

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday March 14, 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 Excused  
Rhiannon Navin Excused  
Beth Acocella Excused  
Tatiana Infante  
Fela Cortes

ADMINISTRATION

Thomas Geoffino  
Jean Manning  
Yesika Torres  
Elizabeth Joseph

WLS REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. David Mener

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:

The February 8th meeting minutes were reviewed by the Trustees. Whitney Barrat moved that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Corey Galloway and approved.

WLS REPORT:

WLS representative Dr. David Mener made the following report:

- *IT Department has been working with public libraries to prepare for the online catalog cleanup project that will remove expired library patron records from the catalog.*
- *Library cards that were not renewed within 3 years and have been expired for an additional 18 or more months will be removed from the online catalog*
- *From 1989-2009 (20 expired patron records)  
2010-2019 (1,169 expired patron records)  
2020-2022 (253,972 Expired Patron Records)  
For New Rochelle, there are 22,088 expired patron records, of which 17,025 have met the criteria of expired with an 18 month grace period. There are approximately 37,030 total users from New Rochelle.*
- *Large number of patron records from 2020-2022 were due to COVID-19 related factors due to a pause on removing expired library records from the online catalog. Automatic renewal of expired patrons occurred. WLS will send out email notifications to expired library patrons.*
- *Goal is to maintain accurate counts of active patrons, clean up the database, Patrons will receive notification 30 days before accounts expire, which runs daily. Expired accounts*

*can still login to the online catalog and login to most digital resources but cannot checkout new materials.*

- *Representatives from the WLS visited the Westchester Children's Museum to tour the space and exchange ideas for collaboration between the 2 organizations with goals to improve access to free reading materials.*
- *Trustee Institute next meeting in person at WLS April 11th 2024 5:30-7:30 pm, Understanding 414 Public Votes, Presenter Rebekkah Aldrich, Executive Director Mid Hudson Library System.*

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Board President Whitney Barrat read from a prepared statement in relation to the conversations surrounding the postponement of the March 21<sup>st</sup> Author Talk program. Whitney acknowledged the “hurt and disappointment that many of you feel. It was and is never the Library’s intent to cause any distress for anyone in our community.” She referenced - and strongly reaffirmed - the American Library Association’s (ALA) Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read as policies adopted by the Library Board and adhered to by our library. Whitney also highlighted and endorsed ALA’s Library Initiated Programs and Displays policy as a document providing significant guidance for library staff engaged in programming efforts. Given the importance of these policies in our library’s commitment to intellectual freedom, Whitney reaffirmed that our library will reschedule and publicize the postponed Author Talk in the near future with the intention of providing a safe and unfettered opportunity for the Author Talk editors to make their presentation in the largest public program space available in our library.

#### 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 have awarded the contract to a vendor that provided an alternative (and most cost-effective) plan for the enclosure of the Teen space and the installation of the 2 smaller conference rooms adjacent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor teen enclosure area. The contractor has begun the work and the entire project is expected to be fully completed by late April.

+ 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 base contract work is proceeding and nearing completion. There are several new conditions that were observed over the course of construction that we would like to repair using the allowance for unforeseen conditions. Once that additional work is approved and*

*completed, we will submit a completion report to the New Rochelle Department of Buildings. We have been holding off on the final patching and painting work at the repair locations so they are accessible if the DOB inspector would like to inspect any or all of the repair work. Once the building department is satisfied that the work is completed, Gleason Powers will undertake the wall/ceiling repairs 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 successfully completed the HCL Construction Upgrade project and closed the grant. The Main Library Noise Abatement Project began as scheduled (February 26<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>). The project is nearly complete except for a few "inaccessible" areas that require special equipment (not currently available) for the installation of the noise abatement panels. Our vendor is making inquiries regarding this issue and will circle back with a plan in the near future.

+ 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 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 area. 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 now have possession of 2 additional vendor bids regarding the removal/remediation of the tanks. In anticipation of this work, we are still working with our vendor regarding the process necessary in addressing the use of the Library South parking lot in relation to the removal of the tanks.

+ 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 April 9<sup>th</sup>.

+ NRPL Foundation: The next Foundation Board meeting will be held on April 1st at Posto 22 Restaurant. The draft FY2024/25 Foundation Grant request for Main and HCL was shared with the Board in the hope that the Board will take action regarding this document at its April meeting. The Foundation continues to plan for the May 9<sup>th</sup> 2024 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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:

Corey Galloway made the motion, upon the recommendation of the Director, the Board of Trustees does hereby approve the appointment of Zeneta Bailey to the position of hourly Clerk (Main Circulation), effective February 16, 2024 at a salary of \$21.17 per hour, seconded by Tatiana Infante and approved.

#### ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT:

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph provided the following report:

*We accomplished a great deal this month. The extra day gave us another opportunity to engage our patrons through our programs, materials and services.*

*Main's preschool morning programs continue to be overwhelmingly successful, attracting 950 children and their adults to the Children's Room.*

*During the end-of-the-month February Break programs, over 600 kids and caregivers came to the library to attend a puppet show, make Snow Globes, build with LEGOs and watched performances by world-renowned violinist Daisy Joplin, the always popular musician Zev Haber and storyteller Therese Folks Pair who enchanted families with traditional African folktales.*

*Programs at the Huguenot Children's Library were in full swing with the usual programs and the welcome additions of Saturday programming. LEGOS Engineers and Family Fun Saturdays (with both afternoons or special events) have been a big hit with our patrons who appreciated something fun to do during gloomy February. The high school honor society clubs continued with the ever popular Art Club on Mondays and the once a month Science Honor Society workshop. Additionally, our Checkmates club evolved into a more all-encompassing Game Day program which includes chess and checkers but also family friendly board games which patrons have found enjoyable.*

*Our music CD collection which is one of the best in the county boasts a wide variety of genres, tastes and eras. Brian Zamek, responsible for this collection analyzed usage and learned that Christian and Gospel music are the areas with the greatest circulation. As a result of this evidence, he has placed a greater emphasis on purchasing in these areas.*

*The Local History Yearbook Scanning project continues as students are getting more acclimated to the project. A total of eight yearbooks have been digitized and metadata has been incorporated for three volumes. The goal is to digitize and make three yearbooks available per month. We are thrilled to have seven diligent students from seven students from IEY Middle School in this important project.*

## BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair Corey Galloway detailed the draft FY 2024/25 Budget proposal as recommended by the Budget Committee for Board consideration. This Budget scenario calls for an increase of 5.90% over the current year's budget. If adopted, the increase will require a tax levy increase of \$383,602. The City Finance Commissioner has characterized this tax levy increase as costing the 'average' taxpayer an additional \$21.39 per year.

Corey characterized the Budget Committee's efforts as extremely challenging given the unavoidable (and contractually mandated) non-discretionary increases. The non-discretionary increases comprised 80% of the total increase.

The factors influencing this budget increase (as it impacts on each of the budget options) is as follows:

+ Contractually mandated salary increases for full time union staff along with matching increases for hourly staff Additionally, parallel increases in other salary related accounting lines will occur as tied to the salary increases.

+ Escalating and significant medical insurance costs for full time.

+ Dental insurance cost increases for full time staff.

+ The 2 non-discretionary increases relate to a modest 5% increase in the materials budget and the upgrade of the Teen Programming Assistant position to full time status.

Committee members Whitney and Tatiana declared their support for this proposed budget. Discussion ensued.

Corey Galloway moved to adopt the 5.90% as the proposed FY 2024/25 budget, seconded by Tatiana Infante and unanimously approved

## BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:

No report was made.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION AND, FRIENDS COMMITTEE:

Committee Member Fela Cortes shared the community activities report as created by Community Outreach Coordinator Denise Link:

### **BTOP HELP & LEARNING Feb./March 2024 Monthly Report BTOP Help & Learning Room**

*Hello March! Let Spring begin. The BTOP Help & Learning room sessions and attendance are on the rise, assisting patrons with critical online services to access unemployment benefits, SNAP recertification, housing opportunities and digital literacy questions. Many patrons continue to take advantage of our free NRPL tax assistance and use the digital navigation services of the BTOP room to get their 1099's online. NRPL library patrons are taking advantage of the Job Search coach workshops & drop-in sessions, Healthcare and Medicare sessions, as well as borrowing NRPL technology; 28 hotspots, 9 Chromebooks and 5 iPad's were borrowed in February. These devices help our NRPL patrons with job searching, telehealth sessions and connecting to other essential community resources.*

- **Notary Nights-** Every third Thursday of the month, next session 3/21. @ 6pm.
- **Healthcare Navigator-** every Wednesday @ 10am-1pm. Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell is assisting with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan,
- **Job Search Coach-** every Tuesday @ 5pm-7:30pm. Job Search Coach Rebecca Mazin assists individuals looking for a new or improved job by helping with writing resumes, cover letters, completing online job applications and honing interview skills.
- **ESL Classes-** New Sessions begin 3/21. ESL classes @ NRPL Winter/spring 2022 and Westchester Community College.
- **Civic/Citizenship Classes** continue March 16 & 35, with instructor/attorney Sonica Dixon. 2nd fl. Conference room 1:00pm
- **GED Academy-** The BTOP Help & Learning Center supports adult students who are continuing their High School Equivalency (HSE) journey with the personalized learning program from WLS-GED Academy. Learn about the pathways to getting a HSE diploma, last Saturday of each month, 3/30 next session.
- **BTOP Outreach-** Food Pantry 3/13 at IEYMS 4pm-5pm-Library program info. & library giveaways.
- The **NRPL Lobby** was host to a variety of community partners sharing information including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, Hope Community Services of NR, Onward Recovery Independent Living, Inc. and Family Services of Westchester.
- The BTOP Help & Learning center hosted an **NRPL Library class visit** for an 11th grade Salesian High School group on March 4, 2024. Students received their library cards, drawstring backpacks & other library goodies, spent some time checking out the Teen room and met our Teen Librarian Rio. All the amazing things you can do with a NRPL

*Library, including teen volunteering opportunities, were hot topics discussed on the class visit.*

Fela 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, 3/14/24**

***FEBRUARY/MARCH PROGRAMS/EVENTS***

**Art Workshops/Gallery:**

- *Gallery exhibit: NRCA and NRLWV March*
- *Lotus Lantern Art Workshop celebrating Lunar New Year, 2/14 7 attendees*
- *Knitting Clubs 2/9, 2/23 & 3/8- averaging 9 attendees*

**Wellness: Yoga and Qi Gong**

- *Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Average attendance, average of 18 participants/class*
- *Gentle Evening Yoga, February 20, March 4, average 6 attendees/session*
- *Qi gong, Friday, March 1, March 8, 21 and 17 attendees, respectively*

**Lectures/Presentations/Concerts/Other:**

- *Young Musicians of Westchester Concert for Black History Month 2/11, 70 attendees*
- *Ray Blue Jazz Concert 2/16, 85 attendees*
- *True Crime Film Series continues with The St Valentine's Day Massacre, 2/17, 10 attendees*
- *Bokandeye workshops continue. Performance 2/24 150 attendees*
- *Screening of Maya Angelou documentary, 2/25 60 attendees*
- *Red Cross Blood Drive, 2/26, 25 units collected*
- *Ward Acres Community Garden/NRPL Seed Swap, 2/17, 7 attendees*
- *Writing Workshop Series begins (5 sessions) 2/28, March 6. Filled to capacity 8*
- *Songcatchers Concert: Composers of the Future, 3/2 80 attendees*
- *Irish Dance Performance 3/3, 117 attendees*
- *WHM: Zonta Women's Film Series (3 films) , 3/5, 6 attendees*
- *WHM: Counterpoint Concert for Women's History Month 3/10, 65 attendees*

**Virtual**

- *Frederick Douglass National Historic Site Ranger Talk, 2/7, 9 attendees*
- *WHM: David Rose presentation: The Mushrooms of Violetta White Delafield - (Virtual), 3/9, 17 attendees*
- *WHM: NYHS Exhibit: Women's Work (Virtual), 3/12, 10 attendees*

**Coming up:**

- *WHM: "Those Bombastic Blonde Bombshells: Monroe, Mansfield, and Van Doren" (Virtual), 3/13*
- *Wayne Henderson Concert 3/15*
- *Qi Gong , 3/15, 22, 29, April 5, 12*
- *True Crime Film Series continues Man on a Swing, 3/16*
- *NRCA Poetry Slam 3/17*
- *Adventures of an Eclipse Chaser (Virtual), 3/18*
- *Creative Writing Class 3/13, 20 & 27*
- *Folk Art Workshop 3/20*
- *Author Talk: Fatimah Gilliam, Race Rules - What Your Black Friend Won't Tell You, 3/23*
- *Getting Ready for the Solar Eclipse, 3/23*
- *WHM: Mary McLeod Bethune: First Lady of Struggle (Virtual), 3/20*
- *Knitting Club 3/22 & 4/5*
- *School break performances and classes*
- *Hand Sewing Workshops for adult and teens 3/27*
- *Screening of documentary, Undivide Us 3/24*
- *WHM Zonta Film Series continues 3/19 & 3/26*
- *WHM Play readings: Voices and Echoes 3/30*
- *Poetry reading: 4/6*
- *Songcatchers Concert 4/7*
- *Eclipse Party, 4/8*

## **MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

### ***Email highlights:***

- *Average open rate in February was a near record high of 62%, which is 9% higher than the previous month, and 25% higher than the industry average.*

### ***Social Media Highlights***

- *Obtained 31 new Instagram followers, for a total of 2,216, and 22 new Facebook followers, for a total of 3,763.*

### ***Program Marketing Management***

- *March is a very busy month for programs. Supported promotion of 46 March programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications, and community outreach*

### ***Miscellaneous***

- *Library Lovers month promotion - over 100 "love letters" were written. They were displayed on the portable gallery wall throughout the month of February.*
- *NRPL and Huguenot Children's Library were both finalists for Best of Westchester. Voting ran February 14 - March 6. A big push to encourage voting was made to the community, through social media and eblasts. Winners will be announced in the July issue of Westchester Magazine.*
- *AARP Tax Aide assistance has been robust. Our Tax Aide lead, Tim Oberg reported: "We completed 282 returns as compared to 225 last year which is a 25% increase for the*



*same amount of work days. However, we believe there is still potential for more growth when we realize that we did 364 returns in 2020 for the same eight days before COVID forced us to shut down in early March.*

*We informally ask the taxpayers when they arrive about how many are new to our program. We estimate that about 1/3 are new. Most of our clients are from New Rochelle, but we are also getting people from across southern Westchester and the Bronx.”*

- *Planning a community Eclipse Party on April 8 to view the total eclipse in Ruby Dee Park. Distributing eclipse viewing glasses, safe viewing instructions, eclipse music and give-a-ways.*

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:

The following members of the public spoke:  
Joseph Farca 75 Iselin Drive  
Lisa Burton 257 Centre Avenue  
Noelle Elia 17 Halcyon Terrace  
Marvin Chinitz 60 Jerome Avenue  
Judy Delluca N/A  
Jennifer Garcia 111 Centre Avenue  
Matt Border (sp?) 84 Gail Drive  
Jackson Riemerschmidt 917-770-0193  
Andrew Newman 611 Webster, New Rochelle  
Vince Malfetano 914-633-7866

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick

Secretary