successful renovation of the Friends Office is now complete. The next Friends Board meeting is scheduled for February 27th.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting will be held on March 18th in our Main Library Lobby Meeting Room. At the Board's request, the schedule for the remaining Foundation Board meeting will be shared with all Library Trustees. . 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. The next Cocktails & Conversation, scheduled for April 4th at Alvin & Friends, will feature noted author Eric Klinenberg back to discuss his newest book, 2020: One City, Seven People, and the Year Everything Changed.

PERSONNEL REPORT:

Whitney Barrat made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the appointment of Florence Simunyola to the position of Librarian I (Children's – Outreach Services), effective February 1, 2024 at an annual salary of \$58,707, seconded by Fela Cortes and approved.

Tom Geoffino announced that our Library, after an extensive search, has offered the hourly Library Clerk (Circulation) position to Zaneta Bailey. Her expected start date will be February 16th. The Board Resolution approving her employment will be presented at the March Board meeting.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph provided the following report:

A review of the year end material circulation and patron engagement statistics inspired a deeper dive. So, I looked at data for three years and found several encouraging data points that confirms that the library is on the upward trend.

We have seen a steady increase in the circulation of new adult books. This speaks to the thoughtful selection of our adult collection development librarians. Older adult books are also making a comeback after being down in 2022. We can attest this to the careful maintenance and care of this collection. Librarians have been meticulous about weeding for condition and relevance and replacing copies as they become outdated. While streaming is ubiquitous in many homes, we are still seeing our patrons browsing and checking out DVDs. Audiobooks, however, continues to see a decline as E-Audio books gain popularity with various demographics.

Digital media consumption is not declining. We are seeing growth across all digital media platforms.

The staff of the children's room attention to the needs and interests of children has led to phenomenal use of its collection. Checkouts of all formats remain impressive. With the addition of Wonderbooks and Launchpads, we are ushering new learning platforms for our young patrons. These new products not only enforce reading and language literacy but also digital competencies.

The bulk of materials checked out by teens include Manga and graphic novels. We are expanding our gaming collection which are proving to be very popular with our teen patrons. Additionally, we will soon be adding launchpads to our collections. These launchpads will be excellent tools for test prep.

We saw an 11% increase in reference transactions in 2023 and in 2022 over 60% increase from 2021. These transactions reflect all types of requests including museum passes, local history questions, help using library technology, and book requests.

Use of our public service computers and WIFI attest to the importance and vitality of these services.

The number of library programs have grown in the last few years. Activities in the Park and in partnership with community organizations have resulted in greater curiosity and interest in the library.

The total number of program attendees in 2023 surpassed 40,000 which is an increase of about 50% from 2022. In 2021, an impressive number of people attended our programs but in 2022, we welcomed over 27,000 people to a variety of programs for families, children and teens.

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Corey Galloway reported that the Committee has previously met on 2 occasions with some initial progress having been made in the formulation of the next year's budget. Corey indicated the FY 2024/25 budget will include a number of sizable increases related to the non-discretionary expansion relating to salary, health benefits and other similar accounts. He indicated that the next Committee meeting will occur in the near future and expects the Committee will provide a variety of budget options for Board consideration.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair Whitney Barrat reported on the status of the ARPA grant. Issues surrounding removal of the tanks buried in the Children's Garden were highlighted and discussed relative to soil testing, possibility of friable asbestos in play as well as other topics relating to the situation.

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 February 2024 BTOP Report

February is a productive month for connecting library patrons to many online community services including food support, employment, government benefits, 2024 tax help and online learning. Many of our patrons seeking tax help at NRPL can get online assistance with getting their 1099's in the BTOP room. Patrons are taking advantage of borrowing technology at NRPL, with over 50 devices checked in January. The NRPL Hotspots available for library patrons helps ensure equitable access to the internet in our community and makes the NRPL a central location for digital access, learning and literacy.

- *Civic classes for the US citizenship test resumes in 2024 on Saturday afternoons, Feb. 3 & 17 @ 1pm, led by experienced instructor/attorney Sonica Dixon. Some participants are waiting for their interview/test date in 2024, while others have just begun their naturalization application process.*

- *The Winter/Spring 2024 ESL classes with Westchester Community College continue with in-person beginner classes in the morning, four days a week. Each level of classes provides balanced instruction and practice in all language skills.*
- *High School Equivalency (HSE) orientation sessions help patrons learn about the different pathways to getting a high school diploma and connect them to free study resources. The fourth Saturday of each month 10:00-12:00 pm BTOP room. Next date 2/24/24.*
- *Westchester County Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell provides enrollment assistance to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan, Wednesday mornings 10-12pm.*
- *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 March 2024.*
- *February 2024 marks the 20th monthly Notary Night at the New Rochelle Public Library. Since June 2022, over 50 library patrons have used the free Notary services for their business and personal documents. Every third Thursday of the month in the BTOP room.*
- *In addition to her weekly, drop-in sessions, Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin is offering a "Jump Start Your Job Search" class to assist those who are looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes, cover letters, searching for jobs on the internet & networking. Tuesday, 2/27 @ 6:30pm- 3rd fl. classroom.*
- *New outreach efforts in the NRPL lobby include New Rochelle community partners HOPE Community Services and the Zonta Club of New Rochelle; Building a Better World for Women & Girls.*
- *The NRPL Community Outreach/Information Sessions at the monthly IEYMS mobile food pantry takes place on Wednesday, 2/7/24 @ 4pm-5pm. There will be NRPL program info. & book giveaways for all ages.*
- *Digital Navigator efforts are under way at NRPL and the BTOP room is assisting patrons with using a device, securing free or low-cost internet service, accessing critical online services and explaining about the wind-down procedures for the Affordable Connectivity Program and its impact on internet discounts for households in our community. <https://hvconnected.org/>*

Rhiannon shared the Marketing/Communications/Programming report as created by Marketing/Communications Head Lisa Itzkowitz and Programming Head Tobe Sevush. She highlighted the large number of attendees attending our diverse programming for all ages and populations. She characterized our offerings as "something for everybody....":

Marketing/Program Report to Board of Trustees, 2/8/24

JANUARY/FEBRUARY PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Art Workshops/Gallery:

- **Gallery exhibit: The Fine Art of Illustration by Cedric Lucas 1/17-2/25/24**
- **Adult Art Workshop January 17, 9 attendees**
- **Knitting Club: January 12 & 26, 12 & 10 attendees respectively**

Yoga:

- *Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Average attendance, average of 18 participants/class*
- *Gentle Evening Yoga, January 23, 9 attendees*
- *Qi gong, Friday, January 12, 21 attendees; January 19, 10 attendees*

Lectures/Presentations/Concerts/Other:

- *NRPL Author Talk, Reggie Marra, January 18th, 8 attendees*
- *Red Cross Blood Drive, 1/26, 22 units collected*
- *Bokandeye Workshop series January 20, January 27 & February 3, 26, 16 & 35 attendees*
- *Presumption of Guilt Documentary 2/4, 50 attendees*

Virtual

- *Healthy Yards New Rochelle, How to Start a Native Plant Garden, 1/24, 23 attendees*
- *Madam C.J. Walker, The First Black Female Millionaire, 2/5, 20 attendees*
- *Around the Kitchen Table: Healthy New You, 2/6, 7 attendees*

Coming up:

- *Frederick Douglass National Historic Site Ranger Talk, 2/7*
- *Knitting Clubs 2/9, 2/23 & 3/8*
- *Bokandeye workshops continue. Performance 2/24*
- *Screening of Maya Angelou documentary, 2/25*
- *Young Musicians of Westchester Concert for Black History Month 2/11*
- *Lotus Lantern Art Workshop celebrating Lunar New Year, 2/14*
- *Ray Blue Jazz Concert 2/16*
- *True Crime Film Series continues with The St Valentine's Day Massacre, 2/17*
- *Red Cross Blood Drive, 2/26*
- *Ward Acres Community Garden/NRPL Seed Swap, 2/17*
- *Writing Workshop Series begins (5 sessions) 2/28*
- *Qi gong, continuing Fridays in March*
- *Songcatchers Concert: Composers of the Future, 3/2*
- *Irish Dance Performance 3/3*
- *WHM: Counterpoint Concert for Women's History Month 3/10*
- *WHM: Zonta Women's Film Series (3 films), 3/5*
- *WHM: David Rose presentation: The Mushrooms of Violetta White Delafield - Women's History Month (Virtual), 3/9*
- *WHM: NYHS Exhibit: Women's Work (Virtual), 3/12*
- *WHM: "Those Bombastic Blonde Bombshells: Monroe, Mansfield, and Van Doren" (Virtual), 3/13*

Grants:

- *Poets and Writers Grant: We received a grant for the Creative Writing Workshop Series. The grant is for half the cost of the program.*

- *NEFA Grant: We received a grant for a Cinco de Mayo educational performance by Calpulli Mexican Dance Company. The grant is for half the cost of the program.*
- *Arts Alive: We are applying for a grant for our annual summer Calpulli workshop series and performance. We are requesting the full amount for the program. We received it for our Bokandeye workshop series for winter 2023. I'm not sure if this will be a factor but I was encouraged to apply.*

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Email highlights:

- *Average open rate in January was 53%, which is 13% higher than the industry average.*

Social Media Highlights

- *Obtained 23 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,585 and 26 new Facebook followers for a total of 3,741, representing a year over year increase of 25% (Instagram followers) and a 6% increase in Facebook likes.*
- *Website visits via Google increased 45% year over year, and 60% since December 2023*

Program Marketing Management

- *Supported promotion of 25 January programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications, and community outreach.*

Community Relationship Building:

- *Met with Marketing Coordinator for Stella/25 Maple to discuss promoting NRPL events at those two properties.*
- *Met with Parks & Rec and a member of Ward Acres Conservancy (WAC) to discuss StoryWalk concept for Ward Acres. WAC pursuing a book walk. NRPL will promote. Exploring Storywalk with Parks & Rec for Huguenot Park (near HCL.)*
- *Connected with Lisa Boillot of Westchester Women's Agenda - Female Economic Empowerment Group re: potential for NRPL to host Lunch and Learn program*

Miscellaneous

- *Library Lovers month promotion -soliciting and displaying "Love Letters" from patrons. Over 20 notes received on first day (February 6)*
- *Administering AARP Program which launched February 1. Program will run Tuesdays and Thursdays, through April 11. Served 35 people on first day*
- *Exploring organization who can help streamline production and printing of a hardcopy newsletter for NRPL*
- *Updating existing website pages to ensure information is current. Hopeful we will pursue a new website in the near future, contingent on funding.*
- *Redesigned weekly eblast to improve readability on mobile*
- *Gala - soliciting committee members and silent auction items*
- *Planning book event with Fatimah Gilliam, Race Rules: What Your Black Friend Won't Tell You*

- *Developing Friends volunteer flyer to help grow volunteer base*
- *Finalizing Welcome to NRPL Pamphlet for cardholders*

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.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick
Secretary