



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES PUBLIC BUDGET MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 2, 2024**

NRPL Board President Whitney Barrat called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS

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

ADMINISTRATION

Jean Manning
Yesika Torres

REVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 2024-25 BUDGET

Board member Corey Galloway, chair of the Budget Committee read the following report regarding the 2024-25 budget.

Dear Fellow Board Members,

Today, we are sharing with you the Budget Committee's recommendation for the 2024-25 NRPL Budget.

SUMMARY:

- NRPL Budget Request: \$6,888,669.43 (total tax levy,) - a 5.97% increase in the average homeowners' annual tax burden, or a **\$405,620.80** increase from last year to which \$336,029.02 are contractual obligations.
- The non-discretionary budget line items amount to the majority (about 80%) of the overall budget increase.

Non discretionary and/or contractually mandated increases:

● **Salary increases:**

- A 2.5% negotiated and approved salary increase of full time salaries results in a **\$112,276.50 increase.**
- The overall increase in salaries in the 24/25 budget vs 23/34 is \$146,688.86. This includes increases in hourly and weekly wages

● **Benefits:**

● **Health insurance:**

- Health insurance costs for full-time library staff increased by **12.2%**

- The library contributes 82%, staff contributes 18%.
- The increase this year amounts to **\$189,340.16**

In addition to these unavoidable increases, the proposed 2024-25 budget includes only two other line items for increases as mentioned above:

- One new full-time position, a Library Assistant/Teen Services and Outreach Assistant **\$60,000.00 (includes salary and all benefits)**
- A modest increase in library materials of **\$15,543.26** for the year.

EXPLANATION:

As in the past, we've explored numerous possible budget scenarios with varying levels of increase. In the past, we've tried to show a scenario that keeps the budget flat, but that was not possible this year due to unavoidable and contractually mandated increases in salaries and health insurance. In addition to these unavoidable increases, the proposed 2024-25 budget **includes only two other line item increases as mentioned before.**

With the increase, the teen full-time position – the addition of a full-time Library Assistant position (Teen Services and Outreach Assistant) – serves one of the key target age groups (teens) that the library provides services to and is in our 2022-2026 strategic plan. It is listed as Goal #5 – to increase in visibility, access, and scale. To fully accomplish the aforementioned goal, we are seeking to replace the part-time Young Adult and Digital Media Lab Assistant position with the full-time Teen Services and Outreach Assistant position.

The head of teen services created a well-reasoned document that calls for the creation of a Library Assistant/Teen Services and Outreach Assistant position, which is attached to this proposal. In it, the teen services head outlines that a full-time position will ensure that we have a dedicated staff member in Teen Services who can consistently and assuredly be available and relied upon. With this full-time position dedicated to the connection between the library and the community, we can broaden our reach, develop new programs, and increase the number of teens who utilize the library and motivate them to become lifelong library patrons.

As the former Assistant Director, Elizabeth Joseph explained, we have seen significant growth in the use and engagement of the library this year. This includes the use of our materials, number of programs and attendance at those programs. The funds we receive not only allow us to sustain such momentum but help us explore and offer new streams of learning and fascination.

During this past calendar year alone, we saw ...

- 14% increase in checkouts of library materials, including both print and digital materials;
- 11% increase in requests for information at our public service desks;
- 18% increase in the number of programs hosted; and
- 50% increase in program attendance.

Additionally, the summer learning experiences we offered this past year resulted in a phenomenal turnout. Participation in summer reading games increased by almost 40%.

The services and programs we offer amplify the academic and economic possibilities for people of all ages. We ensure an environment that supports and revitalizes the social-emotional health of our community members. Support for the library is an investment in the community and the city we live in. The New Rochelle Public Library is a cornerstone in the life of New Rochelle residents, it grounds us while allowing us to soar.

It is the Budget Committee’s opinion that the two additional line item increases are absolutely essential to ensure that NRPL can maintain our increased outreach to patrons of all ages via enhanced services, including teen services, as well as a continued modest investment into a current and relevant materials offering to our patrons. Despite the overall budget increase, you will find that the proposed 2024-25 is in fact (and as always) a very frugal budget. We are confident that we can explain the increased tax burden to the public in a way that makes it palatable to them. ***Again, the average taxpayer in New Rochelle will see an increase of approximately \$28 from last year’s budget in their taxes going to New Rochelle Public Library.*** Given that the survey conducted to inform the strategic plan suggested that the community is willing to support the library through taxes, we hope our voting public will support this budget.

Supporting information:

- The Westchester Library System (WLS) recently published a document providing comparisons between the 38 public libraries in the system. The NRPL’s FTE staffing per capita (for every 2,000 residents) is the **2nd lowest library and is ranked 37 out of 38 libraries) in the county at 0.80.** The NRPL is staffed very lightly given our population size, square footage for two facilities and the long opening hours. We believe adding this new Library Assistant/Teen Services and Outreach Assistant position is appropriate in the context of the NRPL’s staffing situation, and to remain in alignment with the community’s stated goals per our strategic plan, which the community was involved with, intimately.
- Regarding materials, the NRPL is again ranked as the **2nd lowest (our library is ranked 37 out of 38 libraries) in the county with \$5.18 spent per resident on library materials.** The attached information sheet, which is a part of the previously referenced publication providing comparative Westchester public library information, details our woeful status relative to per capita library materials spending. We must enhance our spending in order to provide equity in access to library materials for our residents and to provide fair value for taxpayers.

Thank you,
NRPL Budget Committee – Corey Galloway, Chair; Whitney Barrat; Rhiannon Navin

TAX CAP RESOLUTION

Board President Whitney Barrat noted when any library in NYS overrides the tax cap, they are required to pass a resolution, as a board, to increase the tax cap. Adoption of the budget that the board approved and adopted in March, requires a tax levy increase of \$383,602, which exceeds the statutory tax levy increase limit of \$149,366 for this school year and must be approved by 60% of the qualified voters present and voting.

Whitney made a motion to approve the tax cap override. Seconded by Corey Galloway and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED 2024-2025 BUDGET

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD – No members of the public signed up to speak

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m. with a motion by Whitney Barrat that was seconded by Corey Galloway and unanimously approved.