

Board of Trustees
Minutes
January 12, 2023

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, January 12th at 7:00 pm.

Board members present were Heather Augustyn, Kathryn Cochran, Michele Corazzo, Nick Tilden, Abbe Trent, and Rondi Wightman.

Board members absent: Will Scharp

Also present at this meeting were: Interim Library Director Heather Chaddock, Library Attorney Lisa Baron via Zoom, and Library Bookkeeper Kelsey Stearns.

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to approve the minutes from the executive session on December 5, 2022 as presented. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2022 regular meeting as presented. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

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

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of December 9, 2022 through January 12, 2023 as presented. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Librarian's Report

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

In December, 8,784 people visited the Library; WPL created 14 in-person programs with 219 attendees and 2 live virtual programs with 12 attendees; WPL answered 18 reference questions and 98 tech help questions; 137 people utilized library meeting rooms; and WPL registered 56 new library cards.

The Library purchased a new snow blower from Hopkins Ace at the beginning of December, in anticipation of another snowy Duneland winter. The old snow blower was estimated to be 15 or 16 years old, and no longer able to be repaired, as the parts are no longer available.

On Friday, December 16, Museum staff alerted the Duneland School Corporation that the furnace had gone out in the exhibit area. DSC sent a repair person, who confirmed that the furnace needed a new blower motor. The repair person put in an order for a new one, and completed a temporary fix to tide the Museum over until the part would come in early the following week. On Monday morning, staff discovered that the fix had not held, and it was 38.5 degrees in the exhibit area. This was in the midst of an extreme cold snap in the area. The Museum Curator set up a space heater in hopes of bringing the temperature up, and the Thomas Branch sent over an additional space heater. Museum staff worked in their offices during this time, which were not affected by the cold temperatures. The exhibit areas were made temporarily off limits to the public.

The space heaters brought the temperature up to 58 degrees, and the furnace was fixed by DSC on Wednesday morning.

On Thursday, December 22nd, Interim Director Chaddock made the decision to close all branches of WPL at 2:00 PM, to allow staff to get home safely before a blizzard warning went into effect for Porter County at 3:00 PM. The Library remained closed on Friday, December 23rd as the inclement weather continued, and it was closed on Saturday and Sunday for the Christmas holiday. WPL reopened all branches as scheduled on Monday, December 26th. Maintenance staff checked on the buildings while closed and found no damage to any of the locations as a result of the high winds and extremely low temperatures.

Chesterton-Porter Rotary President Barbara Black invited Interim Director Chaddock to attend the Rotary's January 3rd meeting to give some brief updates from WPL. The Rotary presented the Library with a \$500 check "in support of WPL's many and diverse programming initiatives." WPL is grateful to the Rotary for this generous donation, and for their longstanding volunteer support of the Library's summer movie and concert series.

Interim Director Chaddock met with Chesterton's Parks Superintendent Tyler McLead on December 15th. He suggested moving the Summer Concert series to Chesterton Park instead of Thomas Centennial Park. Interim Director Chaddock acknowledged that WPL would need to aggressively market a change in location for such a longstanding tradition. However, she feels the benefits would far outweigh the drawbacks of this move. Tyler offered to let WPL store its popcorn maker and cooler in the locked concession stand at Chesterton Park, benefitting the Rotary volunteers who move the machine and other concession necessities each week. Chesterton Park also boasts a playground and splash pad, which would likely draw families and improve attendance. Heather Augustyn echoed this sentiment and supported the move to Chesterton Park. Finally, Chesterton Park is not bordered by a set of busy train tracks, improving the concert experience for attendees and musicians alike. Rondi Wightman added that WPL should keep local businesses in mind when making this change, advocating for collaboration on local specials on concert nights.

WPL purchased two new laptop computers in December for the Director and the IT Manager. Their old laptops will be recommissioned for the Bookkeeper to use in her duties as Minutes Recorder, and as a backup for programming and patron use, respectively.

On December 27th at 6:20 PM, an employee at Harris, Welsh & Lukmann called to let WPL know that water was running from a spigot outside the Baugher Center. Library staff walked over and located the spigot running on the west side of the BC. The spigot did not have a handle and required a key to turn it off. Staff contacted the Maintenance Manager and Interim Director Chaddock for further direction, and another Maintenance staff member was able to come in and turn the spigot off with a key. Interim Director Chaddock called the Chesterton Police non-emergency line the next day to inform them that this had occurred, and directed the WPL Maintenance Manager to look into locking covers for the outdoor spigots at all locations.

On January 4th, Interim Director Chaddock was approached by a local journalist seeking a quote about WPL's stance on going fine-free, to be included as part of a forthcoming article reporting that several local library systems were fine-free as of January 1, 2023. She responded that Westchester Public Library was currently considering the ramifications of going fine-free. When asked to provide some additional information about what considerations would be taken into account by the Board in weighing a decision, Interim Director Chaddock told the journalist that WPL would need to research outcomes from other library systems who have adopted this policy to help predict what the effects may be on library collections. WPL would need to consider how it may need to change the ways and amounts in which staff order materials, so as not to create a disruption in service and availability of items for WPL patrons. In addition, WPL would need to consider and draft proposed changes to loan rules to coincide with a vote to go fine-free. Interim Director Chaddock plans

to meet with key staff to identify a proposed timeline for this change and to hear their recommendations for responsibly moving forward. Abbe Trent voiced her support of going fine-free, believing it to be an outdated policy that is no longer useful which excludes potential Library users who are intimidated by having fines. Heather Augustyn agreed with Abbe. Kathryn Cochran mentioned that library fees are a holdover from a paid subscription library model, harkening to classism. Nick Tilden shared his initial hesitation to embrace this concept, and acknowledged that the amount of fines taken in by the Library is significant; however, he ultimately noted that the Library is not here to make money or teach morality and responsibility; the Library is here to provide access to knowledge. Interim Director Chaddock said that there is now supporting data documented from larger systems, as well as smaller local systems, that have been fine-free for years; these libraries have found going fine-free to be a positive and successful experience, and to her knowledge, no libraries have reversed this decision. Rondi Wightman asked if the Library would be able to run a pilot program by only lifting fines from specific collections, such as books-only, rather than go all fine-free all at once. Interim Director Chaddock noted that the concept of lateness is not going away, only the limitations the fines place on patrons.

In December, four \$250,000 LIRF CDs matured and were reinvested by Horizon Trust & Investment Management at the following rates: Forbright Bank, MD 4.5% Uinta Bank, WY 2 years 4.4% Synchrony Bank, UT 4.3% US Treasury 2-year 4.25%

Separated staff members include: Lisa Stamm/Executive Director, Richard Gaines/PT Cleaner, and Nathan Alexander/PT Clerk. Other staff changes include Heather Chaddock moving from Assistant Director to Interim Director.

Old Business Thomas HVAC

As the Board decided during its September regular meeting, due to pandemic supply chain delays and scarcity of materials, WPL waived the requirement that the contractor pay for materials in advance, meaning WPL will pay for materials as they are purchased and securely stored by the contractor until ready for use in the HVAC project. As such, WPL cut another check to the contractor, Circle R Mechanical, for more materials purchased and stored, for a total of \$5,169.99 from the approved Additional Appropriation from WPL's Rainy Day fund.

Given the extended timeframe of the HVAC and lighting renovation project, WPL needed to reapply for our building permits from the Town of Chesterton. These permits are typically only granted for 6 months at a time, and WPL had already been given an extension on its original permits. WPL applied for, and received, a new permit to cover the remainder of the project. The total cost was \$1,822.00, paid for from the Additional Appropriation from WPL's Rainy Day fund.

Asbestos abatement occurred on the roof of the Thomas Branch on January 4th and 5th. In addition, holes were bored through the concrete in the roof going down into the 2nd floor mechanical room, and again from the mechanical room floor down through the ceiling of the boiler room, in order to create a channel for new ductwork to go in. Staff and patrons are handling the changes so far with good humor and flexibility.

Dune Acres Property

Lauren DeFauw with McColly Real Estate contacted Interim Director Chaddock on January 9th to share that she had an interested buyer in the Dune Acres property which was gifted to WPL in 2014; she sent over a proposed Purchase Agreement for \$200,000. The buyer had also offered to pay for the boundary survey to be performed. Lauren recommended that WPL accept this offer. Discussion among the Board members ensued, with the general consensus being that this was a good offer, given that assessed values had fallen recently. Nick Tilden commented that overall he was pleased that WPL had waited for an offer.

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to accept the \$200,000 offer on the Dune Acres property as presented. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Memoriams

Discussion took place regarding the wording on memorial plaques for the benches to honor recently deceased board members. The group settled on final wording, which Kathryn will forward to Interim Director Chaddock to move forward with ordering.

Health Insurance Error

Interim Director Chaddock asked tax attorney Lane Gensburg for an update in advance of the January Board meeting, and he provided a lengthy response identifying and discussing the issues created by WPL's erroneous withholding of employee wages to fund group health insurance premiums, and the Library's options to correct this error. Discussion regarding the Library's next steps concluded with ensuring the Library's insurance company is aware of the issue and ensuring liability coverage in the event of any claims regarding the errors. Interim Director Chaddock will reach out to Anton Insurance and discuss next steps forward with Lane Gensburg. Library Attorney Lisa Baron will work with Lane Gensburg to draft correspondence to affected current and former employees.

New Business

PLAC

Signatures were required for the quarterly Public Library Access Card statement.

Review and Readopt Trustee Bylaws

Interim Director Chaddock stated that no changes were recommended or necessary to the bylaws unless the Board would like to make changes.

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to readopt the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees Bylaws as presented. Nick Tilden seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion was passed.

Internal Controls Certification

The Indiana State Board of Accounts (SBOA) has decided that public library Boards must annually certify that all Library employees have read the Library's Internal Controls Policy, watched the Internal Controls video created by the State, and have signed the Library's Internal Controls signature page. These steps

are included in Library operations; however, SBOA would like the Board to annually, formally state that this occurs (under the daily activities of the Library Director).

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to certify that the Board certifies all Library employees are up-to-date on the Library's Internal Controls. Rondi Wightman seconded this motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Rainy Day Transfer

Indiana public libraries are permitted by law to annually transfer up to 10% of the prior year's total budget amount into the Rainy Day Fund at the beginning of a new year, if there are funds remaining to do so at the close of the prior year. After examining the Dec. 31st balance in our Operating Fund, and considering that the Township did not see a drastic hit to the June (or December) tax draws, Interim Director Chaddock recommends the Library transfer 7% for a total of \$279,928 into the Rainy Day Fund.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to approve the Rainy Day Transfer as presented. Heather Augustyn seconded this motion. All voted in favor, and the motion was passed.

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to approve the Librarian's Report. Abbe Trent seconded this motion. All voted in favor, and the motion was passed.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

Other Business

No other business was addressed at this time.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be February 9, 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Baugher Center.

Kathryn Conchran made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Reconvene as Board of Finance

This meeting was called to order by Board President Kathryn Cochran at 8:00 PM.

Investment Summary

Horizon Trust Investment Management provided a 2022 investment summary for the Board's review. As previously noted, the reason for any discrepancies that may occur year-to-year between the Investment Summary ending balance and the balance listed on WPL's own Bank Balances Report is that the Investment Summary reflects the daily fluctuations of money market balances and pending accrued interest.

Review and Readopt Investment Policy

Interim Director Chaddock saw no need for changes at this time and recommended the policy remain as-is.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to readopt the investment policy as presented. Nick Tilden seconded this motion. All voted in favor, and the motion was passed.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

Other Business

No other business was addressed at this time.

Nick Tilden made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsey Stearns, Minutes Recorder for
Heather Augustyn, Secretary