

Board of Trustees  
Minutes  
July 13, 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, July 13th at 7:00 pm.

Board members present were: Kathryn Cochran, Abbe Trent, Michele Corazzo, Justin Martinson, and, via Zoom, Will Scharp.

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

This meeting was called to order by Board President Will Scharp at 7:05 pm.

Approval of Executive Session Minutes

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the minutes from the June 19, 2023 executive session. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the minutes from the June 8, 2023 regular session. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. Abbe Trent, Kathryn Cochran, Michele Corazzo, Rondi Wightman, and Will Scharp voted in favor; Justin Martinson abstained due to absence. The motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

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

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of June 9, 2023 through July 13, 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 June, 15,465 people visited the Library; WPL created 42 in-person programs with 1,261 attendees; WPL answered 58 reference questions and 89 tech help questions; 175 people utilized library meeting rooms; and WPL registered 144 new library cards.

The Draft Budget is typically delivered at the July regular board meeting, with the Budget Hearing and Adoption taking place in September. Because this is both Director Chaddock's and the Library Bookkeeper's first budget season, both elected to attend an 8-hour Budget Workshop hosted by the Indiana State Library and the Department of Local Government Finance on Friday, July 7th. The training was informative and helpful, but it did not leave much time to create the 2024 budget before the July regular board meeting. Director Chaddock stated her desire to go through the budget process with as much detail and assistance as possible, instead of rushing a draft budget to the July meeting. In addition, the State Board of Accounts had not yet publicly announced the Max Levy Growth Quotient, which is a critical piece of the equation to determine next year's budget. Director Chaddock confirmed with the budget training hosts that sharing a draft budget in August would still leave plenty of time to make adjustments, if needed, and be on pace for the September hearing and adoption.

#### Staff Changes

Joined: Gray Hanna, P/T Maintenance

Separated: Christopher Carpenter; P/T Cleaner

Other: N/A

#### Old Business

##### Thomas HVAC

Phase 2 of this project at the Thomas Branch is nearing completion. This phase included the Administrative Offices, the staff lounge, all upstairs restrooms, the AV Department, and the Bertha Wood Meeting Room. As of the last contractor update meeting on July 5, all HVAC and ductwork installation had been completed in the Phase 2 area, the ceiling grid was nearly complete, and ceiling tiles and lighting were currently being installed. This area will be turned over to library staff on July 21st, and work will begin on Phase 3 on July 24th. A&Cs #11 and #12 were included in the Board Documents for a total of \$226,085.52. Additionally, a change order came through this month in the amount of \$18,112.22, for a necessary unforeseen fix to the roof drain, and 33 additional LED lights being installed on all of the soffits in the building, which were somehow not included in the blueprints the architects worked from to develop the original lighting plan.

Director Chaddock anticipates the Phase 3 construction affecting staff and patrons the most, for a few important reasons. There will be no accessible restrooms on the first floor during this time—everyone will need to go upstairs to the second floor for restroom access. WPL does have

elevator access to the second floor for anyone who needs it. The Circulation desk and the entire Children's and Young Adult Departments will also be under construction. The Reference desk will offer check-outs, fine payments, and new library cards at this time. The Adult collection will still be available downstairs. The Children's Department will temporarily move upstairs to the (newly completed) Bertha Wood Room, and the Young Adult Department will be housed in the Serials Department, in the room where the Friends of the Library Sorting Room used to be. There are many, many preparations for staff to make before July 24th, including installing baby changing stations in both of the upstairs restrooms (there are currently none), creating lists of the most popular children's and YA materials to pull and shelve in their temporary departments, shifting staffing schedules to ensure these areas are adequately covered, and communicating all of these changes to staff and the public.

One highlight is that WPL is planning to hire Jimenez Painters to apply a fresh coat of paint to all of the walls in the Thomas Branch, after each area has completed its HVAC work. Jimenez has agreed to work with the construction schedule to do a little at a time, using a low-VOC paint, so as not to further disrupt patrons or staff.

Director Chaddock is always seeking ways to encourage WPL staff, especially during this time, as they are dealing with the brunt of the inconvenience of working while under renovation, and they have been tasked with answering many of the public's questions about the project. They have been patient, professional, and endlessly flexible through it all, so Director Chaddock decided to spruce up the staff lounge at the Thomas Branch as a morale booster. The lounge will receive a fresh coat of paint, new decor for the walls, and new lamps with USB charging stations attached to them, so staff can charge up their devices during their breaks. These improvements cost a total of \$295.87 from the Unrestricted Gift Fund.

#### Narcan

Following the Board's discussion last month, as well as new information provided through Abbe Trent's email communication with Porter County Health Department Nurse Jessica Mahler, Director Chaddock recommends that the WPL system move forward with installing Nalox Boxes outside each WPL location, at no cost to the Library. These boxes would be paid for by a grant and refills are supplied by the county. To quote some of the statistics Jessica shared, "drug overdoses accounted for 2.59% of all deaths in Indiana, showcasing the severity of the issue at hand. Equally concerning is the fact that overdose deaths in Indiana have been steadily increasing at an annual rate of 4.49% over the past three years. These alarming trends demand immediate action to prevent further loss of life within our community."

Director Chaddock suggested having Jessica, or another expert, come to the Baugher Center for an all-staff training about the Nalox Boxes, where staff can have their questions answered and concerns addressed by a medical professional. Director Chaddock relayed that she has learned a lot and become much more comfortable with the idea after investigating the issue, and

knows it would be good for staff to have some of their possible misconceptions cleared up as well.

Kathryn Cochran commented that she believes it would be a good idea to talk to the police and EMTs in the area to let them know the Library plans to install these boxes and ask if there are any additional safety precautions to be taken, aside from calling 9-1-1 when the boxes are used. Abbe Trent stated she has learned, from Jessica and from the Substance Abuse Counsel, that the strength of opioids is increasing and sometimes multiple doses are required. Some Nalox Boxes go through a lot of the medication because people know it's there and take it to have on hand for personal emergencies. She believes having one at the Hageman and Thomas Branches is a definite must, and that the Baugher Center and Museum would be good locations to host the Boxes as well.

Director Chaddock stated that the Baugher Center should also have one, but that removing one from the Museum would be okay if there is a Nalox Box located in the park or at the school building.

A motion was made by Abbe Trent for WPL to procure Nalox Boxes for all locations if they are available. This was seconded by Kathryn Cochran. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

#### New Business            PLAC

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to approve and sign the third-quarter PLAC agreement. This motion was seconded by Justin Martinson. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

#### Pride Display Complaints

WPL received numerous instances of patrons complaining about its book displays honoring Pride Month in June of this year. The complaints arrived via email and in person, at both library locations. Director Chaddock shared her responses to the complaints with the Board.

This is a noteworthy increase in negative reactions to Pride Month displays and books; WPL typically receives one or two each year. The notion that certain content is harmful to children seems to have taken hold within a segment of the community, as well as within the national conversation. Director Chaddock stated that this notion is factually unfounded, and perpetuates a harmful, false narrative against the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, Pride Month is a national observance, first federally recognized in 1999.

Director Chaddock explained, "Library staff rotate seasonal displays monthly within each department (with displays for babies, children, young adults, and adults). Typically, we use these displays to highlight nationally recognized holidays or celebrations, such as Easter, Christmas, Hispanic Heritage Month, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Pride Month is also a

nationally recognized celebration, and so we share books featuring LGBTQ+ characters and culture during the month of June.”

Director Chaddock went on to explain that WPL offers displays about many seasonal topics, like cookie baking in December, or gardening in May. WPL staff do their best to create high-interest, beautiful displays that will appeal to and educate patrons, and strive to offer a wide variety of materials and viewpoints over the course of the year, to appeal to as many different patrons as possible. WPL librarians are also adept at picking up on what is popular locally, and making note of what subjects are frequently requested by patrons, so the Library can order more of those types of books, and potentially even create a future display.

One patron asked for a request form for library displays. Director Chaddock noted that WPL librarians are specifically trained to create engaging displays representing a wide variety of viewpoints, as well as increase circulation of WPL materials, as part of their job duties. In addition, the display calendar for each year is completely planned with national holidays to address, as well as popular seasonal displays, and displays WPL intentionally plans to help advertise upcoming programs.

Director Chaddock stated that she stands firmly against the idea of creating a “family-friendly” display, as suggested by one patron, which would intentionally exclude all LGBTQ+ representation, because that would suggest that LGBTQ+ content is somehow unfriendly to families. The books the patron requested be included in their suggested display were purchased by the Library, and were on display with the rest of the new books for several months, as is the Library’s standard procedure. In considering how to fairly and equitably address this issue, Director Chaddock stated that creating a display of the nature in which the patron suggested would create a hostile environment within the Library for any patron who identifies as queer or nonbinary. While some patrons have complained that the Pride displays are creating a hostile environment within the Library for them, Director Chaddock stated that these are not two sides of the same coin; the Pride display promotes inclusivity of a protected class of people.

The Board unanimously agreed that accepting all public suggestions for displays would be an unnecessary deviation from its current established, well-working procedure. Justin Martinson said that Director Chaddock put it very well when stating these are not two sides of the same coin, and that a display that actively excludes a group of people would go against the Library’s mission. Will Scharp stated that WPL librarians are trained to make the displays, and are capable of handling them as part of their job duties. Kathryn Cochran voiced her concern that public involvement would just lead to a fight for control of the designated space. Rondi Wightman echoed this, stating that it would open a floodgate of suggestions the Library would need to filter for appropriate topics, potentially leading to more complaints, and she reiterated

that, should this issue resurface, Director Chaddock should invite these patrons to speak with the Board or attend a meeting.

#### Museum Purchase

Kathryn Cochran and the WPL Museum Curator attended the YMCA's Healthy Living Campus meeting on June 26th. Director Chaddock attended a follow-up meeting on July 11th, which included Gro, several representatives from the YMCA and the School Corporation, Abonmarche Architects, and Berglund project managers. The meeting was more for the main partners (DSC and the local YMCA) to hear about the progress of the architect's plans, which are still fluid at this point. Director Chaddock spoke with DSC Superintendent Chip Pettit, and shared that if WPL were to develop land for a garden near the Museum, the Library would want to own that land, not lease it. Director Chaddock also spoke with Duneland YMCA CEO Dave Kasarda, who offered to come speak with the WPL Board in the future.

After some discussion among the Board, Library Attorney Lisa Baron stated that she would speak with DSC counsel regarding the Board's concerns about negotiating with the YMCA versus the DSC about borders and easements for the Museum parcel. Discussion continued regarding additional land for future development by the Library for outdoor meeting space, Museum storage, a pollinator garden, or other potential uses. The Board was generally in favor of requesting additional land.

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran that the Board authorizes Director Chaddock to open negotiations with DSC to purchase an additional half-acre lot to the north of the Brown Mansion as depicted on the GIS Map, up to fair market value. The motion was seconded by Rondi Wightman. Will Scharp, Kathryn Cochran, Abbe Trent, Rondi Wightman, and Justin Martinson voted in favor; Michele Corazzo voted against, and the motion passed.

After some additional discussion, the group decided to revise the motion they had just passed, as follows: Kathryn Cochran made a motion that the Board authorizes Director Chaddock to enter into discussions with Duneland School Corporation Superintendent to purchase additional land immediately surrounding the Brown Mansion. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to approve the Librarian's Report. This motion was seconded by Justin Martinson. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

#### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Other Business

There was no other business.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be August 10, 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Baugher Center.

Will Scharp adjourned the meeting at 8:43 PM.

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Will Scharp, President

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Michele Corazzo, Secretary

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Rondi Wightman, Vice-President

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Kathryn Cochran, Board Member

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Abbe Trent, Treasurer

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Michael Livovich, Board Member

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Justin Martinson, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsey Stearns, Minutes Recorder for  
Michele Corazzo, Secretary