

WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
Minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting
Library Board of Trustees
September 23, 2019

AGENDA: Reading of the Open Public Meeting Act

ROLL CALL: Scott McDonald, Jeanine Gleba, John Valentine, Ron Duryea, Rosemarie Rosati, Mayor David Higgins, and Jacqueline Nassry (arrived late) - A quorum was present

Absent: Michelle Norris

Also in attendance: Usha Thampi-Lukose; Library Director; Tracy Quamme, Account Clerk; Lakshmi Baskaram, Executive Director of Warren County Office on Aging and Disability Services, Josh Melchor and Eric Stromfeld from Merrill Lynch Wealth Management.

The regular monthly meeting of the Washington Public Library, Board of Trustees was called to order by President Scott McDonald at 7:01 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING: A motion was made by Jeanine Gleba and seconded by Ron Duryea to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Washington Public Library Board of Trustees held on August 26, 2019.

Approved with 6 ayes. (Jacqueline Nassry had not yet arrived.)

COMMUNICATIONS: none

AUDIENCE:

President Scott McDonald opened up the audience portion of the meeting. Seeing no one, Scott closed this portion of the meeting.

REPORTS:

1. President's Report

Scott McDonald submitted a written report and emailed a copy of the report for inclusion in the Washington Borough Council packet for their next meeting.

2. Treasurer's Report - No discussion.

Approval of the reports from the president and the treasurer were done jointly. Jeanine Gleba made the motion to approve both reports and David Higgins seconded the motion.

All in favor with 6 ayes; 0 nays; 0 abstentions.

2. Director's Report

Jeanine Gleba complimented the number of workshops that had been provided the previous month and made the motion to approve the report. Scott McDonald seconded the motion.

All in favor with 6 ayes.

Scott McDonald made the decision to allow the guests who were present to address the Board prior to moving to the detailed discussion anticipated with some of the committee agenda items.

Usha Thampi-Lukose introduced Lakshmi Baskaram who is the Executive Director of Warren County Office on Aging. The Warren County Senior Center staff are interested in partnering with the Washington Borough Public Library on activities for the benefit of senior citizens served by both organizations.

Ms. Baskaram said her vision is for all Warren County citizens to know her department's phone number. They are trying to combat isolation and the suicide rate associated with the elderly. The department provides caregiver information, and the senior center offers the opportunity for seniors to socialize.

Lakshmi Baskaram provided handouts and presented on programming offered at the senior center. Financial counseling is provided with a focus on Medicare and Medicaid benefits that support remaining at home and living independently as long as possible. The programs are free, but donations are accepted from participants. The center provides a hot lunch each day that it is open.

The hope for the partnership with the library is to begin by providing programming for seniors at the library during the day when transportation provided through the county is available. The board members thanked Ms. Basharam and expressed their support of these efforts. Rosemarie Rosati noted that the partnership would help to assist the library to meet its requirement to outreach underserved populations.

Josh Melchor and Eric Strom from Merrill Lynch Wealth Management were next to present. They distributed an updated policy for investment along with handouts with fund information. Jaqueline Nassry arrived during this discussion.

The members discussed the distinction between the library funds and the monies raised on the library's behalf and held by the Friends of the Library in their account. That money is still very limited. The money currently available for investment is in the library accounts; however, the library's deficit budget will result in the full expenditure of those funds within approximately two years unless there is a change to expenditures or revenue. Further discussion of this issue was held over for the Finance Committee report.

Rosemarie Rosati brought up that the issue of potential restrictions regarding the investment of the library funds was still outstanding. Jeanine Gleba had found state information which she read to the board, but one question that remained was whether investment in foreign funds was permitted. Rosemarie Rosati offered to follow up with the state contact recommended by the Borough Manager, and Jeanine Gleba said that she would forward the link to the information that she had found.

Josh Melchor asked that board members review the updated policy and submit any needed modifications preferably as a group. Any requested changes should be submitted at least a week before the next meeting so that the changes can be incorporated and the modified document redistributed for review prior to the meeting in order to ensure that a vote can occur at that meeting.

3. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

The Board was presented with the request to approve additional expenditures through the Library checkbook funds:

- \$ 5,431.00 to cover the projected "in-house" budget line spending and
- \$13,257.00 to reimburse Washington Borough for costs exceeding the 2019 allocation (primarily personnel and utility expenses).

A total of \$18,688.00 was approved with 6 ayes (Jacqueline Nassry included), 1 abstention (David Higgins) and 0 nays.

A detailed discussion followed of how to address the deficit budget. If the deficit continues at approximately \$25,000 per year, the funds will be completely expended in about two years. The solution would be to cut expenses or find new revenue to avoid closing the library.

David Higgins gave an update regarding efforts to create a joint library with additional municipalities. That process would take at least 2 years. A regionalized library would require an expansion of the facility and services with additional staff time needed.

Another discussion regarding the potential reduction in expenses followed. Rosemarie Rosati noted that the targeted reduction of \$25,000 could **not** be achieved through cutting non-personnel expenses. The majority of the library budget is personnel costs, and the largest salary is associated with the director line.

Rosemarie stated that we do not have data to determine the number of hours needed for administrative oversight of the library functions, but that a reduction in that line of approximately 10 hours could eliminate the budget deficit. If the current director was to leave based on that reduction, the question would become whether the library could fill the limited position. The possibility of sharing a director with another library was also briefly discussed. Rosemarie noted that it would be ironic to struggle to fill a very part time director position if the Borough was successful within two years in partnering with other municipalities to create a joint library since that expansion would probably require a full time director.

David Higgins questioned the hourly rate for the director and the significant 2019 hourly rate increase for the bookkeeper. Rosemarie Rosati responded that both rates, especially the one for the bookkeeper, fell below the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) 2018 salary guidelines (the most recent available on their website). (Note that the director salary being referenced is based on the requirement for a Masters in Library Science.)

Ron Duryea reported that during the hiring process for the current Director, the Trustees were provided with and told to follow the civil service salary guidelines. It should be noted that the library has used civil service job descriptions for staff. In order to resolve the question of whether the civil service salary guidelines are relevant, included below is a link to the New Jersey "Attorney General's Opinion" that Jeanine Gleba obtained from the New Jersey Library Association:

Attorney General's Opinion 1959-10
(https://www.njstatelib.org/services_for_libraries/resources/library_law/page22-2/)

The quote below is from that document with bold added:

" * * the old Supreme Court ruled that the Trustees form 'a branch or a board of the municipal government, *** to manage educational matters for the benefit of the whole community,' and not an 'independent entity,' and, while given a corporate existence 'for *** convenience and for the purposes of *** administration,' the corporate body is yet 'a mere branch or agency for that special purpose.' The Court of Errors and Appeals found it sufficient to rest affirmance of the particular judgment on the narrower ground that the **employees of the Library are 'in the paid service of the municipality,' and therefore subject to the provisions of the Civil Service Act.** Trustees of Free Public Library of Newark v. Civil Service Commission, 83 N.J.L. 196 (Sup. Ct. 1912); affirmed, 86 N.J.L. 307 (E. & A. 1914).*

The discussion will continue at a future board meeting to give the Trustees time to consider the complicated issues.

- b. House Committee – No report.
- c. Policy Committee – Jeanine Gleba reported that the Employee Handbook is close to being completed. She asked that the Trustees carefully review all documents like this when they are forwarded given the tremendous amount of work that goes into their preparation.

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. Friends of the Library Update – No report.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Lakshmi Baskaram, Executive Director, Warren County Office on Aging and Disability Services – see previous report.
- 2. Josh Melchor from Merrill Lynch Wealth Management – addressed previously.
- 3. Approval of In-House Budget Update – completed during Finance Committee report.

4. Proposed Trustee Manual – Rosemarie Rosati and Jeanine Gleba had circulated their edits to the document in order to better reflect the current status of items noted as required in the original version of the manual created by the NJLA. Scott McDonald said that he had left all sections in the document with the thought that they might be needed eventually. He agreed to create a statement that would clarify the aspirational status of requirements not currently met.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (as needed):

Prior to adjournment David Higgins requested the support of the Board of Trustees in the pursuit of creating a joint library. He made the following motion which was seconded by Jeanine Gleba:

The Board as a whole supports the Council to investigate the regionalization of the library with Washington Township, Franklin Township, Mansfield and Oxford.

The motion was approved with 6 ayes with Ron Duryea abstaining.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, a motion was made by David Higgins and seconded by John Valentine to adjourn. The motion was carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Washington Public Library, Board of Trustees, will be held on Monday, October 28, 2019 at 7:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemarie Rosati
Secretary