

## South Orange Public Library

### Minutes of Library Board Meeting, September 19, 2023

- 1) At 7:31pm the meeting was called to order by Ms. Karp. Present in person were Hildy Karp, Jane Bean-Folkes, Tracy Carroll, Shama Diegnan, Brian O’Leary, Ritu Pancholy, Jamie Saeed, and Marietta Zacker, Jill Faherty, Village Trustee Karen Hilton, Friends Representative Kathie Abrams, South Orange Community Member Alyssa Aronson, and Jenna Leis.  
Attending virtually was Emily Brown.

- 2) **Minutes of the July 2023 Library Board Meeting:** A motion was made by Dr. Bean-Folkes to approve the meeting minutes from the July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 board meeting. This was seconded by Ms. Brown and approved by all.

- 3) **Friends of SOPL update:** Ms. Abrams told the Board about the Friends upcoming jewelry sale on September 21st. This one will be a select sale and the larger sale is set for the weekend of November 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. She is also excited to report that they extended the home delivery service for another two years. It is expected to pick up more once the library moves to its temporary locations. The Brooklyn Botanical Garden, Morris Museum, New York Historic Society, and the Storm King museum passes have also been renewed for another year.

- a. *Agreement for Tag & Books Sale:* As suggested in a previous meeting Ms. Abrams and Ms. Faherty went to the Friends with the idea to host a tag sale to sell books and furniture that the library will not be taking to the temporary location or placing into storage. In order to proceed the Friends will need a *Memorandum of Understanding* from Ms. Faherty and the Board stating that the Friends will take possession of the libraries books, DVDs, and other materials weeded from the Library’s collection, as well as furniture, computers, and other furnishings with a resolution approved by the Board. It also outlines what will be expected of the friends and the support they will receive from the Board, Foundation, and community. Ms. Abrams sent Ms. Faherty a sample memo to create one for the sale which was shared with the Board. A concern from Friends members was that they will be responsible for all unsold materials but the memo will clearly state that the library and its staff will take on the responsibility for it. The Friends also requested that the Board and Foundation volunteer their time to help staff it as this is a much larger endeavor than any of the Friends previous sales.

Questions from the Board included what the condition of the books we were selling and how the local schools could get involved. Ms. Faherty let them know the books put aside for sale are in okay condition and have circulated a minimal amount in the last five years. As for the schools, Ms. Abrams mentioned

that prior to the pandemic when they did book sales, teachers had early access and this can be put in place again.

The Board voted in a straw poll that they were for the Friends hosting the tag sale and would volunteer throughout. Without a confirmed date not every member could commit time yet but would do their best to support it. The next step is for Ms. Faherty to write the official request from the Board to the Friends to host it and gift them the books and furniture. They can then submit it for a vote to their members to approve and take the next steps.

#### 4) **Foundation Update:**

- a. *Capital Campaign:* Ms. Zacker gave a brief overview of the Campaign to make clear its purpose within the Foundation. As many know, the library received a grant from the States and money from the Village for the construction project but there is a gap in the funding that is to be made up by private donations. The Capital Campaign works to raise this money and is made up of members from the Board, Foundation, and the community. It was made clear that the Capital Campaign reports to the Foundation, the checks are written to the same place. They have been active in meeting at least once a week and are working closely with Ms. Faherty, Ms. Hilton, the architect Andrew Berman and his team. A goal of theirs is to make sure the town and community understands what the project is doing and how it is getting done. The Campaign is ready to officially go public and sort of did that with a presentation last week at the Village with Mr. Berman and his plans as well as meeting with the nonprofit historic groups in town last Thursday to receive their approval to be sent to the State for the grant.

There were some questions about better defining the fundraising role of the Foundation and Capital Campaign compared to the Friends. Ms. Abrams and Ms. Zacker plan to talk more about this soon, particularly to get the wording right.

- i. *October 4<sup>th</sup>:* Board members should have received an invitation in the mail to a private event being held for those who were identified as key donors as well as members of the Foundation, Friends, and Village Board of Trustees on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Though not mandatory, Board members are encouraged to attend if they can to talk through what is happening and listen to what is going on. Everyone will be provided with talking points about the project so they are informed when asked questions. Mr. Berman will also be presenting new renderings and news about the project.

Ms. Zacker asked the Board to commit financially to the project soon and to see her to receive a pledge form or with any questions. They are wishing to express to donors at this event that all members of the Board have financially participated. There is no set amount needed but the gift should be something meaningful to each member. Ms. Saeed also

suggested that members working for corporations could ask if they are willing to match and contributions made.

- ii. *Naming Opportunities:* A current list of naming opportunities for donors was shared with the Board. These were approved a while back with some minor changes as the plans continue to flow. These are subject to change as things move forward but Ms. Zacker wanted to keep the Board up to date. Some naming opportunities have already been taken as donations have already started to come in. So far they are starting out with \$750,000 in pledges and donations. Ms. Zacker said this is a great start but the last bit of fundraising is always the hardest. Their goal is to raise over a million dollars. Towards the end of the Campaign there are plans to do something of a brick campaign to get the community involved in raising the final bit of the money.

The Campaign has been working with hired consultants for the project to make sure the numbers for the naming opportunities are logical. They will be presented as well at the October 4<sup>th</sup> event with an asterisk that things are subject to change.

So far Ms. Faherty has been doing tours for potential key donors of the building. Ms. Hilton commended her for an excellent job with these. All of these potential donors are receiving invitations to the October 4<sup>th</sup> event. Ms. Karp also wanted to say how Mr. Berman is a terrific presenter. He grew up and went to school in South Orange and is the right person for this project.

Ms. Hilton reminded everyone that the SOPL Board was responsible for overseeing the Library design and the Village oversees the financing. But that we are still in the early stages of the project. Mr. Berman has come out with a plan and two cost estimates, next he will go out to get another for the revisions made. Once construction drawings are made they will see what bids come back. So there are a number of steps along the way. Right now there is an estimated \$17 million to use but they want to be realistic with potential donors that the plan presented to them can change as other factors do. One positive that Ms. Karp pointed out was how when calling Mr. Berman's references from other libraries his team has worked on, they all said he was very good at staying within or under budget.

Ideally, Ms. Zacker said it would be best to have the money in the bank tomorrow as part of the bidding process. So they need as much as they can now. She also reminded the Board of the naming policy they previously approved. It was suggested this be cycled around again for new members to review.

5) **Bills Payable:** Before voting on the bills Ms. Faherty was asked to clarify a discrepancy between the checks and the bill presented. It was made clear that Ants in the Pants is the same as Ms. Jolie and Ms. Faherty will check with the library book keeper to see if the check was not fully filled out and rectify it. It was also clarified that the payment to Accurate Tank Testing was for the removal of the old oil tank from the Connett building. Ms. Faherty attempted to get the Village to cover this expense but they told her it must come out of the operating budget. She pushed back as much as she could with them and Ms. Hilton will now look into the issue. Until then the bill had to be paid.

A motion was made by Ms. Saeed to approve the bills payable from the Operating account totaling \$19,449.39 and the Trustees account totaling \$2,160.20. This was seconded by Mrs. Carroll and approved by all.

6) **Committee updates**

a. *Finance:* Mr. O’Leary reported that the committee met a couple weeks ago and discussed a few primary things. First, that they still feel the \$212,000 pledged is a good target number for the Board. There were also discussions on expenditures for the move to a temporary location as well as talks of the need for long term projects.

The committee was working with Mr. Berman in preparation for his presentation to the Village Board of Trustees that took place the previous week. Mr. O’Leary stayed on the call to listen to public comments after the presentation. He said there were concerns from the public about overruns and if the library had their arms around the project. The Trustees were confident the library had it under control. Mr. O’Leary thinks this is an opportunity to demonstrate to the public that the Library is responsible, “prudent stewards,” and knows what it’s doing with the planning and the bonded money. After the plan goes public the committee will talk more about where they are financially.

The concerns could be related to the delays with the Baird project. While the library shouldn’t compare itself to it, that project does loom large with the public and Village according to Ms. Karp. Mr. O’Leary thinks the Friends pitching in with the tag sale can make the closing of the current library more of a community project. It can be a celebration of the old library. In a future finance meeting he wants to create a reporting schedule to show the public they are on track with the project. Mrs. Carroll also added there should be construction updates on the website. Ms. Faherty does plan to have these updates as the project moves along and is talking with the Foundation and their consultant 7 Layers about a variety of communications and to be as transparent as possible.

On the Village budget side, Ms. Hilton informed the Board that they will be budgeting the same way as the previous year. The library will be invited back

for the third year to present their budget request to the Village and show the public's money hard at work there. This will be coming up in January and is an opportunity to see the Trustees enthusiasm for the project.

Mrs. Carroll asked if Ms. Faherty had any idea the effect moving to the Walton address will have on the budget next year. Ms. Faherty hasn't had a chance to run the exact numbers yet but expects that it will not be very different from the current annual budget. Many of the utilities such as electric have to still be on in the 68 building while under construction and PSEG continues to be one of the libraries biggest expenses. There are also a number of services carrying over to Walton such as web services, cleaning, etc. The fish tank is an expense that will not be carried over as the Friends have offered to find some place to rehome the fish and the tank.

Ms. Hilton shared that with the grant and Village bond towards the library project there will be a \$150 increase per household per year for 20 years to fund these improvements.

Mr. O'Leary feels they are in a strong position in regards to the budget. He says Ms. Faherty has broken much of it down into more categories which allows it to be better fine-tuned and more visibility in budgeting. The shift of expense to the temporary location is happening in pieces. For staffing it will be trading one type of librarian for another. Faherty said she will speak more on the new hours in her director's report but for now did mention how it will affect the staff. There will be a lot less programming space and with the help of the Head of Youth Services, Keisha Miller, and part-time Children's Librarian, Nashaya Lyon-Watson, they have been looking for alternative locations by going out into the community and working with businesses and nonprofits. This includes approaching SOPAC about playing movies, hosting story times in local coffee shops, and being in the schools more. Ms. Faherty commended Ms. Miller and Ms. Lyons-Watson for being able to shake things up this year. They had a great turn out for summer reading programs and they would like to continue this momentum even while in the temporary locations.

- b. *Personnel*: Mrs. Carroll informed the Board that the Personnel Committee is still in the process of fine-tuning their survey for Ms. Faherty's performance review. The survey will be hosted online for the first time this year and will include slightly different ones for library staff, Board members, and stake holders identified by both the committee and Ms. Faherty herself. She hopes to have the dates by early next week. They will also be meeting with Ms. Faherty to go over her progress and goals for the next 12 months. It was decided the survey will go out for two weeks to give everyone ample time to complete it. The content will be very similar to previous years with just some minor changes.

- c. *Communications Committee:* The Committee has so far met on an as needed basis. Ms. Faherty has been meeting frequently with the libraries communications consultant, Kristin LaGrua who as of right now is planned to stay until the end of the year. When asked about extending her contract with the library Ms. Faherty said it is based on what funding is still available. She was hired with money provided by the Foundation and the plan is to keep her on for as long as they can. She has been creating templates and plans for the staff to utilize. Much has already been coordinated in many social media posts and flyers. There has also been a push to schedule social media posts and get programing planning done ahead of time for better publicity.

Ms. LaGrua has been working with the library to make upcoming major announcements. This includes the library closing and reopening, communicating with the Foundation, and joining BCCLS starting in the new year. A priority has been joining BCCLS and how to wrap that into the closing. Right now they are also working to communicate through email or newsletter with any library members with expired cards, or soon-to-be-expired, in order to get them up to date so they can still access services while the building is closed. This month is National Library Card Sign-up month and there is a big marketing campaign to support it.

Ms. Faherty is also working to redo some of the website to communicate more of the library expenditures (what is spent on books, the building, staff, etc.) in order to be more transparent with the public. Ms. LaGrua will assist in getting this done once the library has relocated.

It was briefly asked if in the new locations job descriptions for staff will change. Ms. Faherty is still working on that, a lot of staff have very loose job descriptions to begin with. It is expected though that jobs will change in the new locations. There is also the addition of BCCLS which will add more work to the staff with the increase in book deliveries. Ms. Faherty is working to update the descriptions as she can. She said that while jobs may change the overall goals will remain the same.

- d. *Building Advisory (BAC):*

- i. *Current Status of the Project:* As previously mentioned, Mr. Berman presented the current plans to the Village Board of Trustees. They had some good questions and are in agreement with things moving forward. Mr. Berman also went in front of the two non-profit historic groups in town, the South Orange Historical & Preservation Society and the Montrose Park Historical Association. The State needs a letter from these groups in order to proceed with the grant. They both voted to give the project their support and will provide a letter..

Ms. Karp let the Board know the BAC met often in preparation for the meeting with the Village Trustees and will continue to meet more often as they are close to the final plans. They are in a good place moving forward.

The BAC was formed in part to hire the architect for the project and find out what was needed for that. They now continue to liaison between the architect, construction manager, and the Village. Its members are Board members, library staff, Village staff, and volunteer members of the community, both who are in the architectural field.

Ms. Hilton gave an update to the asbestos remediation in the Connett building. The Village Trustees approved two contracts, one to remove the asbestos and one to oversee the removal. This will be happening soon and is a very invasive process. The goal is to save as much of the historic woodwork as possible but some is just too full of asbestos to make that possible, especially the downstairs areas. It will probably be a six to eight-week process and must happen before any construction can get started. A walk through will be done tomorrow with the removal company to answer any questions. Mr. Berman has also provided the demolition plans to get rid of anything that is planning to be demolished anyway. Most of this includes walls and things added after the building was built. The goal is to restore Connett to its original state as is possible.

Once the 1968 building is vacated it will also be checked for asbestos and, if found, the removal will begin there.

- e. *Committee Summaries:* It was suggested by Ms. Pancholy that prior to monthly meetings, committees send out a summary of what will be discussed in order to help expedite the meetings a bit. There were concerns that members would not have the time to submit and send summaries out prior to the meetings, but the Board agreed to try it out for October. They would need to be done at least a week in advanced so that Ms. Faherty could distribute them in a timely manner with the rest of the materials.

## **7) Director's Report:**

### *a. Programming and services update:*

- i. *Summer Reading Summary:* Ms. Faherty reported that this year's summer reading was a success from many points. In terms of programming attendance, she has never seen so many attendees at any programs in her time with the library. The most popular program, not including the kick off and closing parties, was the visit from a penguin named Ozzie. Other popular programs included the bee keeper program, that was thematically

connected with a book discussion, live animals that included a crocodile, hedgehog, and a few others. There were a total of 85 programs. The increase in attendance of these programs really exposes the need for larger community spaces in the new library to accommodate these needs.

This year the library participated in Beanstack, an online service to track patrons progress during summer reading. In total the community read over 9,000 books, triple over the previous year, and submitted a few hundred book reviews. This only included what was logged. There were concerns that having Beanstack only through an app worked for every family as many kids don't have devices. There were paper log alternatives in the children's room that could have been promoted more. This year there was also an increase in adult participation with 60 adults signing up for Beanstack and logging over 150 books.

Thanks to contributions from the Friends the library was able to giveaway one book to every child that signed up for summer reading. Baker & Taylor, the library's book supplier, gave a great discount to purchase these giveaway books. Many kids and parents appreciated this.

This year's VolunTEEN program saw 42 teens volunteer throughout the summer. They ended the summer with an award ceremony with Police Chief Morillo as the keynote. The teens were key to the library programming this summer.

- b. *Current and forthcoming:* September is Library Card Sign-up Month and, as previously mentioned, the library is working with Ms. LaGrua to better publicize card holders to renew cards. With her help the library started an Instagram giveaway for a pair of AirPods, donated by an anonymous donor. South Orange Library card holders can post a picture with their library card with the hashtag #Getcarded to enter. Throughout this they have seen an increase of over 600 likes to the page.

Coming up there are two community-wide events in October which the library will be participating in. First, October 1<sup>st</sup> is the Fall Festival, and second October 8<sup>th</sup> is Community Day, formally known as Newcomers Day. The library is also the rain location for these events. Last year Community day was held at the library and it was packed.

Ms. LaGrua has been working with the library to rename and edit the library newsletter. Through a library staff vote, it was decided to officially name the eNewsletter *Check It Out* and Jill is working to create a new logo for it. The newsletter includes a message from Ms. Faherty, youth services updates, construction project updates, and BCCLS updates, among other unique newsworthy items. Ms. Faherty has also started an internal newsletter to keep the



staff up to date on things that happen in Board meetings, with the Village, town events the library is participating in, etc.

- c. *BCCLS*: The staff has been hard at work training on BCCLS the last few weeks, which has been very thorough teaching different systems, procedures, and policy to give them all the information to hit the ground running. As a project overview, right now they are in the planning and training stage. Next is the transition stage which will begin early October when all of the library's records are transferred over to BCCLS. It is set to then go live on December 1<sup>st</sup>. It isn't clear yet if the library will make it widely known to the public yet as they are not officially paying members until January 1<sup>st</sup>. It was brought up that December may be able to be used as a soft launch so staff can have time getting used to the new system as it is a large change on their end.

All patrons are encouraged to make sure their cards are up to date. Once BCCLS debuts patrons will still have the same library card, just a different experience. The BCCLS team will provide great patron facing pointers and things the library should focus on when promoting the change in the communication plan. It will point out what is changing for patrons including the new app, access to deliveries, holds, returns to other libraries, etc.

This will not replace the Libby app as Libby is run by Overdrive and BCCLS is as well. Patrons will just use the same library code to access both. All of this will be explained further in communications to the public.

The question was brought up about community training for BCCLS. Ms. Faherty is still looking into this and will see what literature BCCLS is providing. Ideas were suggested like doing virtual training or hosting in person training at the Baird once the library is set up there. Ms. Abrams did bring up her concern that there needs to be a decision if the public can use it in December and if so there needs to be support for patrons on how to use it, either online, over the phone, or in person.

- d. *Project update & relocation plan*: In regards to the move, Ms. Faherty has been meeting with a group from the Village every other week which includes Ms. Hilton, Village Tax Assessor Agent Ellen Malgieri, and Deputy Village Administrator Peter Travers. Mr. Travers has been overseeing the Baird and is in charge of the Parks Department move from Walton Avenue back to the Baird. They wanted to run the date December 1<sup>st</sup> to officially close the library and start packing for the move. The Village has approved this already. December 1<sup>st</sup> the Parks Department can begin to move to the Baird so the library can move into Walton shortly after. This is regardless of the Baird being completely done as the office and staff space will be ready at this time. Ms. Hilton expressed she is confident in the timeline for the Baird's completion at this time.

The Village advised about two months may be needed to close the library completely to finish the move. The idea is that it could potentially take two months but if it takes less time than the better. This time would be used to stop operations so the staff can be focused entirely on packing and relocating.

DPW is on board to assist with moving shelves and the minimal furniture being taken to the Walton location. Their assistance is dependent on there being snow and if they will be busy plowing. Much of the move is dependent on their schedule. As a second option Ms. Faherty is pricing out moving companies but would prefer to save the money as she was told it has to come out of the operating budget.

The Board did express concerns about being fully closed for so long. If this is the case Ms. Faherty can start working out what services to keep running while moving and if there will be a shorter period of time where everything will stop.

There were some questions if BCCLS deliveries can be made to the building while it is closed but before construction starts. Ms. Faherty is unsure because Walton has been set up as the delivery location for BCCLS and doesn't know if that can be changed. The staff is also still getting used to BCCLS as a system because it is a major change for them. Another solution is for patrons to pick up books at other libraries, have staff dedicated to pickups during this time, or just have patrons use other BCCLS or ReBL libraries all together.

Questions were also brought up about being closed for so long without programming, especially for children. According to Ms. Faherty the timing works out that programming is usually minimal in December through mid-January. Many people don't attend during the holiday season and it is a break for staff to recharge and prep for the next year. Most children's services are also planned to be held at the Baird which can be quickly set up once the staff has access to it. They also may have access to other spaces such as the Skate House.

Ms. Faherty stressed that she wants to manage expectations with the public. They will know more of what is being taken with them closer to the December 1<sup>st</sup> date. Right now books are being assessed through continued weeding, and the final amount and how many shelves that can fit is being determined. A proposed timeline includes closing December 1<sup>st</sup>, clearing out the building, then possibly holding the Friends tag sale in the empty building the first or second week of January. This timeline is possible with the Villages ensuring the Parks Department will start moving out of Walton on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. O'Leary did reiterate the Board's concerns about two months being a long time to be closed. He is uncomfortable making the decision without a written plan in place from both the library and the Village. The plan should include thought out metrics that include times for packing, shelf moving, resources in place, etc. This timeline will be shared with the staff in order for them to assist

with creating a realistic plan. Their focus on the move is one reason Ms. Abrams suggests against staff members being available to help the Friends with the tag sale. She would rather their focus be entirely on packing.

Ms. Faherty will create formal written metrics and a plan including how many staff members will be doing what for the Board to review before a concrete decision is made on the duration of closing. Ms. Hilton supports a written plan and said she can get the Village to sign off on it as well if needed.

- i. *Town Hall:* At Ms. Faherty's last meeting with the Village they requested she approach the Board about a possible date to host a town hall with Mr. Berman and the plans. According to Ms. Karp's memory there was no specific timing in Mr. Berman's plan for this, just a commitment to do a town hall.

There was back and forth between Board members if setting the date should wait until the plans are more finalized. This would be hard to do has each time Mr. Berman goes out for cost estimates things could change as well as when the bid for contractors go out. It was agreed the town hall must be held before any breaking of ground on the project as the community must be made aware of what is going on.

A suggestion is that it would be after the next cost estimate but before going out to bid. Another was to wait until the building is empty but before any work is done so it can be held in the empty building. Ms. Faherty will also ask Mr. Berman for his suggestion as he has experience with this. She will also speak with Ms. LaGrua to assist with marketing and support with marketing the town hall.

- ii. *Hours:* Ms. Faherty shared with the Board a set of proposed hours of operations for the two temporary locations. The total hour's open is approximately equal but the big difference would be to have the Baird location's late nights be Monday's and Wednesday's until 9pm while Walton remains Tuesday's and Thursday's until 8pm. These were made with the understanding that things may be tweaked once the library gets an idea of what traffic is like to each location and readjust to meet the community's needs.

The idea is to have the Baird open as long as possible as it is expected to be busier and have the most foot traffic at all hours. It was also noted that Walton is set as the BCCLS pick up location and Ms. Faherty is unsure if they can add the Baird as one but she will reach out and check.

Ms. Saeed brought up concerns with lighting at the Walton location. It is not very well lit at night, especially during the winter. New Jersey State Library requires libraries to be open until 8pm multiple nights

and there is the expectation that staff will not be leaving the building alone at closing. Some Board members still showed some concern and Ms. Saeed suggested reaching out to the police department to see if there is anything they can assist with.

The hours were created after Ms. Faherty spoke with other libraries who have gone through similar situations as well as looked at the full-time staff available to fulfill these needs. She estimates they will need 12-13 full-time staffers for these hours but while they only have 10 at the moment the remaining hours can be made up with part-time staff. There will also be an increase/difference in staff loads with the introduction of BCCLS. When speaking with Maplewood about daily deliveries they say they have four staff members who handle it. It is estimated to get five to six bins of books a day with about 50 books in each. This increase in BCCLS work is also while the library still has to run reference services, information support, circulation, etc.

This is something Ms. Faherty will go to the staff with to get their opinions but she wanted to get Board input on when they expect to be open as a community. They are going from running one to two facilities so needs will be met differently. The Board gave their approval for the hours for the moment.

Ms. Faherty was informed by the NJSL that SOPL is currently not open the minimum three evenings a week required. During the pandemic the minimum was waived. Then it switched to two nights a week, and it appears to have reverted to the pre pandemic requirement for 3-nights weekly. She was unable to find any communication from NJSL indicating the change. She will be writing the State to see if there is any way to waive the requirement as the building will only be open for a short time before the move. It has been shown that having more late nights does not really meet the communities needs right now as staff reports most nights are pretty empty. In addition, the library already exceeds the requirement of 48 hours of operation. But if they deny the request she has suggested shifting the Monday hours from 9am-6pm to 11am-8pm. The Board is in agreement that if it is a matter of State compliance then it must be done.

- e. *Building Update:*
    - i. *Connett Abatement:* This was already discussed during the Building Committee update.
- 8) **New Business:** Before the meeting concluded Mr. O’Leary wanted to briefly bring up a previous meetings discussion on the current challenge policy. He requested a copy of it

and offered to take on reevaluating the policy as current events may be cause for increasing concern.

**9) Current and Upcoming:** The next Board meeting scheduled for October 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm at the library.

10) The Board meeting was adjourned at 10:15pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Jenna Leis*