

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

October 15, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at the Loch Raven Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:01 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were: Maureen Walsh David, Claudia Cruz, Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, and Anne West. Mr. Netzer was absent.

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 Projects & Data Manager; Robin Linton, Human Resources Manager; Jonathan O’Neill, Employee & Labor Relations Officer; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager; and Kinshasa Vargas-Pile, Loch Raven Library Manager.

Ms. Cheikh informed the Board of the need for a Closed Session under General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) to discuss a personnel matter and to consult with staff regarding pending or potential litigation. The Closed Session was added to the end of the agenda by unanimous vote of members present **(West/Cruz)**.

A report on any decisions made in Closed Session will be shared at the November 19, 2024, meeting.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the September 17, 2024, meeting **(Walsh David/West)**.

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

Highlighted were National Freedom to Read Day of Action on October 19. There will be community read ins at Essex and Perry Hall that day.

Comments from the Public

None.

REPORTS

CEO’s Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

CEO Alcántara-Antoine expressed her appreciation for Staff Day which took place on October 14. BCPL staff had a day of learning and fun featuring keynote speakers Jamar Rahming, Director

Rebecca Hass of Anne Arundel County Public Library. The focus was helping the staff prepare for transformation as BCPL gets ready for strategic planning in 2025. CEO Alcántara-Antoine thanked the Human Resources and Staff Day Planning Committee for a wonderful day of learning and the Trustees who attended.

Statistical Dashboard – Gamertsfelder

Ms. Gamertsfelder the statistical dashboard and stated that numbers were on track. She also provided an information sheet about the Loch Raven Library.

Dr. Lin-Chen asked for an explanation of the Social Vulnerability Index. Ms. Gamertsfelder shared that the index is based of census numbers to identify areas where the community is least able to prepare for or recover from economic challenges. BCPL uses the index to help identify what services to offer our communities.

Loch Raven Library (Vargas-Pile)

Ms. Vargas-Pile has been manager at Loch Raven for 6 months. The building is a shared space with the Baltimore County Department of Health WIC Center. Ms. Vargas-Pile and her staff have been focusing on outreach to students and children in her service area. They also provide customers will job seeking assistance, helping with job searches and resume writing.

Customer Experience (Edington)

Ms. Edington introduced Lisa Allgeier, the new Cockeysville Library Manager. Ms. Allgeier was previously the Assistant Library Manager at Reisterstown. Ms. Edington also announced that Yvette May, Essex Library Manager, will be retiring in December after 50 years of service. Ms. May has held several roles at BCPL on the librarian and circulation side of operations.

Operations (Cooke)

The Catonsville renovation is complete except for a few small punch-list items. The public restrooms at Pikesville have reopened, and staff restrooms are now under renovation. Storyville at the Rosedale branch was closed for a week to facilitate the installation of new flooring and a refreshment of exhibits.

Mr. Cooke introduced Justin Hartzell, the new Capital Projects Manager. Mr. Hartzell was the former Cockeysville Library Manager.

Ms. Cheikh asked if the design plan for Woodlawn would be presented soon; the Woodlawn design firm will present at the November board meeting.

Fiscal Services (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe briefly discussed the Finance Report. Ms. Rowe shared that there are no items of concern. Many of the current expenses are estimates and the gap between revenue and expenditures will continue to close through the second half of FY 25.

Collective Bargaining (O'Neill)

Mr. O'Neill advised that negotiations with the union for FY 2026 will be scheduled soon. The MOU required the union to give BCPL notice by October 15 of the sections of the contract they wish to reopen for bargaining. In 2023, BCPL and the union agreed on a three-year contract with a mechanism to reopen or revisit bargaining for sections of the contract in each year of the contract. For FY 25, parties agreed in the MOU to reopen the compensation article and the issue of personal leave for part-time staff. The union has notified BCPL of its intent to bargain for FY 26. BCPL has prepared a list of contractual provisions that we wish to amend or replace and will provide that list to the union in accordance with the contract.

By law, BCPL and the union must reach agreement or declare an impasse by March 1, 2025.

Mr. O'Neill also spoke with the Board about contract administration. Using the contract's grievance and arbitration clause, BCPL and the union went to arbitration on one issue. The grievance was filed in 2023 and arose as a legacy of BCPL's reorganization that created the Library Services Assistant position. Staff accepting these positions were subject to a new introductory period. The union argued that contractual and procedural rules governing Introductory Periods do not apply to an incumbent employee who starts a new appointment at BCPL. BCPL and the union submitted briefs and presented oral arguments at a hearing on August 26, 2024. On October 8, 2024, the arbitrator issued a ruling rejecting the union's claim. The arbitrator found that the language in both the contract and the Staff Handbook is "clear and unambiguous" in creating a rule that defines the status of probationary employees during Introductory Periods.

Mr. O'Neill felt that the case was important because it is the first grievance to make it through the contractual process for resolving disputes. An adverse ruling could have had a potential effect on BCPL's longstanding and contractually ratified policy of determining suitability for a position by placing a new or *newly appointed incumbent* employee in a six-month Introductory Period. While there were some hitches along the way, BCPL and the union worked together to move the complaint through the process to arbitration.

The negotiations season promises to be quite busy, with robust communications with the union at the bargaining table. BCPL will be reexamining the MOU using the knowledge of how the contract functions well, areas of the contract where more clarity is needed, and other contractual provisions that have not worked well in practice to make the systems and procedures created by it more effective, clear, and efficient.

Human Resources (Linton)

Ms. Linton shared that BCPL currently has 535 employees. Over the past month, Human Resources filled 25 positions. The few open positions remaining are for Part-Time Library Services Assistants. Ms. Linton and her team's focus has been on the recruitment process, Staff

Day; professional development for the Human Resources staff; and implementation of the new Maryland law around disclosure of wage information.

Ms. Walsh David was appreciative of the new format of the Human Resources Report.

Ms. Cheikh praised the Human Resources team for their work on Staff Day. Ms. Linton shared the feedback has been positive.

Operational Plan (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder reviewed with the Board the Operational Plan for the 4th quarter of FY 2024 and the 1st quarter of FY 2025. In FY 2024, BCPL exceeded all goals except Media and Information Literacy. BCPL provided only 11 of the targeted 16 programs. Goals for FY 2025 will be revised to better reflect the work BCPL is doing. Will continue to look for ways to provide meaningful programming around Media and Information Literacy.

Ms. Cheikh was very appreciative of the number of children who received nutritional support at the library. She also praised the imagination and flexibility reflected in BCPL's programming.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh thanked Ms. Mann and the Staff Day team for their organization of Staff Day and for including the Board. Ms. Cheikh, Ms. Ganguly, Dr. Lin-Chen, and Ms. Walsh David all attended and were impressed with the incredible accomplishments of the BCPL staff over the past year. They were inspired by keynote speaker, Jamar Rahming, Executive Director of the Wilmington Public Library, and his remarks about a change in thinking for public libraries. The Board is excited to support the CEO and staff as they embark on reimagining BCPL for the next generation while keeping true to the mission of providing access, equity, and knowledge for Baltimore County.

Ms. Cheikh expressed the Board's excitement for the upcoming event with Sir Alexander McCall Smith Event at Owings Mills and for the ribbon cutting for the new STREAM vehicle.

Ms. Cheikh thanked Helen for the presentation of vendors that were on the agenda for approval. It is one of the important roles of the Board of Trustees to approve contracts over \$50,000. Ensuring oversight and transparency of our fiscal spending.

Finally, Ms. Cheikh thanked Ms. Vargas-Pile for hosting the Board meeting at her branch.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Vendors over \$50,000 (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe presented the Board with a list of vendors which are ongoing contracts or sole source, that will approach or exceed \$50,000 in expenditures in FY 2025.

Ms. Cheikh asked about the inclusion of Baltimore County and Kaiser Foundation Health Plan. Ms. Rowe explained that Baltimore County receives 20% of BCPL's allocated State Aide for Libraries, and that medical expenses with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan are part of a county contract but billed directly to BCPL for initial payment. Dr. Lin-Chen requested clarification on the T-Mobile and Verizon Hotspots. Ms. Rowe shared that the Digital Equity and Virtual Services Department work with both vendors for optimal pricing. A portion of the Verizon Wireless expenditure is also for cell phones.

The Board approved the list of vendors **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

CLOSED SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cheikh called for a motion to close the public portion of the meeting under General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) to discuss a personnel matter and to consult with staff regarding pending or potential litigation **(West/Ganguly)** and to adjourn the meeting from the Closed Session. Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Ganguly, Lin-Chen, Walsh David, and West. The staff members present at the Closed Session were CEO Alcántara-Antoine, Ms. Linton, and Mr. O'Neill.

A summary statement for the Closed Session will be shared at the November 19, 2024, meeting.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees