

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

January 18, 2022

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held via Zoom on Tuesday, January 18, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 am by Board President Maureen Walsh David, and a notification of recording was given. Those wishing to speak during public comment were asked to sign up using the Q&A tool on Zoom. Other Board members present were: Jane Eickhoff, Paul Schwab, and Anne West. Ms. Cheikh joined the meeting at 8:08 am.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Director; William Carroll, Staff Association President; James Cooke, Assistant Director; Natalie Edington, Assistant Director; Jen Evans, Administrative Assistant; Linda Frederick, Marketing and Development Manager; Lisa Keil, Planning & Projects Data Specialist; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Manager; Joey Schenning, Staff Association Past-President; Liz Sundermann-Zinger, Digital Equity and Virtual Services Manager; and Mary Wilson, Human Resources Manager.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the November 16, 2021 meeting (**West/Eickhoff**).

Correspondence

The Board received a holiday card from the Arbutus staff.

Upcoming Events

Book Lovers Bash will be held on February 23, 2022. Ms. Alcántara-Antoine, Ms. West and Ms. Walsh David expressed their excitement to hear the featured authors.

REPORTS

Director's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

Director Alcántara-Antoine gave a verbal Director's Report. This past year was a tough one for staff and customers. We are constantly reminded of why we are here serving the community. Service has addressed inequities that have always existed in Baltimore County under the surface, but were laid bare by the pandemic. One customer called to tell us how indispensable the "angel libraries" have been as mental health EMTs during the pandemic. Another customer shared how a large overdue fine kept him from using his library card for four years, even after the materials were returned. He started going back to the library once he learned BCPL had gone fine free and rediscovered his love of the library. BCPL has stepped up in big ways to be of service, provide access, and to level the playing field for our customers. We have impacted

quality of life with a recent coat distribution, and as a distribution site for COVID-19 home test kits.

The Director offered Kudos to BCPL staff who go the extra mile every single day to serve the public and who embody our values through their hard work and dedication.

Recently, BCPL staff voted to collectively bargain and we are currently in contract negotiations. It is anticipated that a contract will be in place by March 1st as required by State statute. The Director and the administrative team look forward to working productively with staff and their elected representative to negotiate a contract that works for everyone in the organization and allows BCPL to carry out its mission as a library system.

Director Alcántara-Antoine shared that she has been nominated to run as a candidate for President of the Public Library Association. This is a personal and professional honor and a nod to BCPL for all that is being done to make it a progressive and leading organization. It is a testament to BCPL's standing in the library profession and will create an even brighter spotlight on BCPL.

Ms. Walsh David congratulated her on the nomination and how it reflects on BCPL.

Statistical Dashboard (Keil)

Ms. Keil shared the statistical dashboard for November and December 2021. Ms. Keil pointed out that in-person programming was suspended in mid-December and the large number of new accounts is from the recent import of Baltimore County Public Schools student accounts into Polaris.

Facilities Report (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke reported that winter weather is causing ongoing HVAC and door issues around the system. Plans for the Catonsville renovation are complete and the project should go out to bid soon. The project calls for the closure of the branch in May 2022. Mr. Cooke shared that with the retirement of Jana Korman, Jessica Faulkner will be the new manager of the Reisterstown Branch. Ms. Faulkner joins BCPL from Enoch Pratt Free Library. Director Alcántara-Antoine and Mr. Cooke are working the Baltimore County Government on a number of capital projects. These include feasibility studies on the replacement or renovation of the Lansdowne, Towson, and Woodlawn Branches.

Finance Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe provided the Board with the December financial summary. Revenues and expenditures continue to be below previous projections. There were no significant changes from previous months.

Mr. Schwab asked if the reduction in fee revenue had to do with the closure of meeting room bookings due to COVID-19. Ms. Rowe clarified that it was a combination of no fees from meeting room bookings, not processing permits and licenses, and reduced passport applications, and

confirmed those reductions were due to COVID-19. Mr. Schwab requested clarification on the underspent equipment budget and would the funds be spent in the second half of the year. Ms. Rowe indicated that, yes those funds would be expended by the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Walsh David asked if the purchase orders for equipment were paid when they arrive and Ms. Rowe confirmed that was BCPL's process.

Foundation Report (Frederick)

Ms. Frederick shared a Foundation Report in infographic format. She highlighted the addition of Kelley McGeehan to the Foundation Board, and the Foundations desire to expand their Board. Projects supported by the Foundation in 2021 included the Mobile Library Law Center, Social Worker in the Library and Preservation Station at Reisterstown. The All In Crowd now includes 182 external and 50 employee members. The Foundation plans to use funds from the Endowment for Early Childhood Literacy to fund projects in 2022. Other 2022 projects include expansion of the Social Worker in the Library, fundraising for a STREAM vehicle for Youth and Family Engagement, and a push for capital funding.

Ms. Walsh David commented favorably on the number of staff who have made a commitment to the All in Crowd.

Quality of Worklife Survey Summary (Wilson)

Ms. Wilson presented the Board with a summary of the Quality of Worklife Survey. This survey provides an opportunity for staff to share their opinions, ideas, and satisfaction with BCPL as an employer, with the administration and the Board. This year the survey measure staff satisfaction in three areas: *Culture and Values, Empowerment, and Overall Satisfaction* and were compared with responses to the same questions in 2018. Staff participation in the survey was 79% with 73% responding that they are satisfied with BCPL as an employer. There were three narrative questions included in the survey: *How would you describe the culture at BCPL?, What kind of culture do you want?, One thing I like most about working at BCPL is...* Staff responses to these questions focused on their fellow staff members. They saw BCPL's culture as generally positive but evolving, that communication has increased but still requires attention. Staff remarked that they would like a culture where co-workers interacted like a team to provide the best service, both externally and internally. One where mistakes were used as a learning opportunity. Staff overwhelmingly remarked that the best thing about BCPL was their colleagues.

Director Alcántara-Antoine will be holding discussion sessions with staff over the next couple of months. This will be an opportunity for staff to share ideas on how to improve BCPL's culture, and how to better fulfil BCPL's mission.

Ms. Walsh David looks forward to hearing what the staff has to say in those sessions.

Ms. Cheikh asked why there were no compensation and benefits questions in this year's survey. Ms. Wilson pointed out that since the 2003 baseline survey, questions are broken down into groups, and appear on the survey every three years.

Staff Association Report (Schenning)

The Staff Association was pleased with this year's participation in the Festival of Trees. The Wellness Challenge will continue in 2022. Staff are still welcome to sign up for Polar Bear Plunge, which will now take place on March 26th.

Mr. Schenning shared the results of the Staff Association election of officers. President – Will Carroll, Vice President – Joe Crock, Secretary – Megan Skipper, Treasurer – Carl Land. He then introduce Mr. Carroll, who will be attending the meetings for Staff Association this year.

Ms. Walsh David was pleased to welcome Mr. Carroll and looks forward to his reports.

Board Report (Walsh David)

In her Board Report. Ms. Walsh David shared that the Board was very pleased with the number of staff who participated in the recent union election. The Board looks forward to having a meaningful collaboration with the IAMAW and they hope that contract negotiations go smoothly. The Board is prepared to schedule a meeting as needed to accommodate a vote on the contract.

Ms. Walsh David also congratulated Director Alcántara-Antoine on completing her master's in Public Administration.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS- continued

FY 2023 Budget Request (Rowe)

The FY 23 Budget Request was developed after a review of usage of resources to identify efficiencies and assess purchases. It reflects the reallocation of dollars to fund initiatives. In FY 23 a priority is to implement the Library Services Assistant position and to have a competitive salary scale. If approved, this request will be presented to the County for approval. Due to the compressed time frame of the process, the Board was asked to approve the FY 23 Budget Request and to authorize the Finance Committee to make any necessary changes. This has been the process in prior years to allow for changes that may be requested by Baltimore County.

Mr. Schwab asked if it is expected that service will continue only 6 days a week or will it expand to 7 days? Ms. Rowe responded that it is expected that the current model of 6 days of service will continue, but there is room to expand as necessary in the request, based on higher traffic or new initiatives.

Mr. Schwab requested an explanation of why funding for security, which is often over budget, has been reduced. Ms. Rowe explained that only two branches currently have guards and it is not expected that guard service will expand to pre-pandemic levels this year. However, a buffer has been built in for expansion as necessary.

The Board approved the FY 23 Budget request and authorized the Finance Committee to make any necessary changes (Cheikh/Eickhoff).

Policy – Lactation Breaks Policy (Wilson)

This policy provides reasonable break time during the work day to express milk and requires agencies to provide an appropriate room for this purpose. The Board approved the Lactation Breaks Policy (West/Schwab).

Policy – COVID-19 Vaccination Policy (Wilson)

This policy requires that staff submit proof of having received FDA authorized COVID-19 vaccination by January 21, 2022 or be required to submit to weekly COVID-Testing. Testing would be required of unvaccinated staff, including those with a medical or religious waiver. Staff would be tested on work time at a Baltimore County staff testing site. This policy will be in place until March 31, 2022 unless terminated sooner by Library Administration. The policy may be extended in 30-day increments by Library Administration as needed and with guidance from Baltimore County.

Ms. West expressed her issues with staff having paid work time to be tested. She felt testing should be done before or after their work shift. Ms. Wilson responded that the Office of Law made the recommendation of staff testing so it is not punitive. Staff will be encouraged to test at the beginning or end of their shift to mitigate impact on operations. The County is working with our roster of unvaccinated staff to determine the closest testing site to their workplace.

Ms. West and Ms. Walsh David asked about booster shots as recommended by the CDC. Ms. Wilson confirmed that the current policy does not require a booster shot, only the initial two BioNTech-Pfizer or Moderna shots, or the single Johnson & Johnson shot. The policy would be amended on recommendation from the County Health Officer. She stated that only a small number of staff will be required to do weekly testing.

Director Alcántara-Antione confirmed that this policy is what is recommended by the County Health Officer, his main concern is primary vaccination.

Ms. Walsh David asked if the policy would come back to the Board after March 31. Mr. Schwab pointed out that Library Administration could extend the policy in 30-day increments. Ms. Wilson confirmed that the policy would only come back to the Board if there were needed changes.

Mr. Schwab asked for clarification on compliance. Ms. Wilson shared that each occurrence will be taken separately and HR staff will reach out to staff who miss their appointment three times before initiating corrective action.

Ms. Eickhoff stated that she was aware that BCPL was following guidance from the County and Office of Law. However, she is uncomfortable with staff returning to work after having been tested if they do not have immediate test results and disapproves of allowing them to do so.

The Board approved the Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Policy (**Schwab/Eickhoff - Aye: Walsh David, Cheikh, Eickhoff, and Schwab. Nay: West**).

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Sheldon Barber, business representative of IAMWA introduced himself to the Board. He expressed his appreciation of the comments made by a number of people in appreciation of the work done by staff in the branches. He hopes that we can come to an agreement that addresses the workers concerns and that we can form a productive relationship going forward. He stated that he did not feel that the relationship had to be adversarial even though we are on different sides and hopes to work together positively.

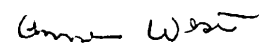
Ms. Walsh David thanked him for his comments.

Ms. West inquired about information for the upcoming Budget Town Hall sessions. Director Alcántara-Antoine assured her that links and talking points would be sent shortly.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 am (**West/Schwab**).

Submitted by



Anne West

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees