

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

September 17, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at the Catonsville Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:04 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were: Maureen Walsh David, Claudia Cruz, Pamela Lin-Chen, and Anne West. Ms. Ganguly joined the meeting at 8:17. Mr. Netzer was absent.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Natalie Edington, Chief Customer Experience Officer; Sarah Jane Brunson, Catonsville Library Manager; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning Projects & Data Manager; Robin Linton, Human Resources Manager.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the June 18, 2024, meeting (**Walsh David/West**), and the July 11, 2024, meeting (**Walsh David/West**).

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

Highlighted was the October 20 Foundation author event with Sir Alexander McCall Smith.

Comments from the Public

None.

REPORTS

As heavy traffic was delaying attendees, Ms. Cheikh reordered the presentation of reports.

Statistical Dashboard – Gamertsfelder

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared a redesigned statistical dashboard and a new fact sheet for Catonsville. The new fact sheet will be used in place of the “in focus” section of the dashboard to highlight specific branches or other items of note.

Customer Experience (Edington)

Ms. Edington highlighted the program series *Two Truths and a Lie: Separating Facts from Fiction*. This is a series of three workshops to inform attendees about disinformation and its impact on

the community, democracy, and the upcoming election. This will be followed by moderated post-election conversation on what was learned.

Ms. Edington also shared that for National Voter Registration Day, staff are making sure to mention the forms available to customers visiting the branches.

Ms. West asked if staff were actively registering voters and that is not the case. BCPL provides registration forms and assists customers with online registration.

Operations (Cooke)

The Catonsville renovation is complete except for a few small punch-list items. The HVAC replacement at Pikesville is complete, and the restroom project is progressing. The refresh of Storyville is ongoing. This project involves replacing flooring, electrical work, and a refresh of exhibits. In November, the White Marsh Library will be undergoing a refresh of the restrooms and meeting room. This project is anticipated to take five months. December will see the installation of new digital monument signage at White Marsh and Rosedale.

Mr. Cooke was pleased to announce that Justin Hartzell is the new Capital Projects Manager. Mr. Hartzell will be overseeing the White Marsh project.

A question was asked about placement of the new digital signs. These will replace the current signage outside of the branches.

Ms. Walsh David asked if the plans for the Woodlawn renovation were complete. These plans are almost final.

CEO (Alcántara-Antoine)

The CEO expressed her pride in the renovation at Catonsville and the tremendous outpouring of love and support from the community for all the improvements made to the branch.

Libraries represent democracy in action. Not only does voting registration and/or voting happen at public libraries nationwide, but public libraries provide the tools needed to fully participate in our democracy as informed citizens.

Public libraries are the last bastion of a democratic society. Maryland's Freedom to Read Act protects libraries and librarians and upholds the individual's right to read. However, there are about 30 states that are attempting or have been successful at passing anti-library legislation. This is not an issue that is going away. Libraries need to remain vigilant against these attempts to erode our democracy.

Catonsville Library – Brunson

Ms. Brunson shared that the community is extremely excited about the reopened branch. Customers have been very enthusiastic about the new space, and the recording studio has been a big hit. Since reopening the branch has seen over 10,000 customers in 15 days. It is estimated

that 35 new customers a day are being signed up for library cards, and attendance at storytime has been at record highs.

Staff were assigned to work in other branches during closure and maintained a busy community outreach schedule within the Catonsville community. Providing 94 programs that saw 6000 attendees. These programs were primarily focused on youth, but outreach to the Westside Men's Shelter also continued weekly.

Human Resources (Linton)

Ms. Linton shared that Human Resources has filled nearly all of BCPL's open positions. Her department has filled 40 positions in the last 60 days. Most of the remaining open positions are for Part-Time Library Services Assistants. Ms. Linton continues to work on several key initiatives including Updates to the Staff Handbook, Bilingual Pay, refining the recruitment process. The Human Resources department is also preparing for Staff Day. This year's Staff Day will focus on staff appreciation and transformation. The Board is encouraged to attend.

Fiscal Services (Alcántara -Antoine)

CEO Alcántara-Antoine briefly discussed the Finance Report. The CEO pointed out that investment revenue has contributed to a positive variance in Other Fees and Services. BCPL has also been asked by the County to use Prior Fund Balance to cover a gap in funding for FY 24. Mr. John O'Neill (Office of Budget and Finance) who was present as an observer, shared that the County's request was a rare occurrence and BCPL flexibility in using Prior Fund Balance to cover the unanticipated funding gap was appreciated.

Ms. Ganguly asked if there were plans to use Prior Fund Balance in the future. These funds are primarily used for capital projects.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh welcomed the new Board member, Dr. Pamela Lin Chen. Dr. Lin Chen has practiced family medicine in Towson for more than 20 years. She has also served as a community volunteer with the PTA, has been active with the Boy Scouts, and is a current Baltimore County election judge. The Board expressed their excitement at having Dr. Lin-Chen join them.

Ms. Cheikh thanked BCPL staff for an incredible summer of service. She praised the programming and meal distribution provided by branches. These activities show what thriving hubs of activity the libraries are for the communities they serve.

Ms. Cheikh reported that in the closed session held on July 11, 2024, the Board voted unanimously (Cheikh, Walsh David, Cruz, Eickhoff, Netzer, West) to approve a contract for CEO, Sonia Alcantara Antoine. The Board is excited to demonstrate their commitment to CEO Alcantara Antoine's vision for BCPL and recognize the important work she has accomplished in moving BCPL to be more inclusive and dynamic. They also recognized the CEO's successful and ongoing advocacy for new twenty-first century modern libraries across the County that can provide incredible services.

Ms. Cheikh thanked everyone involved in the reopening of the Catonsville library. She was especially appreciative of the efforts of Linda Frederick and Catonsville Branch Manager Sara Jane Brunson that made the opening “on BCPL brand.” The Catonsville Library building has been thoughtfully renovated with nods to Baltimore County’s natural environment, local Catonsville history and three new recording studios in line with Catonsville being Music City, Maryland. Projects like these are not possible without our State and local funding partners. Ms. Cheikh thanked all state and local elected officials and fellow Board members that joined many Catonsville residents and BCPL staff in celebrating the grand opening.

The Board is excited for the upcoming events this Fall and looked forward to the sold-out Afternoon with Sir Alexander McCall Smith on October 20th.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Policy – Staff Handbook Section 7-8 Conference Presentation and Speaking Engagements (Linton)

This policy was updated to align with Section 8-29 Acceptance of Gifts. Ms. West requested that the policy add clarification that staff must seek approval from a supervisor before submitting the appropriate forms to Human Resources. The Board approved Staff Handbook Section 7-8 with the suggested change **(Walsh David/Cruz)**.

Policy – Staff Handbook Section 8-12 Sharing Your Knowledge and Skills Outside of BCPL (Linton)

This policy clarifies how staff share their skills as part of secondary employment. Ms. West requested that Staff Handbook Section 8-12 be updated to reflect a single verb tense. The Board approved Staff Handbook Section 8-12 with the suggested edits **(West/Ganguly)**.

Policy – Staff Handbook Section 8-29 Acceptance of Gifts (Linton)

This policy was updated to align with Baltimore County’s policy on accepting gifts. The Board approved the updated policy (West/Lin-Chen).

Ms. Cheikh thanked Ms. Linton for her work updating the Staff Handbook.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting adjourned at 8:38 am **(Walsh David/West)**.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees