

**NEW ROCHELLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, April 11, 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   Excused  
Tatiana Infante  
Fela Cortes

**ADMINISTRATION**

Thomas Geoffino  
Jean Manning  
Yesika Torres  
Elizabeth Joseph

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING:**

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

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Whitney Barrat moved that the Trustees to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues, seconded by Lucille Renwick and fully approved. The board went into Executive Session at 7:33 p.m.

Whitney Barrat moved at 8:13 p.m. that the Trustees reconvene the meeting, seconded by Lucille Renwick and fully approved.

The full board meeting resumed at 8:13 p.m.

**WLS REPRESENTATIVE -- Dr. David Mener**

*The WLS meeting was relatively brief, and I will summarize our executive director's report.*

*Our executive director elaborated on several programs WLS is involved in including:*

- 1. Career Coaching Services*
- 2. Workforce and Business Development*
- 3. Professional Development, session on effective interviewing to be hosted at Somers Library*
- 4. Database cleanup of the online catalog/Interlibrary Loan System*
- 5. Development department hosted workups aimed at supporting member library friends and foundations with focus on Library Giving Day on April 3rd 2024.*
- 6. Launch of the Quarterly Newsletter, "Take Note!" targeted to member library friends and foundations to support member library fundraising efforts.*
- 7. Patron accounts removed from the online catalog were transitioned to deletion status and after 30 more days of inactivity, the accounts will be permanently deleted.*

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

Board President Whitney Barrat provided remarks for the last meeting of Library Director Tom Geoffino, retiring after 18 years. She reiterated some remarks she had made at Tom’s April 10 retirement party at the library and would say much of the same at the meeting. She noted that in her six and a half years of working with Tom they have been through a number of changes at the library. *“You’ve led the library with integrity and a generosity of spirit. During the period we’ve worked, at every step, you’ve kept the community and residents of New Rochelle at the center of your decision making. You’ve made your mark and you will be missed.”*

Tom thanked Whitney for the kind remarks and noted that the accomplishments at NRPL were due to the collective work of everyone at the Library – the staff, the board (current and past) – and keeping the community as a most important priority. The goal to broaden the library to be as open and welcoming as possible for the entire community has been a pleasure of his as a Director. Having the opportunity to learn and grow along with the library and the board. ... I am excited for the library and the community and believe it will continue to grow in a lot of ways.

## **DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Before starting his director’s admin for 30 years and director for 25 both at New Ro and elsewhere, so last director’s report.

Tom Geoffino reported on the following issues:  
Series of grants they are starting or completing:

- Pending NYS Library Construction Grants: The Third Floor Renovation Project – (Update) Nearly complete. Final element to finish is the enclosure of the area above the teen space. Have created 2 fairly large conference rooms for meetings. New public meeting spaces and new study rooms. Even before the pandemic, people are looking for more private spaces and have done a good job to address that need. (Background follows) 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: Fire Safety Project (Fire Barrier Project Update) – Received state grants for this work. It is nearly done. Protecting the building for any fire. Report from project manager, Douglas Emilio. Of the 571 observed deficient conditions, all are substantially completed and approved by the Special Inspector. There

*are about 20 that need to be completed and some of those need to be addressed as a change order work, with the library's prior approval, to reflect unforeseen conditions. The sign off and approval process with the City of New Rochelle is the same as reported on the last month's report. Nearly at the end of the project, but there are just a few additional things that need to be addressed to ensure the public and staff are in a safe building.*

(Background follows) 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.

- 2022 NYS Library Construction Grant: Project at HCL – (Update) Completed. Installed storage solutions throughout facility. Enhancements to the basement re: flooring. Updated kitchen. Keeping out vermin. Building not as drafty. Noise abatement project was completed March 1 and is complete. Project managed by Elizabeth Joseph. There are panels that need to be installed. In teen area, there will be a 2<sup>nd</sup> phased submitted in August 2023. Expect to see those funds Summer 2024 for completion in Fall 2024 to include noise abatement and signage for better flow of traffic throughout the library. Same grant process has funding to improve restrooms at HCL to be made more ADA compliant as well as overall improvements. Hope for funding to arrive in early Fall 2024.

(Background)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: Updates for this grant are above (in bold & what follows (in bold)). This grant is in process (see "Background Information that follows"). NRPL is hopeful the grant award announcements will be made in Summer 2024 with the grant funds to arrive in early Fall 2024.– (Background information) 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.

- **ARPA Grant: *Update – NRPL Foundation undertook on behalf of library with the City are still working with library staff and board to create a children's outdoor pavilion in garden area. Grant funded (\$250K). Currently working through contract language. Hoping that's addressed and funding received. Space can be used for teens and other ways as well.***  
(Background information follows) 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. Friends of NRPL are requesting donated books come in smaller amounts to better handle the demand of donations The Friends Board will hold its annual lunch in May to thank its volunteers. .
- **NRPL Foundation: *Update: The NRPL Foundation board meeting was held on April 1st at Posto 22 Restaurant and included conversation regarding future governance, noting the departure of current Foundation President Chris Selin after nine (9) years of service. Foundation discussed governance regarding bringing someone on board (hiring someone) to handle. NRPL Foundation also will hold its annual gala on May 9.*** 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.. **Tickets available at the NRPL Foundation website.**

- **The April 4<sup>th</sup> Cocktails & Conversation, at Alvin & Friends, featuring author Eric Klinenberg and his newest book, 2020: One City, Seven People, and the Year Everything Changed, was a big success with more than 60 attendees.**

### **NEW MOTIONS PRESENTED TO THE BOARD**

**1<sup>st</sup> MOTION** -- NRPL Director Tom Geoffino requested approval for the annual report to NYS library through Westchester Library System. Every year, legally obligated to fill out document with all of the activities of the NRPL and that has been done, managed by Administrative Assistant Jean Manning, with input from Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph and NRPL staff. Has been accepted by WLS and will go on to NYS.

*Whitney Barrat moved that the 2023 New Rochelle Public Library Annual Report as successfully submitted to New York State, be endorsed. Seconded by Rhiannon Navin and fully approved.*

**2<sup>ND</sup> MOTION** -- NRPL Director Tom Geoffino asked for board resolution and approval regarding NRPL long-standing work regarding e-Rate funding specifically related to technology. Geoffino credited IT Head Daniel Ogyiri on his work to obtain the e-Rate grant (sent to the board prior to the meeting). Signed the grant request prior to the board meeting and board agreed that was appropriate. Getting \$57,231.01 and need to provide a matching contribution of \$13,577.49 which can come from the Library Fund balance.

*Whitney Barrat moved that New Rochelle Public Library accept the 2024 e-Rate Grant under Category 2 subsections, Basic Maintenance, Licenses for Basic Maintenance and Managed Internal Broadband Services. The library will receive \$57,231.01 in grant monies contingent upon a matching contribution of \$13,577.49 from the Library Fund balance. The motion was seconded by Tatiana Infante and fully approved.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> MOTION** – NRPL Director Geoffino asked for a vote on 2024-25 NRPL Foundation annual grant for the main and HCL locations. Allows to receive matching funds for NYS library construction grants and to continue to fund the museum pass program and a number of services for teens, adults, children and more for the New Rochelle community. Another part of the request relates to HCL and work they do.

*Whitney Barrat moved that the 2024-25 New Rochelle Public Library Foundation annual main and HCL grant request be endorsed. Seconded by Corey Galloway and fully approved.*

### **PERSONNEL REPORT:**

Board President Whitney Barrat announced that the board has been in the process of searching for a permanent director and are in the process of seeking an interim director and when there is news and information, the board will hold a special meeting to make an announcement.

## **ASSISTANT DIRECTORS REPORT**

Assistant Director Elizabeth Joseph provided the following report:

*March was a busy month for the New Rochelle Public Library! Public service departments geared up for exciting summer initiatives and potential funding opportunities. The Children's Department is at the heart of several exciting developments. Planning for the summer reading program, themed "Adventure Begins at Your Library," is well underway. This summer, we're honored to be one of eight libraries chosen for the national STEM Tales program. This distinction allows us to participate in cutting-edge research on the impact of media-based STEM read-alouds for young children.*

*Additionally, a grant received last year enables us to host several STEM programs. The Children's Department is thrilled about the potential of securing NYS construction grant funds. We began the process with design thinking sessions, where staff brainstormed solutions and goals for the new space. There was a clear consensus: the renovated area should be light, bright, welcoming, and fun. Accessibility and inclusivity for neurodivergent children and caregivers are at the forefront of our plans. The space will house an expanded parenting collection, a new special needs center, and boast greater discoverability of materials. Mobile furniture will allow for adaptable programming areas, ranging from story times to social gaming. We're currently discussing options with vendors to find the best products and prices. While ambitious, we're excited to see this project come to life!*

*Adult services are also buzzing with activity, separate from construction projects. In light of a recent retirement, Adult Services Supervisor Kira Aiello is updating staff responsibilities to address existing strengths and identify potential gaps. This restructuring ensures seamless collection maintenance, program delivery, and service provision. Additionally, a revised job description now reflects contemporary skills, including technology and instructional design.*

*The public services staff are the library's greatest asset. Their dedication, both within the library and in the community, is what makes the New Rochelle Public Library truly remarkable. They are the driving force behind our continued success and growth.*

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### ***BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE***

Chair Corey Galloway reiterated the FY 2024/25 Budget for approval -- \$7,034,006.45 compared to last year's budget of \$6,650,404.39, which is an increase of \$383,602 and equates to 5.90%, or annual average per tax payer \$21.39.

### ***BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:***

No report was made.

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FOUNDATION AND, FRIENDS COMMITTEE:**

MARCH/APRIL PROGRAMS/EVENTS

**Art Workshops/Gallery:**

- Gallery exhibit: NRCA, NRLWV, March NRAA Dermot Gale Award Show, April
- Folk Art Workshop 3/20, 10 attendees
- Knitting Clubs March 22 and April 5- averaging 3-5

**Wellness: Yoga and Qi Gong**

- Chair Yoga, Mondays and Wednesdays. Average attendance, average of 18 participants/class
- Gentle Evening Yoga, March 28, April 4, average 6 attendees/session
- Qi gong, Fridays, March 15, 22, 29, April 5, average 18 attendees/session

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

- Wayne Henderson Concert 3/15, 140 attendees
- True Crime Film Series continues *Man on a Swing*, 3/16, 24 attendees
- NRCA Poetry Slam 3/17, 60 attendees
- Creative Writing Class 3/13, 20 & 27. All classes at capacity of 8
- Author Talk: Fatimah Gilliam, *Race Rules - What Your Black Friend Won't Tell You*, 3/23, 52 attendees
- Getting Ready for the Solar Eclipse, 3/23, 20 attendees
- School break performances and classes
- Screening of documentary, *Undivide Us* 3/24, 34 attendees
- WHM Zonta Film Series continues 3/19 & 3/26, 5 attendees and 15 attendees
- Hand Sewing Workshops for adult and teens 3/27, 5 attendees and 3 attendees
- WHM Play readings: *Voices and Echoes* 3/30, 45 attendees
- Brown Bag Book Discussion, 8 attendees
- Poetry reading: 4/6, 20 attendees
- Songcatchers Concert 4/7, 103 attendees
- Eclipse Party, 4/8, 225 attendees

**Virtual**

- WHM: "Those Bombastic Blonde Bombshells: Monroe, Mansfield, and Van Doren" (Virtual), 3/13, 5 attendees
- Adventures of an Eclipse Chaser (Virtual), 3/18, 11 attendees
- WHM: Mary McLeod Bethune: First Lady of Struggle (Virtual), 3/20, 11 attendees
- Author Talk with Ben Goldfarb: *Crossings: How Road Ecology Is Shaping the Future of Our Planet*, 3/27, 7 attendees
- Around the Kitchen Table: Spring Cleaning, 4/2, 8 attendees

**Coming up:**

- Michael Powers Blues Heritage Concert, 4/12
- Qi Gong , 4/12, 19, 4/26
- True Crime Film Series continues, *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* , 4/13

- **New Rochelle Plays Hollywood, *The Candidate*, 4/14**
- **Jazz Art Workshop 4/17**
- **New Well Minded Movement Classes (Feldenkrais Method) classes begin, 4/18, 25**
- **Author Talk: *Voices of a People's History of the United States in the 21st Century: Documents of Hope and Resistance* with editors Anthony Arnove and Haley Pessin, 4/18**
- **Chair yoga continues Mondays and Wednesdays**
- **Gentle yoga continues**
- **Reception NRAA, 4/14**
- **Knitting Club 4/19**
- **Jared Pauley Jazz Concert, 4/21**
- **Sewing Workshops begin 4/27 including children's classes**
- **Calpulli Cinco de Mayo Celebration 4/30**

## **MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

### **Program Marketing**

- Supported promotion of 43 April programs through print and digital media, PR, targeted communications, and community outreach

### **Email highlights:**

- Average open rate in March was 55 %, which is 16% higher than the industry average.
- Our email distribution list continues to grow. There were 380 net new contacts in March. Total distribution list is now at 10,675.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Hosted 1 virtual and 2 in person programs (one adult/one children's) in advance of the 4/8/24 solar eclipse. Distributed 950 pairs of eclipse viewing glasses, and welcomed over 225 patrons to the library for an eclipse viewing - both outside in Ruby Dee Park, and via livestream from NASA in Ossie Davis Theater.
- AARP Tax Aide assistance continued to be extremely busy. has been robust. Our Tax Aide lead, Tim Oberg reported: "Last Tuesday (March 26) was a very busy day. We received and processed 55 returns. Due to the high volume of work, we stopped accepting new names at noon. Cindy estimated that we had to turn away at least ten taxpayers who came in later because we were not sure if we would be able to assist them within the available time. I had to go back to 2019 to find a day when we processed a record 59 returns, and that was on the last day of April, which is always our busiest day."

### **BTOP Help & Learning Center**

Tax assistance at the NRPL is in full swing, as the deadline for filing draws near. The BTOP room continues to assist the AARP tax volunteers, by providing critical online support for patrons to obtain necessary documents from other Government agencies, to complete their tax return. The New Rochelle School District completed a successful Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration Event at the library. Families with children eligible for Pre-K and Kindergarten



were able to complete forms necessary for the new school year in the Fall 2024. Adult literacy and GED learning through the GED Academy is gaining attention at the NRPL. All patrons with a Westchester library card can join the GED academy to improve their reading and writing skills or prepare for the GED, all for free. Patrons are dropping by the BTOP room to learn more about their smartphones, laptops, and how to access important online services, such as recent housing applications in NR. Patrons continue to borrow technology, 50 devices were checked out of NRPL in the month of March 2024. These devices help our patrons connect with job searching, telehealth, community resources and library databases and services.

- Library patrons continue to prepare for their job search with experienced Job Readiness Coach, Rebecca Mazin, who assists with online job applications, writing or editing resumes and job interview skills every Tuesday evenings from 5pm-7:45pm.
- Healthcare Navigator Elizabeth Blackwell continues to assist with open enrollment to purchase, change or renew coverage in a NYS qualified health plan on Wednesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm.
- The NRPL Lobby was host to a variety of community information resources including Urban Strategies HeadStart Program, Onward Peer Recovery, Family Services of Westchester, Stand Up Wireless and JCC.
- Notary Nights at the library is the third Thursday of the month. Next date is 4/18 @ 6:00-7:30 pm. Many patrons have taken advantage of this free service.
- In-person English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at NRPL with Westchester Community College continue through early May 2024. ESL courses for Summer 2024 to be announced.
- Civic/Citizenship classes next class is on Saturday, April 13th @ 1:00 pm. Classes have been extended for patrons who have their interview test coming up in May and June 2024.
- BTOP Outreach- Kids Healthy Day at the YMCA on 4/20. national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids and families. Library info & free giveaways!
- A Spring Job Fair is scheduled for April 19th at NRPL in collaboration with WestCop New Rochelle, a community partner serving at-risk residents of New Rochelle.
- The BTOP Help & Learning Center supports adult students who are continuing their High School Equivalency (HSE) journey with the personalized learning program from WLS, the GED Academy. Learn about the pathways to getting

***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:

- Vera Salter
- Cecilia Lavin
- Sameh Fakhouri
- Bruce Soloway
- Elise Waterstan
- Damon Maher

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m. with a motion made by Whitney Barrat and seconded by Tatiana Infante and approved by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille Renwick  
Secretary