

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 15, 2022

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at the Essex Library. Before the meeting was called to order it was announced that Public Comments would move earlier in the agenda and those wishing to speak were asked to sign up. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 am by Board President Maureen Walsh David. Other Board members present were: Yara Cheikh, Jane Eickhoff, Mike Netzer, Paul Schwab, Aaron Slater, and Anne West.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Director; James Cooke, Assistant Director; Natalie Edington, Assistant Director; Jen Evans, Administrative Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects & Data Manager; Yvette May, Essex Library Manager; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the February 15, 2022 meeting (Slater/West).

Correspondence

The Board has received three pieces of correspondence regarding the Estate of Lyndon Fink. Two were about the probate process and one was a partial dispersal of funds. Mr. Cooke shared that funds from the estate have supported recent furniture and fixture purchases around the system.

Upcoming Events

The annual Supporters Meeting for the Friends, and other volunteers will be held on March 31 at 11:30 am in the Towson Room.

Comments from the Public

The Board heard from three members of the public. Anita Bass was pleased to see the Board meeting at Essex. She expressed concern about how the meeting was advertised in the Branch. Nicole Dvorak asked that the Board consider keeping a virtual component to the meeting so more staff could attend or posting a recording of the meeting for staff to view. Sheldon Barber requested Public Comments remain at the end of the meeting so questions could be asked about items on the agenda.

Ms. Walsh David thanked them for their comments.

REPORTS

Director's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

This week, March 17, marks 2 years since the library closed for the global pandemic. BCPL moved quickly to determine how to deliver public library service under extraordinary circumstances, recreating our service model to continue to serve our community. The appreciation expressed by the community is unabated, and we continue to hear how BCPL kept people sane during the pandemic, providing relief and respite, offering escape and a lifeline, and helping to save lives through meal distribution and COVID test kit distribution.

BCPL did all of this together, as *One Library, One Team*, while staff also faced the impacts of the pandemic in their own lives. Ms. Alcántara-Antoine expressed her pride in the BCPL team for stepping up to the plate to keep going, even when the going got tough.

Ms. Alcántara-Antoine shared the recent conversations with staff around the Quality of Worklife Survey has revealed opportunities to strengthen BCPL's organizational culture and increase communication.

BCPL is creating a capital plan to prioritize needed improvements to facilities and replace outdated vehicles in the mobile outreach fleet. BCPL has launched an Operational Plan as a companion to the Strategic Plan and has been steadily working towards accomplishing the goals and objectives we laid out for ourselves. Also ongoing is work around the recent Equity Audit, examining how closely we live up to our stated values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and where there is room for improvement. The Board will receive reports on these activities in upcoming meetings.

Branch Report (May)

Library Manager Yvette May spoke briefly about the challenges facing staff serving the Essex community. In general those living in Essex make less than those in other Baltimore County Communities and struggle financially. Recently, the County Executive has launched a community recovery program for Essex that is looking to target the crime rate and resolve some other social issues. The Essex Branch is the home base for BCPL's first social worker, who has assisted a number of community members. Essex also works with community partners like the Baltimore County office of Economic and Workforce Development, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Prologue, and Lawyers in the Library.

The Board had a number of questions for Ms. May. Mr. Netzer asked about the hours of the social worker. The social worker is based at Essex and visits branches on the east side of the County. Appointments and walk-in times are available at Essex three days a week. Ms. Cheikh asked if Essex had an afterschool program, which it does not. The Essex Branch is not in a walkable community and Ms. May and her staff have had limited success with outreach to children and teens. Ms. Eickhoff asked if Essex served meals and they do in partnership with Good Harvest.

Ms. Walsh David applauded Ms. May and her staff for creating a community hub.

Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder reviewed the statistical dashboard for February 2022. She called the Board's attention to the statistics for Wi-Fi use, which are inaccurate due to the server needing replacement during the month of February. Mr. Schwab asked about the number of new customers compared to total customers, and if returns have been tracked since BCPL stopped charging extended loan fees in regards to the impact on holds. Ms. West asked if all program and event attendees are counted. Ms. Gamertsfelder responded that the number of customers fluctuates as Maryland libraries are required by the Maryland State Library to purge accounts that have been unused for three years. There has been little impact on returns since going fine free. Materials are either renewed automatically, or customers are sent a notice to return materials with holds and are eventually charged for the items they do not return. In response to Ms. West's questions, Ms. Gamertsfelder assured her we do track attendance numbers.

As BCPL has been Fine Free for Youth for a year, the Board will receive a report on the policy's impact in April.

Facilities Report (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke reported that focus and planning has turned to three or four major renovations for the next year. The start of the Catonsville renovation has been delayed due to the unexpected need to replace windows. Plans progress for the move to single service desks at Cockeysville and Perry Hall with the assistance of Property Management and the Office of Information Technology (OIT). BCPL is also working with OIT on a pilot project at Cockeysville to provide exterior lockers for hold pickup. The Loch Raven meeting room is currently closed as the flooring is being replaced. New exterior signs are in the works for Hereford, Randallstown and White Marsh. A feasibility study is being conducted to determine if the Woodlawn Branch should be renovated or replaced. Reisterstown is having ongoing issues with its doors and HVAC system which Property Management is working to resolve. The 311 center located on the first floor of the Towson Branch will be moving into a smaller space in the building, allowing BCPL to reclaim the larger 311 space.

Mr. Netzer asked if the lockers would work with a code. They would and should be a help in managing the tremendous number of holds picked up at Cockeysville. Mr. Schwab asked if the County was responsible for fixing the issues with the doors and HVAC at Reisterstown. Mr. Cook assured him Property Management was working diligently on the issue as the doors and systems are new. Ms. Walsh David asked about the architect for the Woodlawn project. The firm is Quinn Evans, who have worked on a number of library construction projects including the North East Library in Cecil County.

Finance Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe provided the Board with the February financial summary. Revenues and expenditures continue to be below previous projections. Mr. Schwab inquired about how BCPL received funds from the Foundation. Ms. Rowe responded that BCPL sends them an invoice as needed.

Mr. Netzer asked what would happen to the unused funds for security guards. Those funds will be rolled into the fund balance and be used expenses in FY 2023 as appropriate.

Board Report (Walsh David)

Ms. Walsh David reported that Mr. Schwab would not be seeking reappointment and the Board will be looking for a new member to start in July 2022. The Board will accept applications until March 18, then a review committee made up of Ms. Walsh David, Ms. Cheikh, and Ms. West would review applications and conduct interview of selected candidates in April.

Ms. Walsh David appointed Nominating Committee consisting of Ms. Eickhoff, Mr. Netzer, and Mr. Slater.

Ms. Walsh David affirmed that at the February closed session, the Board discussed the Evaluation of the Director, a personnel matter, the re-appointment of a trustee, a collective bargaining issue. No votes were taken.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Before the meeting adjourned, Mr. Schwab asked that Board members consider speaking with candidates for office as they meet them about the need for additional capital and operational funding for BCPL and libraries in general. He hopes that MLA will create a questionnaire for candidates about library issues.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 am **(Slater/Schwab)**.

Submitted by


Paul Schwab
Vice President
Board of Library Trustees