

## BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

February 20, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at the Towson Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were: Maureen Walsh David, Claudia Cruz, Jane Eickhoff, Havaca Ganguly, and Anne West. Mr. Netzer arrived at 8:18.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Natalie Edington, Chief Customer Experience Officer; Ann Beegle, Director of Philanthropy and Partnerships; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning and Projects Manager; Alexandra Houff, Digital Equity and Virtual Services Manager; Amanda Leitch, Human Resources Generalist; Jonathan O’Neil, Employee and Labor Relations Officer; and Helen Rowe Fiscal Services Manager.

Other guests: Kyle McMillian and Nicki Herdson of Parker Phillips, Inc.

#### COMMUNICATION

##### *Minutes*

The Board approved the minutes of the January 16, 2024, meeting (**West/Ganguly**).

##### *Correspondence*

None.

##### *Upcoming Events*

Highlighted were the February 20 Dialogs on Race: Exploring Reparations to African Americans for U.S. Slavery, Dr. Ray Winbush, and the sold-out Lisa Scottoline event on February 25.

##### *Comments from the Public*

None.

#### REPORTS

##### *CEO (Alcántara-Antoine)*

Last week a group from BCPL attended MD Library Legislative Day, including Board President Yara Cheikh, and Board members Claudia Cruz and Anne West. Advocacy is a team effort at BCPL. The CEO thanked the Board, BCPL management, and Cornerstone for supporting Legislative Day. The group met with members of the Baltimore County delegation or their aides and had crucial conversations about needed support for BCPL and other key legislation in this year’s session.

The CEO highlighted the Freedom to Read bill (HB785/SB738) that been introduced in this year's session. The bill looks to curb restrictions implemented in other states where the freedom to read has been curtailed legislatively and/or librarians are penalized or prosecuted for providing access to materials. The CEO was proud to be one of the bill's contributors and will testify in support of it. The support of Library Board members and private citizens is critical to the success of this bill.

In recognition of the bill and in honor of this year's Booklover's Bash, BCPL hosted a conversation about intellectual freedom and censorship on February 15. Invited speakers included Dr. Emily Knox from the University of Illinois, whose research focuses on censorship; Joyce McIntosh from the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, who has been working with libraries across the country to fight censorship; and Nate Coulter, Executive director of Central Arkansas Library System, who was successful in a lawsuit against AK Act 372, which would have violated the First Amendment rights of readers. Over 100 were in attendance, including others from within the state who saw this as a training opportunity for library leadership and Boards. It was a thought-provoking conversation.

BCPL continues to be a leader in the state for standing up for library values, and for being visible and out front on critical issues. The CEO is proud of this team and this organization.

### ***Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)***

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared the January 2024 statistics with the Board.

### ***Customer Experience (Edington)***

CCEO Edington highlighted Black History Month Programs which are being held around the system. Customers can also take advantage of free tax assistance from preparation in partnership with AARP. Branches engaged with the community in a variety of ways, Reisterstown hosted an after-hours glow party for teens, Pikesville attended a Family Reading Night at a local elementary school, and Loch Raven hosted a Chromebook Giveaway event in partnership with the Digital Equity and Virtual Services Department.

### ***Operations (Cooke)***

COO Cooke discussed the hard hat tour of the partially renovated Catonsville library. Members of the Board, the County Executive, Councilman Young, and State legislators viewed the space and had a variety of questions answered by the architects and other partners in the project. The renovation is 80% complete on schedule for a May reopening. The drawings for the Woodlawn renovation are complete and the project should begin in March 2025. The project to renovate the restrooms at Pikesville has been put out to bid. The project is expected to begin in May. Cost estimates are under development for the White Marsh meeting room and restroom renovation. The project should begin in September 2024.

Ms. West asked if it was possible to increase the size of the White Marsh Branch due to the large amount of new construction in the area. COO Cooke acknowledged that the branch needed expansion, but that is not on the current capital projects schedule.

### ***Fiscal Services (Rowe)***

Ms. Rowe provided the Finance Report. There was little variance from last month.

Ms. Rowe also shared that BCPL had received a clean audit from the Maryland State Retirement Agency who reviewed several factors including: that all eligible employees were enrolled in their system, that payroll data was accurately reported, that no retiree was reemployed before 45 days following retirement.

Mr. Netzer arrived.

### ***Human Resources (Leitch)***

Ms. Leitch reported on the busy month in Human Resources. Human Resources staff processed reports for the Time to Care Act and IRS 1095 forms for staff. Recruitments included a Recording Studio Specialist, Payroll Specialist, Assistant Library Manager as well as several Librarians and Library Services Assistants. Human Resources participated in the most recent collective bargaining negotiations and conducted benefits orientation for new staff.

### ***DEI Report (Miller)***

Ms. Miller updated the Board on DEI efforts around the system. Staff are participating in the continuing DEI education initiative Beginning Conversations which launched in September. The first topics were the History of Public Libraries and Civil Rights, and Intellectual Freedom and DEI.

The Black Library Workers Affinity group will celebrate their second anniversary in March. Other groups that have been launched this year are B Proud a LGBTQIA+ Affinity Groups and Library Workers Over 50 Affinity Group.

Ms. Miller and Jessica Cordova, New Americans Outreach Specialist, have been active on the County Executive's New American Task Force and have been advocating for the library.

The Accessibility Services Project team has released their report and recommendations. Ms. Miller thanked the team for their work. Ms. Gamertsfelder and Planning in Projects is developing a plan to implement recommendations.

### ***Collective Bargaining Report (O'Neill)***

Mr. O'Neill reported that this year's negotiations with Local Lodge 4583 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) covered only Article 8 (Compensation) and Article 13, Section 13.3 (Personal Leave) with the bulk of the negotiations centering around the provisions of the compensation article. All other sections of the prior

agreements are still in effect. Fiscal Services continues to work with the union to properly deduct dues.

The Labor Management Committee, which is made up of management and union representatives, continues to evaluate new policies.

### ***Board Report (Cheikh)***

Ms. Cheikh marked the passing of Michael Amann. Mr. Amann served on the Library Board from June 1983 to June 1993 and served as Board President in 1989,1990, and 1991. He was instrumental in establishing the Baltimore County Library Foundation for BCPL. Ms. Cheikh expressed the Board's gratitude for Michael's service and offered condolences to his wife and his family.

Ms. Cheikh joined elected officials, BCPL staff, our CEO, fellow Trustees, on a tour of the renovations of the Catonsville Library. The collective feeling of excitement was palpable among the attendees. Ms. Cheikh shared her excitement that in several months the clean and modern new spaces will be open for the Catonsville community to enjoy. She thanked the tour organizers and those working to improve library spaces and the state and local agencies who are partnering and funding these reimagined spaces.

Ms. Cheikh shared the Board's thanks to all the BCPL staff that participated in Library Legislative Day in Annapolis, Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Cheikh and Board members Claudia Cruz, Anne West joined the CEO and staff advocating for issues important to BCPL and Maryland libraries. The Board is proud to champion the Freedom to Read bill which protects library catalogues from partisan or doctrinal disapproval and librarians from dismissal or retaliation.

Ms. Cheikh thanked the Fiscal Services department. Ms. Rowe and her team have created a FY2025 submission that prioritizes BCPL mission to provide opportunities to explore, learn, and create. The Board will continue to work to empower and engage individuals for a more inclusive and connected Baltimore County community.

Ms. Cheikh announced that the Board is seeking a new trustee to fill a vacancy in July. She encouraged members of the community to apply for the open position. More information and applications are available online.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### ***Towson Economic Impact Study (Parker Phillips, Inc.)***

Kyle McMillan and Nicki Herdson of Parker Phillips presented the Towson Economic Impact Study. This study was commissioned by BCPL to determine the economic value BCPL's location in the center to Towson adds to the community. The study determined that in 2023, the Towson

Branch generated \$39.4 million in overall economic impact which supported 328 jobs and contributed \$2 million to state and local taxes.

The Board accepted the Towson Economic Impact Study **(Eickhoff/Ganguly)**.

***Affiliation Agreement Between Baltimore County Public Library and the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library (Beegle)***

This agreement with the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library defines each organization's role and their relationship with one another. This will let each focus on their respective goals and the broader mission. The Board approved the Affiliation Agreement **(West/Cruz)**. This will now go to the Foundation Board for approval.

***Approval of FY 2025 Budget Submission (Rowe)***

The FY 2025 budget request is \$50,656,731, an increase of 2.17% over the FY 2024 budget. Included in this budget is an increase of 7.19% in Special Funds revenue, an increase of 2.18% in State Aid for Libraries, and a request for an increase from the County General Fund of 1.84%. The Board approved the FY 2025 Budget Submission **(Ganguly/Eickhoff)**.

***Award of Contract – Meeting Room Booking Software (Houff)***

BCPL's current meeting room and event booking software will not be available after August 2024. A team including BCPL staff and representatives of the Office of Information Technology reviewed several products and those from Communico best meet the organization's needs. The Board awarded the contract for meeting room booking and event software to Communico for \$35,000 per year for three years **(Eickhoff/West)**.

**CLOSED SESSION**

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 collective bargaining at 9:39 am **(Walsh David/Cruz)**. Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Eickhoff, Ganguly, Netzer, Walsh David, and West.

The Board resumed open session 9:55 am **(West/Ganguly)**. Ms. Cheikh reported that the Board had discussed personnel actions and unanimously approved the contract with IAMAW.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 (**West/Ganguly**).

Submitted by

Havaca Ganguly

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees