

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 16, 2021

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held via Zoom on Tuesday, March 16, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 am by Board President Maureen Walsh David, and a notification of recording was given. Those wishing to speak during public comment were asked to sign-up using the Q&A tool on Zoom. Other Board members present were: Yara Cheikh, Jane Eickhoff, Michael Netzer, Paul Schwab, and Aaron Slater. Ms. West joined the meeting after Public Comment.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, 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; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager; Joey Schenning, Staff Association President; Liz Sundermann-Zimmer, Virtual Services and Media Creation Manager; Mary Wilson, Human Resources Manager. Presenting to the Board was Elizabeth Sachs, Director, Baltimore County Office of Government Reform and Strategic Initiatives.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the February 16, 2021 meeting (**Slater/Cheikh**).

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

Director Alcántara-Antoine shared the following upcoming events with the Board: Maryland Humanities: Reckoning with Race, March 16; 1000 Books before Kindergarten kick off March 22; Annual Supporters' Meeting March 24.

Observers of the meeting leaving comments in chat and the Q&A feature were asked to sign up for Public Comment if they wished to speak to the Board.

Public Comments

Monica Lee Silbas and Bridget Fitzgerald with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers spoke in support of the Collective Bargaining Bill currently being reviewed by the Maryland General Assembly.

Ms. Walsh David thanked them and then confirmed that comments in chat and Q & A were about reopening plans for the library, an update on that topic was to be given later in the meeting.

Ms. Cheikh logged out of the meeting to resolve a technical issue and returned immediately.

Ms. Walsh David reordered the agenda to make the closed session the next item of business. The Board was reminded that they would need to log out of the open session and into the closed session, where they would be joined by Mr. Malone, their legal counsel.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board moved into Closed Session to obtain legal advice about collective bargaining. Attendees were notified that the session would last approximately 30 minutes.

Motion to close meeting (**West**); seconded (**Eickhoff**) voting in favor (**Eickhoff, Netzer, Slater, Schwab, Walsh David, and West**).

The session was closed under the following statutory authority: “consult with counsel to obtain legal advice” § 3-305(b)(7).

Closed Session adjourned at 8:55 am (**Schwab/Slater**) and the Board moved back into regular session.

Ms. Elizabeth Sachs, Director of the Baltimore County office of Government Reform and Strategic Initiatives, joined the Board. Ms. Walsh David and Ms. Cheikh were acquainted with Ms. Sachs through various prior positions and projects.

NEW BUSINESS

Baltimore County Efficiency Audit (Sachs)

Ms. Sachs provided the Board with an overview of the Baltimore County Efficiency Audit process. This comprehensive assessment will be conducted across all Baltimore County departments, agencies, and the school system to identify opportunities for fiscal savings through efficiency in operations and service delivery. The project will be overseen by the Office of Government Reform and Strategic Initiatives with the firm Public Works, LLC contracted to conduct the assessment. Public Works, LLC has experience and expertise working with state and local governments and schools. The process of interviewing representatives of County Departments, including the Library, has begun and work will continue for the next six months. This will result in a series of Action Plans that will identify opportunities for improvement.

Ms. Walsh David thanked Ms. Sachs and resumed the regular agenda with the Director’s Report.

REPORTS

Director's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

Director Alcántara-Antoine gave a verbal Director's Report. She looks forward to the Efficiency Audit which ties in well with the start of her tenure at BCPL and reviewing the organization with a critical eye to see where BCPL can be more effective and efficient. During her first month at BCPL there have been a series of onsite branch tours and virtual meetings open to all staff. The Director has created a blog like communication tool to keep staff updated with news about the organization. Future reports will feature "mission moments" that highlight how BCPL is fulfilling its mission to the community. This month's highlight was the kickoff of the second virtual cohort for Entrepreneur Academy. The event was attended by 152 participants who were warmly welcomed to the program by the Baltimore County Executive, Director Alcántara-Antoine, and Executive Director Heidi Daniels of Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Statistical Report (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder reviewed the monthly Statistical Dashboard.

Facilities Report (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke reported that the Reisterstown renovation is 90% complete and is projected to finish construction in April and reopen in the summer.

Mr. Cooke shared schematic drawings that are in process for the Catonsville renovation. The current plans have been developed with consideration of the project budget. An updated children's area with a program space, a single service desk, a new teen space, and a recording studio are also part of the renovation plan. New furniture, more streamlined shelving, and new finishes will also be included. This project has not yet been made available for competitive bidding, so there is no current start date for the project.

The Board asked a number of questions about the project. Ms. West asked if there would be a change in the size of the collection due to the smaller shelving. Mr. Cooke stated that the shelving construction allowed for a smaller footprint with the same capacity. Ms. West also asked if the library had consulted with the Baltimore County Arts Guild about the recording studio and was informed that the architect brought in a consultant with the necessary expertise. The Arts Guild will be contacted along with other community partners for collaboration once the project is complete. Mr. Netzer asked about the choice to include a recording studio in the project. The Catonsville project has included the studio as a Center of Excellence as recognition of the area being identified as a music center in the County. Ms. Walsh David asked if the branch would be closed during construction and yes, the branch will close for a projected 10 months.

Finance Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe reported that expenses and revenues remain below budget. BCPL received a payment of \$300,000 related to a bequest from the estate of Mrs. Lyndon Fink. This brings the total gift

from that estate to \$900,000. Grant funds from State Capital grant for the Reisterstown project are now listed with other grant funding for a total of \$726,000 but much of this is offset by expenditures. Fiscal Services and Collection Development staff met with CliftonLarsonAllen to discuss setting up encumbrances for funds related to materials. This will be more efficient at the end of the year, and be a better reflection of funds spent due to all open purchase orders being reflected in budget totals.

Ms. Walsh David asked for clarification that the year-to-date totals will now show any purchase order rather than just those paid and Ms. Rowe gave her confirmation.

Mr. Schenning was experiencing difficulty logging in after the closed session, Ms. Walsh David continued on with the agenda and returned to the Staff Association Report before adjournment.

Board Report

Ms. Walsh David stated that the Board wished to be clear that they very much appreciate all the efforts of the staff and what they have heard about Ms. Alcántara-Antoine's tenure to date. There is a lot of great innovation and excitement going on at the library.

The Board has been clear from the beginning about the collective bargaining bill. They value the staff and have been working hard to get a bill that is fair and workable for all. The Board has gone through several iterations of the bill and are very close to having a bill that is workable for all. The Board has been relying on established processes both in the State and County to have a bill that, if passed, will be effective if the library employees make the choice to collectively bargain. The Board appreciates the help and support of those involved and hope to have more news at the end of the session.

OLD BUSINESS

FY 2022 Budget (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe requested that the Board approve an amended FY 2022 Budget Request. This was to account for \$26, 249 that needed to be added to salaries. The Board approved the amended FY 2022 Budget Request (**Netzer/West**).

Circulation Policy: Removing Barriers to Access – Fine Free for Youth (Edington)

Ms. Edington updated the Board on the progress made implementing Fine Free for Youth. BCPL received a number of clarifications to the law including the effective date of March 8, 2021. Staff have been working to clear fines from 16,000 youth accounts, 5,000 of which had a borrowing block for accumulated fees. Staff are excited by the removal of this barrier to access and service.

Ms. Cheikh asked if individuals were emailed about the removal of fines. Ms. Edington and Ms. Frederick then briefly discussed the marketing plan around this change of policy.

Reopening Plans for BCPL (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke thanked the more than two dozen staff from around the system who have been diligently working to develop reopening plans. With the recent loosening of COVID-19 restrictions by the Governor and County Executive, the next phase of reopening will include limited service inside branches, as well as virtual services and programming. The ability to browse the collection is a frequent request from customers, and a number of central Maryland library systems and Washington D.C are opening the doors to limited in person service. BCPL's Reopening Team is finalizing plans for Phase 3B with limited capacity in person service that will include browsing, self-check, reopening indoor returns, copy and fax service, assistance with information questions, accounts, and reader's advisory. Plans include keeping curbside services, virtual My Librarian appointments, and computer appointments as well as virtual programming. Initially, capacity will be set at 25%, meaning the number of people allowed inside will vary by branch. After consultation with the Baltimore County Health Department, the amount of time returned materials are quarantined will be reduced to overnight. Branch hours will be consistent with the current curbside service hours: Monday-Thursday 10am to 6pm and Friday-Saturday 10am to 3pm. There is no set date for these expanded services to begin, but sometime in mid-April is likely. Over the next few weeks more staff will be on site in branches and departments to get ready for this phase of reopening with flexible schedules and some telework still available. Locations will receive additional PPE as necessary for use by staff and customers.

Mr. Cooke answered a number of questions from the Board. Ms. Cheikh asked if BCPL was keeping track of how many staff had been vaccinated for COVID-19. Mr. Cooke explained that Human Resources was working with the county on how to track vaccinations. Ms. West asked if the limited capacity would necessitate a reservation or appointment to browse the collection. Reservations are not part of the current plan, service will be first-come first-served. Once capacity was reached, customers would need to wait outside until allowed to enter. Mr. Schwab asked if there would be a time limit set for inside visits. While the team is looking at limiting visits to 30 minutes, that may be hard to enforce.

Director Alcántara-Antoine thanked the team who have worked hard to develop a methodology that lets BCPL accomplish its mission to serve the community while keeping customers and staff safe.

Ms. Walsh David expressed the Board's appreciation for the hard work of the Reopening Team and the care they took to balance BCPL's mission and the needs of customers and staff.

NEW BUSINESS - Continued

Staff Day

Investing in staff through learning and development is one of Director Alcántara-Antoine's top priorities. The Director requested that the Board approved the move of the annual Staff Day from August to Indigenous Peoples Day, this year October 11. Staff will have a full day of learning with a general session in the morning and then break into Branch/Department groups

of an afternoon session. The Board approved the move of Staff Day to Indigenous Peoples Day **(Eickhoff/West)**.

REPORTS – Continued

Staff Association (Schenning)

The Staff Association Board of Governors held the first meeting of 2021 in February. The group began work on an agenda for 2021 that will be finalized at their March meeting. Mr. Schenning reminded staff that everyone was welcome to participate in the Wellness Challenge. He hopes to share plans for the year next month.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting adjourned at 9:55 am **(Schwab/Eickhoff)**.

Submitted by

Anne West

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees