

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 21, 2023

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at the Towson Branch. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Maureen Walsh David. Other Board members present were: Yara Cheikh, Jane Eickhoff, Havaca Ganguly, and Anne West.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Natalie Edington, Chief Customer Experience Officer; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning and Projects Manager; Shirley Mason, Woodlawn Circulation Manager; Jonathan O’Neill, Employee & Labor Relations Officer; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager; and Mary Wilson, Human Resources Manager.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the February 21, 2023 **(Eickhoff/West)**.

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

The CEO highlighted the Towson Friends Book Sale from April 12-15; and Women’s History Month with programming throughout March.

Comments from the Public

None

REPORTS

CEO (Alcántara-Antoine)

BCPL has committed itself to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. BCPL serves a diverse community with diverse needs, and it is vital that the people we serve see themselves reflected in our collection and services. It is also important that we look like the community we serve.

CEO Alcántara-Antoine shared that her library journey began with a job as a Page in her local library where she was one of only a handful of people of color working there. This was a pattern that continued in other libraries and in library school; as an industry, people of color are underrepresented in libraries.

BCPL’s equity audit found that while 44% of Baltimore County is made up of people of color, only 22% of BCPL staff are. Two goals in the equity audit are to not only increase recruitment of diverse staff, but to promote retention. BCPL seeks to ensure that staff are made to feel

welcomed and supported, and that they see pathways of success within the organization. This is crucial when an organization is not as diverse as it can be.

Affinity groups like BCPL's Black Library Workers Affinity Group help to support a culture where staff can thrive. The group will build a community among employees with shared experiences and identities, create a space of mutual support, and offer a sense of belonging. It is planned that additional groups will be established in the future.

The CEO then introduced Ms. Shirley Mason, co-lead of BLWA who spoke more about the group and its progress.

Black Library Workers Association (Mason)

Ms. Mason discussed the successes of the Black Library Workers Association over the past year. The group now has 51 members, and has created a steering committee which is working to streamline the group's election process to align with the Strategic Plan. The steering committee works closely with the DEI officer and is relationship building with other BCPL departments. In the future the group plans to create a page for staff on SharePoint and collaborate on the affinity framework for BCPL.

Ms. Walsh David thanked Ms. Mason for her work with the BLWA.

Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared the Statistical Dashboard which included some items specific to the Towson Library.

Ms. Walsh David asked if customers continued to use curbside. Ms. Gamertsfelder stated that it use varied by branch. Ms. Walsh David also asked if February numbers were impacted by the closure of Catonsville, which they have not been. Impact from the Catonsville closure will be seen in the March statistics.

Ms. Cheikh shared that she was aware that some customers would use Cockeysville or Loch Raven to avoid building and parking issues at Towson. She asked if BCPL had statistics about the age groups using the Towson Library or when Towson customers were using other branches. While BCPL was able to see when customers returned material to a branch other than the one where it was checked out, we do not have an assessment as to the reason. Ms. Eickhoff pointed out there are a number of reasons why someone might choose to return material to a different branch.

Public Services (Edington)

CCEO Edington introduced three new Library Managers: Nay Keppler of Woodlawn, Brian Wickman of Towson, and Jarrett Farmer of Randallstown.

Operations (Cooke)

COO Cooke shared that BCPL had launched a new mobile app for customers. This app allows customers to access their library account, self-checkout items anywhere in the library, access hold information and see if the library has a title available by scanning the ISBN among other benefits. Since launching on March 1st, the app has been launched more than 14,000 times and seen over 320,000 transactions.

Mr. Cooke also updated the Board on the progress of the Catonsville renovation. The building closed on February 18, the branch has been emptied to prepare for demolition. Mr. Cooke thanked Ms. Brunson the branch manager and her staff as well as Jamie Watson and Collection Development department, Purnell Sterrett and the Facilities department, Marketing, Digital Equity and Virtual Services, and our partners at Baltimore County Property Management and the Office of Information Technology. He expressed his pleasure that North Point Builders has been selected as the general contractor. BCPL has worked with this company on the renovations of Hereford, Randallstown, and Reisterstown.

Fiscal Services (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe provided the Board with the financial summary. She highlighted additional funds from the Fink estate and upcoming grant payments. Ms. Cheikh asked Ms. Rowe to confirm that there would be no additional funds for the mobile app from CARES Act funds. Ms. Rowe confirmed that this was so.

Human Resources Report (Wilson)

Ms. Wilson shared that Human Resources has just finished interviews for Library Services Assistant both full and part time. A number of part-time staff were promoted to full-time and the department is working now to fill the part-time vacancies this created.

The department has also completed a number of trainings for staff including Defend Yourself – Safer libraries which featured de-escalation strategies. Upcoming trainings include Workplace Harassment Awareness session. While these sessions are currently voluntary, Human Resources is working on a list of mandatory trainings for staff.

Board (Walsh David)

Ms. Walsh David express the Board's condolences to Mr. Slater for a recent death in his family. She then appointed a Nominating Committee to present a slate of officers for consideration in April. The committee will be Mr. Slater, Mr. Netzer, and Ms. Ganguly. The Board will vote on the candidates at the May meeting and the new officers will take office in July.

OLD BUSINESS

February Closed Session Report (Walsh David)

Ms. Walsh David reported that during the February 21 closed session, the Board agreed to request the reappointment of Mr. Netzer to the Board. A letter with this request has been sent to the County Executive.

NEW BUSINESS

Urban Libraries Council Declaration of Democracy (Alcántara-Antoine)

CEO Alcántara-Antoine spoke about libraries impact on democratic society. At public libraries, people can access a broad range of ideas and perspectives. Library collections represent diverse voices and viewpoints, and programs offer opportunities for civic and civil discourse you're your community. BCPL provides a safe space for open dialogue and the free exchange of ideas, allowing people to learn from others and form their own opinions.

The work that is happening in public libraries is increasingly under attack, most notably with the unprecedented rise in book challenges, the disruption of library programs, and attempts at the censorship of free speech and ideas. In direct response to the daily assaults on democratic norms, the Urban Libraries Council's Declaration of Democracy articulates BCPL's commitment to uphold democracy, especially surrounding the freedom to read and the freedom of speech critical to healthy societies.

As a member of the ULC, BCPL stands with colleagues across the country in affirming our mutual commitment to preserving and protecting intellectual freedom so all members of our communities may fully participate in our American democracy.

The CEO requested that the Board formally adopt the ULC Declaration of Democracy.

The Board adopted the Urban Libraries Council Declaration of Democracy **(West/Ganguly)**.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Walsh David called for a motion to close the public portion of the meeting under the General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) (9) to consider matters that relate to collective bargaining **(Cheikh/Ganguly)**. Aye: Walsh David, Cheikh, Eickhoff, Ganguly, and West. Also present in the closed session were CEO Alcántara-Antoine, Mr. O'Neill, and Ms. Wilson.

The Board resumed open session. Ms. Walsh David called for a motion to accept the contract with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers as discussed in closed session. The Board approved the contract **(Cheikh/West)**.

Ms. Walsh David shared how pleased she was that both parties were able to negotiate in good faith to develop a contract that will work for the next few years.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 am **(Cheikh/Eickhoff)**.

Submitted by

Anne West

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees