

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
May 19, 2020

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held via Zoom Webinar on Tuesday, May 19, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Aaron Slater, and a notification of recording was given. Other Board members present were: Yara Cheikh, Maureen Walsh David, Jane Eickhoff, Michael Netzer, Paul Schwab, and Anne West.

Staff in attendance: Paula Miller, Director; James Cooke, Assistant Director; Natalie Edington, Assistant Director; Jen Evans, Administrative Assistant; Linda Frederick, Marketing and Development Manager; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects and Data, Coordinator; Ann McElroy, Staff Association President; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager; Liz Sundermann, Virtual Services and Media Creation Manager; Jamie Watson, Collection Development Coordinator; Mary Wilson, Human Resources Manager.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The minutes for the February 18, 2020 meeting were approved (**Eickhoff/West**).

Correspondence

Was moved to the end of the meeting.

Public Comments

None.

Upcoming Events

REPORTS

Director's Report (Miller)

Will be covered in the pandemic report under New Business.

Staff Reports

Finance Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe reviewed the Financial Report. The closing of the system on March 17 impacted the amount of information available for the report. Currently, grant revenue has increased, and expenditures have decreased. However, revenue from fines/fees has also decreased, due to the closure. The system plans to take a very considered approach to expenditures.

Staff Association (McElroy)

Ms. McElroy shared recent social and fundraising events hosted by the Staff Association.

Board Reports (Slater)

Mr. Slater asked if there was any objection to moving the June Board meeting to June 9th. As there was none, the next Board meeting will be June 9th at 8am most likely via Zoom. This week he will appoint a nominating committee, and a slate of officers for FY 21 will be presented for vote.

OLD BUSINESS

BCPL FY 21 Budget (Rowe, Miller)

The FY 21 Budget request was accepted by the County Budget Office with only small changes. The budget now goes to the County Council. The Library has not been asked to appear to before them. The final Council vote will be on May 29 [This information was provided later in the meeting to update the date, which had initially been reported as May 21].

Strategic Plan XI (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder gave a short review of Strategic Plan XI. The focus areas in the Plan are Quality of Life, Education and Lifelong Learning, Equitable Access, and Organizational Wellness. The Board was complimentary of the thoughtfulness and flexibility of the plan. Mr. Schwab asked about a review of the Mission, Vision, and Values. Ms. Gamertsfelder noted that they had not been changed so that they continue to align with BCPL's recent rebranding. The Board approved Strategic Plan XI (**Schwab/Cheikh**).

Towson Chamber of Commerce Mural Project (Miller, Schwab)

The Towson Chamber of Commerce has received 42 responses from their recent RFP related artist selection for the Towson Mural Project. The applicants will be reviewed, and a panel selected to review entries. Mr. Cooke has been selected to act as the BCPL liaison to the project.

NEW BUSINESS

Pandemic Impact on BCPL

In consultation with the Board, BCPL closed to the public in mid-March. The Director has been in constant contact with the Board, as well as the Baltimore County Executive Office. Director Miller updated the Board on changes to staff work and the impact on public service due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Sundermann (Virtual and Media Services Manager) outlined steps taken to ensure staff had the technology necessary to telework, and to provide support for customers. This included providing laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots from the pool of technology in laptop labs and SPLICE laptops. A number of additional Wi-Fi hotspots were purchased. Licenses to Zoom products were purchased and have been used by staff to attend meetings and provide public programming. Branch Wi-Fi has been boosted where possible to extend into the parking lots so customers may use Wi-Fi from their vehicles. There has also been a very large increase in the number of views to BCPL YouTube videos. Customers continue to be helped with electronic materials issues, and a new phone service model will be launched this week. VAMS is working on a launch of virtual My Librarian appointments in several formats to further assist customers. Ms. Sundermann thanked everyone who has participated in helping to provide technology and training to staff and customers.

Director Miller expressed her thanks for all the hard work staff have put into organizing these services.

Ms. Cheikh asked if Get Out the Vote was being emphasized on our website, and Ms. Gamertsfelder responded that the County is still focused on the 2020 Census and BCPL is following their lead.

Ms. Wilson (HR Manager) updated the Board on the transition of staff to telework. Human Resources has helped in the development of guidelines and policies related to telework to protect the system and the staff. These include the Pandemic Workplan; a Telework Policy and Agreement to outline the systems expectations of staff and the protections they are entitled to; a temporary Leave Policy to address staff who might not have been able to accrue leave during this period. The department has been working with providers: 1) to extend FLEX Benefits deadlines and to halt contributions to child care accounts; 2) to provide staff participating in Deferred Compensation with information on assistance available to them; and 3) assisting staff with unemployment and CARES Act information.

Mr. Netzer inquired about a “clearing house” of work that might be available to staff. Ms. Wilson shared that BCPL has developed a “Help Wanted” system to link staff to work/projects needed in Branches and Departments.

Director Miller thanked the Human Resources staff for their work.

Ms. Watson (Collection Development Manager) shared some of the work that Collection Development has been doing to meet customer needs. A spending plan was developed in March, and while revised, spending on materials has not completely halted. The department is working to maintain BCPL’s hold ratio on eBooks at the usual 3-1 ratio. This spending has focused on the most in demand materials, and the large boost in the borrowing of juvenile material, up from 5% of borrowing to 16%. Ms. Watson reported that there has also been an increase in the use of our databases and training resources, particularly Lynda.com which is used by BCPL staff, Community College and University students. The department is making plans on how best to reestablish the receipt of shipments from vendors to keep processing workloads manageable. Additionally, the option to place holds has remained available to customers, and there are currently 20,000 items on hold. Collection Development and other staff also continue to provide readers advisory through recommendations and Book Buzz programs via YouTube.

Ms. Cheikh inquired if BCPL owned materials from Tumble Books (children’s eBook vendor). Ms. Watson replied was that these eBooks were available to children through BCPS, so BCPL owns complimentary material but has not duplicated the collection.

Director Miller thanked Ms. Watson and her team.

Ms. Frederick (Marketing/Development Manager) and her team have been working to make sure BCPL customers are aware of all the resources still available to them while the buildings are closed. Efforts included promotions on the website, links to unemployment and COVID-19 resources, and library virtual programming announcements. Marketing has continuously updated BCPL’s blog, Facebook page, and has sent newsletters to more than 200,000

subscribers. Through a partnership with WBAL, the Be Well Read campaign continued, and a small number of well-placed TV spots promoted the library's virtual resources.

Director Miller thanked Ms. Frederick and her staff. After receiving an update from Mr. O'Neil of the Office of Budget and Finance, an update was provided for the date of the County Council Budget Message. Ms. Miller also emphasized that staff/staffing was the number one priority in the budget request.

Ms. Edington (Assistant Director) outlined efforts to continue providing programming to BCPL's customers while the branches are closed. Ms. Edington thanked staff for their efforts to make sure customers continued to have enriching programming at home. Once BCPL closed, a team was put together to oversee programming efforts. This team included staff from Virtual and Media Service, Collection Development, Youth and Family Engagement, Adult and Community Engagement, Marketing and Development to name a few. Public service and public service planning continue. BCPL's dedicated and creative staff are providing programs, live *and* prerecorded. Programming work has expanded, as the period of branch closure has lengthened, as it is important to stay connected to our customers. BCPL will continue to use the pre-booked outside performers (where possible). This also focuses on local performers and supports the local economy. Most of the programming is being done on a systemwide basis, with branches continuing to maintain ties with local groups like book clubs.

Most likely, virtual programming will continue even after the branches reopen to customers. Focus areas include Birth to Five, with Storytime, virtual dance parties, and tips for parents. Elementary schoolers have STEAM programming, crafts, and outdoor activity suggestions. Teens can participate in trivia contest, problem solving with apps, and chat session to stay connected. Programs for adults include Book Buzz, concerts, author events, and help with SNAP benefits over the phone. BC Reads events, Summer Reading Club, and Battle of the Books will continue virtually.

The Board was very complimentary of the efforts, creativity, and ability of staff to make the most of the situation, and of how thoughtful the staff are being on how this will impact future programming.

Director Miller thanked Ms. Edington for taking the lead on this project and thanked all the staff involved in the effort. She also thanked Mr. Cooke who has taken the lead on planning for reopening.

Mr. Cooke (Assistant Director) and a team of 28 managers from branches and departments have been working on a plan to reopen to the public that encompasses four critical areas:

- Develop an overall framework for re-entry by staff and re-opening to the public
- Ready all facilities to open, with sufficient PPE supplies, cleaning/disinfecting the facilities and materials, and establishing guidelines
- Resume support services for internal functions.
- Restore, through purposeful and safe phasing, public-facing activities.

The four-phased plan to reopen aligns with the Governor's Maryland Strong plan, guidelines provided by the Maryland State Library, and Baltimore County government's re-opening plans. Staff will continue with telework throughout the first three phases, which are flexible to allow for any changes necessary.

In Phase One, small groups of staff will return to our buildings, implementing steps to resume some services. These staff will work in small groups and in shifts to comply with social distancing guidelines. Exterior book drops will be opened at limited locations, to begin the intake of loaned materials. These materials will be quarantined in the branch meeting rooms for 72 hours. Furniture and public access computers may be removed and stored to facilitate social distancing.

Phase Two continues with larger numbers of staff in the buildings, but still no direct building access by customers. Book drop access will expand, and external pick up of holds will begin regionally. Returned materials will continue to be quarantined for 72 hours. This phase will continue until BCPL is able to open the doors to the public.

Phase Three sees the restoration of limited in-person hours to the public. Smaller branches where social distancing would be difficult will remain closed. Hours may be limited, and special hours for at-risk groups may be implemented. In person service at customer service desks and in person My Librarian appointments may resume. Programming will remain virtual and meeting rooms closed. Security guards will be back on duty to assist staff, plexiglass shields will be installed at service desks, and any other necessary facility and policy modifications will occur.

Phase Four is the resumption of normal service and operations, and has no timeline as it is dependent on the three other phases being completed successfully first.

Mr. Netzer asked about using an A/B schedule for staff. Mr. Cooke noted that this is one of several considerations.

The Board complimented Mr. Cooke and the team on a well thought out plan. They also appreciated the positive attitude of the staff about reopening.

Policies

Changes/Additions to Retirement Policy (Wilson)

Ms. Wilson shared background on changes in two BCPL Personnel Policies.

New provisions in the CARES Act provide for the allowance of distribution from certain retirement plans to help individuals facing financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the provisions is for expanded access to loans. When originally approved, the BCPL retirement plan policy did not provide for loan options for the Deferred Compensation Plan, managed by Nationwide Retirement Solutions. It is requested that this policy be changed to allow eligible staff the option to take a loan

from their plan. Loan eligibility, limits and terms would be established by the Plan Sponsor (Nationwide), and staff would contact them directly.

The enrollment deadline for the Baltimore County retirement plan (ERS) was altered by the County. Staff must enroll within 60 days of employment. The change in BCPL's personnel policies will be an update to reflect the County's practice.

The Board approved both changes **(Eickhoff/Cheikh)**.

Correspondence (Miller)

Director Miller announced her retirement and read the letter she had sent to the Board expressing her appreciation for her time working at BCPL. The Board expressed regret at her departure but wished her well. Director Miller will remain with BCPL until the system is back to more normal operation. She expects to depart sometime in late summer or early fall. Mr. Slater will be appointing a Search Committee in the next week to start the process of hiring a new director.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 am **(Schwab/Eickhoff)**.

Submitted by

Jane Eickhoff

Secretary of the Board of Library Trustees