

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

November 19, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at the Woodlawn Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:11 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were: Maureen Walsh David, Claudia Cruz, Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, Anne West, and Michael Netzer. Anne West attended via phone.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Natalie Edington, Chief Customer Experience Officer; Robin Linton, Human Resources Director; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Director; and Nay Keppler, Woodlawn Library Manager.

Guests in attendance were Mr. Bill Early and Brandon Glover, CliftonLarsonAllen, and Chuck Wray, Rima Namek and Allison McElheny from Quinn Evans Architects.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

Dr. Lin-Chen requested that the 4th paragraph of the minutes be corrected to read “Closed session minutes will be approved at the November 19, 2024, meeting” rather than June. The Board approved the correction and the October minutes (**Lin-Chen/West**).

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

The CEO shared information about upcoming community charity drives. Donations will be collected at branches to be given to those in need. A second community input session for the Randallstown renovation will be held on November 22, 2024, at 6:30pm at the Randallstown Community Center.

Comments from the Public

None.

REPORTS

CEO's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

The CEO was pleased to share that the ribbon cutting for the new STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) vehicle took place in October. The new vehicle allows BCPL to bring STREAM activities to the community. With this addition, two of the four mobile library vehicles have been replaced with new vehicles.

Last night was the first community engagement session for the Randallstown renovation. Over 50 people attended. The community was vocal and passionate about what they wanted to see in the new library.

The CEO also arranged for a presentation about the Woodlawn Library renovation to be on today's agenda showing how the branch will be transformed into a 21st century library. The renovation will make the branch a 21st century library. BCPL is making critical investments to buildings, but it is the staff that make the library part of the community. The CEO expressed her appreciation for BCPL staff and their positive impact on communities and customers' lives.

Statistical Dashboard – Gamertsfelder

Ms. Gamertsfelder was unable to attend. In her absence, Mr. Cooke briefly reviewed the statistical dashboard and stated that numbers were on track. He also provided an information sheet about the Woodlawn Library.

Ms. Walsh David shared that the recent changes to the design of the dashboard made information clearer and commended Ms. Gamertsfelder's efforts.

Woodlawn Library (Keppler)

The branch is next to Woodlawn High School and sees many teens after school. The branch provides snacks daily to about 50 children after school. With the support of the CEO, a security officer (who is a BCPL staff member) serves alongside a contract security officer. Changes in procedures around how staff engage with teens has seen improvement in the atmosphere of the branch. There has been a significant reduction in the number of security incidents, bans and the length of bans, and calls for police assistance. Staff have seen little engagement from Library @Lunch visits to the high school as the teens visit the library after school. The staff transitioned to lunch visits to local middle schools to connect with students before they get to high school.

There have been more than 40,000 visits to Storyville so far this year. The play-and-learn center will be receiving a touch-up during the upcoming renovation.

The branch recently received two grants from the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library. One is for books to give away during outreach events. The other is to launch a program called Hatchlings to teach expectant mothers how to be their child's first teacher.

The CEO asked Ms. Keppler to discuss the branch's restorative justice efforts. Ms. Keppler shared that teens were being banned from the branch without staff having much engagement with them. Now if a youth is banned the appeals process is explained. Staff have a conversation with them about what happened and the impact of their actions. Staff can also recommend changes to the length of the ban. This approach has been going well. To increase relationship building, a structured check in with the teens, over pizza, happens three times a year. Staff discuss use of the teen space and what programs the teens would like to see. Ms. Keppler answered questions from the Board about how many customers the branch bans and for what reasons. She also responded to questions about the number of students in restorative circles.

Customer Experience (Edington)

Ms. Edington thanked Ms. Keppler and the Woodlawn team for the incredible work they do for the community. BCPL will be starting a pilot project to sell MTA CharmCard 7-day bus passes at Essex, Lansdown, Randallstown, and Towson. After a six-month period, staff will evaluate and assess the program. Ms. Edington thanked the staff involved in developing the pilot.

Operations (Cooke)

The Pikesville staff and public restrooms renovation project has concluded, and all restrooms have reopened. Mr. Cooke thanked BCPL's partners in Baltimore County Property Management. Over 3 million dollars has been invested in improvements to the Pikesville branch over the last few years.

The Catonsville renovation project has concluded. There has been a lot of positive feedback on the improvements.

The contract for the White Marsh meeting room and restroom renovation is under review and work should begin this winter or spring.

Mr. Hartzell, Capital Projects Manager, is working on plans for a meeting room refresh for the seven branches not getting a renovation in the next few years. There are also plans to update AV systems at Arbutus, Cockeysville, Essex, Lansdowne, North Point, Perry Hall, and Pikesville to bring them up to current standards.

Fiscal Services (Rowe)

Revenues are slightly above expenses. It may be necessary to use the fund balance if expenses exceed projections. This would be nothing out of the ordinary, and Ms. Rowe clarified for Ms. Walsh David how such a use of funds would be noted in the Finance Report.

As there will be no December meeting, Ms. Cheikh asked Ms. Rowe if there was anything new from the County about the proposed budget. Ms. Rowe had no new information to share, but there may be something for the January meeting.

Human Resources (Linton)

Ms. Linton reported that as of October 2024, BCPL has 537 employees. There have been two full-time separations and there are 22 full-time job openings, and 7 part-time job openings.

Human Resources' focus in October was on part-time staffing and special projects. HR is working on a Heat-Related Illness policy, revamping the recruitment approval process, and beginning Staff Day planning. Contract negotiations with the Union will begin soon and HR is working to streamline operations and engagement with staff and management on employee relations and enrichment. An HR action plan for the next five years has been shared with leadership.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh reported that during the closed session at the October Board meeting, the Board discussed collective bargaining and received information about potential litigation. No votes were taken.

Ms. Cheikh expressed the Board's appreciation for the work of the BCPL staff daily. The Board recognized the retirement of Yvette May who leaves after fifty years of service to BCPL and the residents of Baltimore County. Ms. May worked at several branches, including Towson, White Marsh, Woodlawn, Catonsville, Parkville, and Essex. Ms. May worked for 21 years as Circulation Services Manager, then earned her Master's degree in Library and Information Science and has served as the Library Manager at Essex for the last 10 years. Ms. May demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the Essex community and staff. Under her leadership, she formed valuable community partnerships that provide critical services. The Board thanked her for her tremendous service and wished her the best in retirement.

On October 29th, many Board members had the opportunity to cut the ribbon for the initiation of our STREAM vehicle. County Executive Olszewski and Senator Kathy Klausmeier joined Ms. Cheikh, Ms. West, Ms. Walsh David, Dr. Lin Chen, the CEO, and many excited staff and community members at the Rosedale Branch to launch the wonderful new addition to the BCPL fleet. The Board is grateful to Baltimore County, our state partners, and the Baltimore County Public Library Foundation for allowing BCPL to provide these transformational services.

Ms. Cheikh was excited to see the designs for the Woodlawn Branch and welcomed the architects from Quinn Evans. Ms. Cheikh attended a community input session for the new Randallstown library and attend an addition session at the Randallstown Community Center with Mr. Cooke for additional input from the community.

Ms. Cheikh acknowledged the work of Ms. Rowe and the fiscal services staff who worked in collaboration with the auditors to provide a completed audit report. This was a tremendous undertaking, and the Board is appreciative of the work and the transparency our audit process provides County residents.

And as this was an election month, Ms. Cheikh closed with an acknowledgement for the Board, the CEO, and the staff of what BCPL has committed to value. We value our customers and communities, equal access and intellectual freedom, flexibility and collaboration, diversity and inclusion and continuous improvement. BCPL's vision is to empower and engage individuals for a more inclusive and connected Baltimore County community. She asked the staff to continue this good work.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Acceptance of FY 2024 Audit (Early)

Mr. Early shared audit results for June 30, 2024, audit. He reviewed the audit scope and process. Mr. Early discussed the impact of new standards, including enhanced risk assessment and understanding of estimates, and a deeper IT understanding. These new standards resulted in more inquiries and data requests from the audit team. CLA used a risk-based approach, and the financial statement audit opinion is unmodified with no material weaknesses. The audit was performed in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

CLA is finalizing engagement with the Board, and once any additional questions or comments have been received, then the final version of the audit will be sent to BCPL. Baltimore County received a draft copy for review.

The Board accepted the FY 2024 Audit **(Lin-Chen/West)**.

Ms. Cheikh thanked Ms. Rowe and her team for their efforts and acknowledged the amount of work involved with the audit process.

Presentation of Woodlawn Renovation Design (Quinn Evans)

The Board received a presentation on the Woodlawn renovation from Quinn Evans Architects staff: Rima Namek, Principal; Chuck Wray, Principal; and Allison McElheny.

Highlighted were planned changes inside and outside. Construction tentatively begins in July 2025, with completion in November 2026. CEO Alcántara-Antoine confirmed the budget at \$22 million. Ms. Cheikh felt that the work would be transformational, and a tremendous amount of work. Community engagement would make for robust plan. The CEO thanked Quinn Evans and shared that her favorite portion of the renovation is the exterior. The innovative design will be a beacon that beckons people in.

Woodlawn Temporary Location (Cooke)

During the Woodlawn renovation, there will be a temporary facility set up to provide a continuous level of service. BCPL will lease a space nearby at 6660 Security Blvd. The space will be over 4,000 square feet, this is about the same size as the Lansdown Branch. The space will house basic services and collections, public PCs, study spaces, a programming room, seating, and staff workspaces. The temporary space is within walking distance of the high school and is in a retail area. It is critical not to have a lengthy service gap in a vulnerable community. A move in date is still to be determined.

Ms. Cheikh was pleased to see the vision of the CEO come to fruition and thanked Mr. Cooke and Mr. Hartzell for their work.

CLOSED SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

At 9:45 am Ms. Cheikh called for a motion to close the public portion of the meeting under General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) to consult with staff regarding pending or potential litigation and to consider matters related to collective bargaining negotiation (West/Ganguly) and to adjourn the meeting from the Closed Session. Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Ganguly, Lin-Chen, Netzer, Walsh David, and West. The staff members present at the Closed Session were CEO Alcántara-Antoine and Ms. Linton.

A summary statement for the Closed Session will be shared at the next Board meeting anticipated to be on January 21, 2025.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees