

Board of Trustees
Minutes
November 10, 2022

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Baugher Center, 100 West Indiana Avenue, Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, November 10, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Board members present were: Heather Augustyn, Kathryn Cochran, Michele Corazzo, Will Scharp, Nick Tilden, and Rondi Wightman.

Board members absent: Abbe Trent

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Lisa Stamm, Library Assistant Director Heather Chaddock, and Library Attorney Lisa Baron.

This meeting was called to order by Board President Kathryn Cochran at 7:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the minutes from the executive session on October 24, 2022 as presented. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. Nick Tilden and Heather Augustyn abstained from voting due to absence. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Nick Tilden to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2022 regular meeting as presented. Heather Augustyn seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports as presented. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Director Stamm made note of additional documents that had been (optionally) added to the Financial and Statistical Reports, including Warrant Cancellations, based on guidance from a recent SBOA webinar she attended.

She also specified that credit card receipts would be reported under Merchant Services beginning this month and going forward.

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Nick Tilden to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of October 13, 2022 through November 10, 2022 as presented. Heather Augustyn seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Librarian's Report

Service highlights were related from the past month featuring positive feedback and gratitude expressed by patrons regarding their Library experiences.

In the month of October, 13,049 people visited the Library. Staff created 37 in-person programs with 580 attendees, and 4 live-virtual programs with 22 attendees. Staff answered 35 reference questions, 110 tech help questions, and 99 new library cards were registered. 210 people utilized Library meeting rooms. Graphs showing materials circulation statistics were provided.

WPL's snow removal provider, Brad Parry, is retiring after 30 years. In recent years, Parry's subcontractor, Jon Skube of Skube Snow Removal, has been handling his snow removal and salting services. Beginning this snow season (2022-2023), Jon Skube is taking over the Library's contract, and keeping services and prices the same.

The Friends of the Library book sale in October was a success, with sales totaling \$3,707. The Friends added to this amount with funds from their savings account to write a check for the Library in the amount of \$5,000,

deposited into the Library's Unrestricted Gift Fund. Director Stamm expressed gratitude to the Friends for their hard work and generosity, and to the community's loyal book sale attendees.

In October, the Kiwanis presented the Westchester Township History Museum with a \$1,000 check for programming, and also presented a \$500 check for the Library's children's programming. Director Stamm thanked the Kiwanis for their unflagging support.

On Friday, October 14th, two of the three furnaces at the Hageman Branch stopped working. Upon examination, it was discovered that the heat exchangers were bad, and there was significant rusting of additional key components. The furnaces were 13 years old, and the cost for the various repairs needed would have outpaced their value, so Director Stamm opted to purchase two, brand-new identical furnaces for a total of \$12,995. The new furnaces have warranties of 10 years parts and labor, with heat exchangers at 20 years parts and labor. They were installed by Precision Controls within a week. Until they were installed, the heater in the Emily Peterson Room and the fireplace in the patron area were utilized to heat the building. Staff and patrons were advised to bundle up before visiting and working. The third furnace is 13 years old as well, and oversized for the area it heats, so it will also be replaced with an appropriately-sized furnace when it eventually fails.

In October, WPL spent seven days collecting statistics in order to report its annual in-house usage to the Indiana State Library. Patrons are asked to put any materials they've looked at or used into a basket or onto a cart, and the items are tallied to get the total number of items used (multiplied by 52 to get the averages for a year). This year's breakdown was 274 items at Thomas, 72 items at Hageman, and 11 items at the Museum, for a total of 357 (x 52) and an annual average of 18,564 items used in-house.

The temporary Bookkeeper the Library contracted from Robert Half departed in October. Director Stamm expressed her gratitude for the Bookkeeper's capable assistance.

WPL's new Bookkeeper discovered another longstanding error in that none of the Library's patron credit card transactions had been reconciled against receipts, or reported on WPL's monthly in-house bank statements. WPL has a separate Horizon bank account that houses the revenue from patron credit card transactions (for Fines & Fees and other fees), but this bank account had not been added to the Library's accounting system software and therefore was not included on statements.

The current balance is \$37,207.37 and Director Stamm reached out to State Board of Accounts (SBOA) for guidance on how to remedy, reconcile, and report this bank account, and for advice on moving forward, including how to add the account to WPL's software starting from its most recent statement, and whether to add a lump sum into Fines & Fees and other revenue accounts. Director Stamm will report more on this after she receives direction from SBOA.

The exterior bench refurbishment has run into additional charges of approximately \$2,000 to purchase, cut, treat, and paint new custom boards, because it was discovered that twice as many were rotten than originally thought. Between the six benches, 25 boards have rotten ends, with the boards only remaining in place by two screws at each end. To save money, the Library will buy pressure-treated lumber (for \$345) and provide it to the professionals doing this job to prepare into useable boards (for \$1,700).

Staff changes for the month include the separation of part-time clerk Ashleigh Spencer, and Tammy Fox-Rowe moving from substitute clerk to part-time clerk.

Old Business

Thomas HVAC

HVAC work has begun in fits and starts. At the recommendation of Anton Insurance, the Library has added a standalone builder's risk policy from Selective at a cost of \$2,249.

The AC unit removal from the Thomas roof was delayed from October 17th to Thursday, October 20th due to high winds. The workers started very early that morning and the entire process took until around 1pm that day. Other than the parking lot being unavailable to patrons, the intricate work did not interrupt operations, staff, or public.

On Tuesday, November 1st, it was noisy for a few hours in the Thomas Branch from work occurring on its roof, as contractors prepared the existing steel framework for the new HVAC units to be placed at a later date.

On Wednesday, November 2nd, workers replaced the main electrical panel at the Thomas Branch, necessitating a systemwide closure for the day (which was discussed and approved during the last regular Board meeting). The Maintenance Manager and Director Stamm were in contact all day and the work went smoothly, beginning at around 6am and finishing at around 3pm. Director Stamm emphasized the benefits of moving forward with an electrical panel that has been upgraded by 50 years. The new panel is straightforward and will be wired and marked correctly, while the old panel was antiquated and involved a lot of guesswork. Also during the closure on the 2nd, contractors returned to the Thomas roof at the Maintenance Manager's suggestion, to complete most of the remaining noisiest work of preparing the steel framework, so as not to disrupt staff and patrons during open hours.

In the near future, WPL need to do another total (systemwide) power cessation, but only for approximately one hour. This is due to a discrepancy in the size of the wires, meaning workers on the 2nd could not connect the circuit breakers that will feed the new rooftop units. The contractors and engineers are resolving this and deciding on a timeframe. This brief outage shall occur on a weekday at 6am, to avoid interruptions to operations, staff, and patrons.

Michele Corazzo asked how long the construction insurance from Anton would run, and Director Stamm responded that it would renew and last in perpetuity for the duration of the HVAC project.

Museum

The Museum is still awaiting the second round of roof repairs to fix the unsuccessful roof repairs of a few months ago. Duneland School Corporation said they were trying to get their hired contractors out to the Museum, but the process has been slow. Director Stamm reached out to them again on the day of this report requesting a date as to when full repairs would happen. She let them know that the recent rains expanded the damage, and DSC replied that Gluth was apparently at the Museum to do some work in early October (but didn't alert WPL staff), and that they would contact them immediately to return since the issue wasn't resolved.

Memoriams

Kathryn Cochran volunteered to send final options for language for the plaques honoring Drew Rhed and Terry Hiestand to the Board via email the following week.

Dune Acres

Director Stamm checked in with realtor Lauren DeFauw of McColly Real Estate about the Dune Acres property. The realtor said that, in general, vacant land stays on the market longer than houses do, but that she had one potential buyer show interest. She also said that the listing has had a lot of “hits,” meaning that people are checking it out, and she sees this as a positive. Director Stamm will report more on this when activity occurs.

Health Insurance Error

Regarding the health insurance error reported on during the September meeting, Director Stamm learned from the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) that the Library is permitted to cut checks from its Operating Fund to reimburse overcharges to affected employees, and that these transactions (checks) do not to be appropriated, per IC 6-1.1-18-9.

SBOA recommended that the Library should run the entire process by an attorney as well as a tax advisor, which they are already in the process of doing. SBOA also recommended that the Library keep any and all documentation for each employee that was overcharged, but added that there is not any specific form from SBOA that needs to be completed as part of WPL’s documentation.

There are tax implications for the affected employees (especially the two of them who are owed amounts between \$10-15,000), since the premium deductions were erroneously taken post-tax instead of pre-tax. Director Stamm reached out to Deloitte for assistance, but they declined to work with the Library, saying that their process for accepting new clients takes too long to be of use and that their fees would be too high. WPL Attorney Lisa Baron didn’t know of anyone to recommend, so Director Stamm consulted her network of local colleagues, and was provided names of two tax attorneys trusted by area library administrators. Director Stamm emailed both the same message and details, and heard back from one the same day. That attorney is Lane M. Gensburg of Gensburg Calandriello & Kanter, P.C. in Chicago, and he was knowledgeable, easy to speak with, and affirmed that this is a complex, unique problem. He was sympathetic to the fact that the Library is a public entity and said he would offer a discounted rate. Director Stamm will bring his completed proposal to the November regular meeting.

Director Stamm also asked Attorney Baron to consider reasonable expectations as to how far back the Library must research this issue. Attorney Baron questioned how many decades back they should try to investigate with a legitimate expectation of finding the information they need. The errors likely occurred over a span of nearly 18 years, and from what staff have found so far, the health insurance provider has changed at least three times in the past decade, and one company appears to no longer be in business. Adding to the confusion is that it seems, according to a retention schedule destruction request made by former staff, that related documents older than ten years may have been permissibly destroyed. This makes it nearly impossible to know the names of those (former) employees who may have opted for family coverage.

At this point, Director Stamm opened this topic for discussion among the Board. Nick Tilden asked if Anton Insurance had records going back farther than what the Library has, and Director Stamm replied that she had already inquired with them, and they do not. Kathryn Cochran made note that funds could not be dispersed without records to justify them. Will Scharp asked if it would be legally permissible to ask former staff to provide their own documentation of their health insurance coverage from WPL, if they have it. Attorney Baron said that would be permissible and that people would likely be open-minded about that process. She also advised that it is doubtful the Library has sufficient records going back 18 years, so the best course will be to work with what staff can legitimately find. Michele Corazzo

asked if it was necessary to employ the services of a tax attorney, and Nick Tilden said it was necessary, in order to protect the Library. He also suggested seeking professional advice on what constitutes a “good faith effort,” and to consider the risk/benefit analysis of how much time and money the Library will devote to researching this issue. Ultimately, the Board directed Director Stamm to move forward with engaging tax attorney Lane Gensburg to assist in the entire situation.

Staff Breakfast

After polling staff, Director Stamm learned that the great majority of them prefer not to gather in-person for a holiday breakfast, due to legitimate concerns about the extreme flu season ahead, along with rapidly increasing Covid variant infections. Staff prefer this year to receive gift cards to local merchants, as the Library has done for the past couple of years. Director Stamm thanked the Board for its original permission to open late on December 9th, but clarified that the Library will be open regular hours, and will celebrate with staff through \$15 gift cards instead. The cost for gift cards will be approximately \$1,000, as opposed to the estimated cost of the breakfast at \$800, but this difference can be comfortably sustained from the Unrestricted Gift Fund.

Rondi Wightman asked whether the Library was allowed to give staff gift cards without taxing them as income, stating that she serves on another board and they recently learned that they could not give gift cards unless they were considered and taxed as income. As the Library has given gift cards in small amounts to staff for the past few years (namely beginning during the pandemic, since in-person gatherings were to be avoided), the question was referred to Attorney Lisa Baron to research and report back to Director Stamm, to inform the Library’s next steps for tokens of employee recognition.

New Business

Separation

Director Stamm publicly announced her intent to separate from her position as Director of Westchester Public Library in December 2022. She emphasized that it was not an easy decision to make, and that she appreciated all that she has experienced at WPL in five years. She stated that she is particularly grateful to the Board for its support while she steered WPL through the twists and turns of the pandemic. She expressed gratitude for the relationships and friendships she has built with the staff and community, and she remains dedicated to the success of WPL.

Executive Session

Following the discussion which took place at the November 1, 2022 Executive Session, Michele Corazzo moved to instate Assistant Director Heather Chaddock as Interim Director for a 6-month trial period, at a 10% pay increase over her January 1, 2023 salary. After 6 months, there will be a review meeting between the Board and Interim Director Chaddock, at which point they will decide whether she will be permanently placed as the Executive Director. Heather Augustyn seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to approve the Librarian’s Report as presented. Nick Tilden seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments at this time.

Other Business

Director Stamm said that with Assistant Director Heather Chaddock moving into the role of Interim Director, the Board would need to find a new Minutes Recorder for its meetings. Director Stamm has approached the Library's Bookkeeper to see if she would be interested in fulfilling this role, as is typically done in other libraries.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Baugher Center.

Will Scharp made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Chaddock, Minutes Recorder for
Heather Augustyn, Secretary