

WESTFIELD MEMORIAL LIBRARY
550 East Broad Street
Westfield, New Jersey 07090-2197

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Regular Meeting

March 24, 2021

Ms. Habayeb, President of the Board, called the regular meeting of the Westfield Memorial Library Board of Trustees to order at 7:31 P.M.

Ms. Habayeb announced:

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the meeting of the Westfield Memorial Library's Board of Trustees is being held virtually through a Zoom Webinar. Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, adequate advance notice of this meeting has been provided by posting a notice of this meeting on the Westfield Memorial Library's community bulletin board and by transmitting the same notice to the Westfield Leader, Star Ledger, and Town Clerk. Attendance at this meeting is welcome, however the public's right to participate is left to the discretion of the Library's Board of Trustees.

The following Board Members were in attendance: Ms. Behr-Shields, Mr. Boyes, Mr. Capone, Ms. Habayeb, Ms. Oporto, Ms. Ramakrishnan, Ms. Saltzman, and Ms. Serapiglia. Staff members attending were Mr. Israel, Ms. Karwowski, Ms. Schulze, and Mr. Tawfik Attala.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Habayeb moved the approval of the minutes of the February 24, 2021 regular meeting. Ms. Oporto seconded the motion, and it was approved as follows:

AYES: Ms. Behr-Shields, Mr. Boyes, Mr. Capone, Ms. Habayeb, Ms. Oporto, Ms. Ramakrishnan, Ms. Saltzman

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: Ms. Serapiglia

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Financial Report for February 2021 was reviewed by the Board. Mr. Israel added that he emailed Mr. Gildea to ascertain if he contacted the joint insurance fund regarding including an additional \$4K in the insurance settlement. As of yet, Mr. Israel has not received an answer.

APPROVAL OF BILLS AND CLAIMS

Ms. Ramakrishnan moved to approve the Bills and Claims totaling \$63,986.57 for March 2021. Both Ms. Habayeb and Ms. Oporto seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

[Ms. Motwani joined the meeting during the report from the Friends.]

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Ms. Lechner and Mr. Miller, co-President of the Friends, gave their report to the board.

Joint Event

Due to the COVID restrictions, the joint event with the Westfield Historical Society being held at the Reeve House on April 24 will not be a fund raiser because it is not sensible to sell tickets as not enough people will be allowed to attend. There will be no charge to attend the event, but pre-registration is required. They plan to sell snacks only rather than hamburgers and hot dogs as previously planned. Tickets to a 50-50 raffle, T-shirts, and books may possibly be sold. The programming includes story time for the children and speakers for the adults.

Book Recycling

The Friends will participate in the Free Market on April 24 at the train station.

A Book Recycling event will be held at the WML parking lot on either Sunday, June 20th or Sunday, June 27th depending on when the library commences closing on Sundays for the summer.

The Friends contacted Mr. Gildea to advise him that they do not feel that a placement of a recycling bin at the Conservation Center will have any impact on their annual book sale. It is their understanding that the bin will be put in place late this month or next month.

If any of the board members receive questions about book recycling, Ms. Lechner asked that they be referred to her.

Reading Buddies

The Friends thanked Ms. Oporto for publicizing the Reading Buddies program at the schools.

Communications with the Public

Ms. Lechner mentioned that she has responded to several comments made by people concerning the closing of the library due to the heating problem. She questioned if the library or board have publicly issued statements concerning the closing and now re-opening.

Mr. Israel stated that press releases have been issued, emails sent, posts made on facebook, an article on Patch, etc. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the board will write a letter to the Westfield Leader editor concerning the closing/re-opening, and thanking the four area libraries that permitted Westfield residents to borrow materials.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director's Report was reviewed. Mr. Israel added that the heat is back on at the library, the staff has returned, and curbside service resumed today. A plan has been worked on for when patrons return back into the building. For a period of time the transmission rate dropped but it has gone back up today to 1.09.

Ms. Saltzman inquired if a transmission rate below 1.0 was still the criteria for re-opening the building to patrons. Mr. Israel responded yes. Ms. Saltzman added that the opening of holds 24/7 is a great benefit to the public.

Mr. Israel introduced Mina Tawfik, the new Computer Specialist who started the beginning of February at the library, to the board.

Mr. Tawfik presented his WML IT Plan which will take from one to two years to implement:

1. Upgrade the Network Infra Structure – upgrade switches to provide 10 times the current network speed
2. Upgrade the Internet Speed – from 20 megabyte up to 100 megabyte
3. Upgrade office software and mail server – currently using 2010 software; implement Office 365 thereby needing only one mail server for both internal and external email
4. Upgrade the Staff Logon for added security
5. Upgrading the library hardware every three to five years
6. Backup to the cloud

Mr. Tawfik added that the installation of remote connect software now allows personnel to work from home. Mr. Israel and Ms. Schulze agreed that the library personnel have already been using it. The librarians can now catalog material from home. Ms. Habayeb reiterated Mr. Israel's comment from the last meeting that the board must consider crafting work-from-home policies to be used after the pandemic.

Ms. Habayeb inquired if cost estimates can be provided for the IT upgrade, thereby allowing for budgeting. Mr. Israel replied to her satisfaction that there is currently money

in the budget to fund the upgrading of switches and to upgrade to Office 365 which costs \$140 per user per year. The cost estimates for the library hardware upgrade will be prepared.

INTERIM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schulze, who is currently WML Senior Department Head, is working on applying for a municipal grant for technology. The WML will request funding for Chromebooks that can be used both in the library and in circulation.

She is learning tasks such as banking, writing checks, payroll, interfacing with the alarm company so as to allow a smooth transition upon Mr. Israel's departure.

Resolution 2021-03 Bank of America Signatories was discussed. The resolution authorizes that Philip Israel be taken off as signatory to the account and that Jennifer Schulze be added as signatory. After a discussion Mr. Israel had with Ms. Habayeb prior to the meeting, paragraph three of the resolution was changed to read:

Whereas the Library's Head of Adult Services, Jennifer Schulze, is an employee in good standing and has been employed at the Westfield Memorial Library for 18 years;

Ms. Habayeb made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-03 with the above mentioned alteration, Ms. Behr-Shields seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously passed.

The appointing of an interim director will be discussed during the Executive Session.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Habayeb asked for committee reports.

Ms. Saltzman, chair of the Search Committee comprised of Ms. Behr-Shields, Ms. Habayeb, Ms. Serapiglia, and herself, gave a status of the search for a new director. A contract was signed with Library Development Solutions. The committee met with the Burgers and reviewed the characteristics that they desired in a director. The Burgers will be contacting the other board members, the Friends' co-presidents, and some staff on their opinions as to characteristics required in a new director.

Timelines were also discussed. Library Development Solutions will write the ad for the Director position which will run for 30 days. The board will have the opportunity to edit the ad, but Ms. Saltzman asks for a quick turnaround. By the end of April/May, the board should have an idea of the number of interested candidates. Library Development Solutions will interview the candidates and present the WML board with the top one to three candidates. At best, the process will take 12 weeks.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Habayeb asked if there was any old business.

Budget

The preliminary 2021 budget was updated with the figures provided by Mr. Gildea for the library's required reimbursements to the Town for health insurance and PERS. The other lines were close to the estimates. The amount needed from surplus was reduced by \$7,353. The Finance Committee has reviewed the budget and recommends approval.

Ms. Habayeb made a motion to approve the 2021 budget as presented. Ms. Oporto seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Fines and Fees Policy

Mr. Israel reviewed the proposed Fines and Fees Policy, which was modeled after a policy from another library, with the board members. In general, fines are being eliminated but not for new materials and limited library materials such as Wi-Fi Hotspots, kindles, and museum passes. Eliminating fines should remove financial barriers that prevent some members of the community from borrowing materials. The policy provides for charging the patron a lost replacement fee and processing fee if the material is not returned after five weeks.

Mr. Israel added that there is an inconsistency in the wording of items 8 and 11 in the policy. Therefore, item 8 will be revised to eliminate the wording "account will be blocked" and instead refer to a "forfeiting of borrowing and renewing privileges." Also, the policy will be revised to include a statement that "replacement copies of lost materials will not be accepted."

Discussion ensued concerning the retention of fines for some materials versus eliminating fines for all materials. Ms. Ramakrishnan felt that the library might be sending a mixed message with the proposed policy if the driving force is equity. On the other hand, the WML wants to encourage patrons to return the new materials and limited library materials on a timely basis so that other patrons might use them. Various board members expressed their thoughts about the matter. Ms. Behr-Shields' research indicated that the norm for the transition period is to retain fines on new materials. A polling of the board members as to their position on the issue was taken.

Ms. Habayeb shared her review of the services provided by Unique Management Services, who gives a gentle nudge to patrons to return materials to the library. Mr. Israel indicated that they are a niche company that services over two thousand libraries and five countries.

Ms. Habayeb made a motion to approve the Fines and Fees Policy with the inclusion of the two discussed revisions (blocked versus forfeiting and not accepting replacement copies). Ms. Serapiglia seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The elimination of fines for new materials can be revisited after a transitional period. The board did not object to the continued use of Unique Management Services.

Ms. Habayeb stated that the actual date to implement this policy will be determined in the future. First the WML must make a push to have all the materials checked out prior to and during the pandemic returned to the library. Then based on the volume of unreturned materials, a decision will have to be made on how to handle the unreturned items.

Second Round of Construction Grants

The State Library announced the second round of construction grants. The question and answer period will be from March 29th through April 23rd. A webinar will be held on April 15th. The final questions and answers will be posted by May 7th. The application period is from May 10 through June 4th. Mr. Israel consulted with Mr. Statile who will review the new requirements. The application will require both a resolution passed by the library board and a resolution passed by the Town Council. The resolutions will be prepared for the April board meeting and the May 11th Town Council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Habayeb asked if there was any new business.

Mr. Israel stated that the State Library announced a new grant that will fund projects for equipment and materials that foster digital inclusion for library users and the community up to \$10K. Mr. Israel and Ms. Schulze plan to apply for the grant to purchase 20 Chromebooks (10 to circulate and 10 to be used in-house). The appropriate number of hotspots would also circulate with the Chromebooks. The ongoing cost to the library would be \$300 per month per hot spot. This ties into one of the Strategic Plan's goals/objectives to make technology of all kinds more accessible to patrons of all ages.

Discussion ensued about the purchasing of Chromebooks. Ms. Oporto advised the board that the life span of Chromebooks is about five years. Mr. Tawfik's opinion is less than five years. As an alternative, he suggested the purchase of iPads/tablets since they have the internet connection built in and they have a longer life span. Mr. Israel and Ms. Schulze felt that a five year life span poses no problem since technology is evolving so fast that who knows what will be available and used five years from now. Patrons are currently familiar with laptop technology and students use Chromebooks in school, therefore, the consensus was that Chromebooks was the way to go.

Ms. Habayeb made the motion to apply for the grant to purchase the Chromebooks. Ms. Saltzman seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Since an approval document is needed from Ms. Habayeb to proceed with the grant application, Mr. Israel and Ms. Schulze will forward her the document for signature in the near future. Mr. Israel added that he is not optimistic that our grant will be approved but we will see what transpires.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Habayeb announced:

Whereas the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

Whereas this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist:

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, by the Board of Trustees of the Westfield Memorial Library, that the public shall be excluded from the discussion of the following matters:

Personnel

Be it further resolved that minutes will be kept on file in the library director's office, and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes shall be made public.

Ms. Habayeb made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 9 P.M. Ms. Oporto seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:
Mary Anne Karwowski

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION

The public portion of the meeting reconvened at 9:25 P.M.

Ms. Habayeb moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 P.M. It was seconded by Ms. Saltzman and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:27 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:
Phil Israel, Secretary Pro-Tem

