

- 1) At 7:32pm the virtual meeting was called to order by Ms. Karp. Present were Hildy Karp, Jane Bean-Folkes, Emily Brown, Tracy Carroll Shama Diegnan, Brian O’Leary, Ritu Pancholy, Jamie Saeed, and Marietta Zacker, Jill Faherty, Village Trustees Karen Hilton and Bill Haskins, Friends Representative Kathie Abrams, South Orange Community Member Alisa Aronson, and Jenna Leis.
  
- 2) **Minutes of the January 2024 Library Board Meeting:** A motion was made by Ms. Saeed to approve the meeting minutes from the January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 board meeting. This was seconded by Mr. O’Leary and approved by all.
  
- 3) **Friends of SOPL update:** Ms. Abrams gave the Board an overview of what the Friends have been up to. She reminded everyone that they officially moved their meetings to the second Monday of the month from 5pm to 6:30pm and are held in the 110 Vose Community Room.

Since the last meeting the Friends have implemented the home delivery program with the help of Ms. Faherty, Friends member Tonia Moore, and library staff member Lindita Cani. As done previously, deliveries will take place on Thursday’s. A signup form is available on the Friends website and Ms. Abrams thanks library staff member Michael Pucci for his assistance in creating flyers to promote it. There are currently 13 volunteers to help deliver materials. Additional days for deliveries and more volunteers can be added if there is an increase in interest.

Two museum passes were recently renewed. These include the Yogi Berra Museum and Learning Center and the Children’s Museum of Manhattan.

As mentioned in last month's meeting, the Friends are applying for a grant through the Midwest National Endowment of the Arts (Midwest NEA) to run a town wide Big Read initiative. It will run all school year and include tons of programs. The grant application was recently submitted and they may hear back on it sometime in late March. The Village has also agreed to assist with volunteers and locations for the initiative. Ms. Abrams is hopeful that with the grant the Friends will not need to spend additional funds of their own.

Ms. Abrams had some bad news in regards to upcoming jewelry sale locations. Despite advocacy and research done on their behalf, a new ordinance for the Baird center makes it so nothing can be held at the location for free. Right now the cost would be \$150 per hour for use of the space which is a large cost for the Friends. The next sale is set to be held on May 4th and while costly it is still the most beneficial space. After some discussions they were able to get Friday and Monday thrown in for the cost of just the weekend. A vote will be held this week for the Friends to approve the cost of \$1,500

to rent the space. This is the most they have ever spent on a jewelry sale which is disappointing but has to be done.

**4) Foundation Update:** Ms. Zacker gave a brief summary of a report sent out to the Board on the latest from the Foundation.

- a. *Capital Campaign:* The Board was asked to let Ms. Zacker know if they did not receive last week's quarterly report. In the report she was excited to announce that the campaign has surpassed the million dollar mark. They are now focusing their efforts on raising more than \$1.5 million and looking forward to touring the now empty building.

The next two neighborhood parties are set to be held at The Newstead, thanks to community member Tonia Moore and at the Canning residence, thanks to community members Patricia and Jim Canning and Heidi Lee who are co-hosting. The Canning/Lee party is scheduled for Thursday, April 11th and no date is set for The Newstead party but it will also be held sometime in April. Board members should expect an invitation and are encouraged to attend.

**5) Policy:**

- a. *Collection Development and Challenge Policy:* This item was left on the agenda by Ms. Faherty as a reminder for the Board to please review the documents regarding the libraries collection development and challenge policy provided at last month's meeting. If they have any recommendations or suggested changes please reach out to her and Mr. O'Leary, who has been helping to revise the policy. It is the hope that the Board will vote on the revisions at next month's meeting.

**6) Bills Payable:** A motion was made by Ms. Saeed to approve the bills payable from the Operating account totaling \$14,570.41 and the Trustees account totaling \$1,146.31. This was seconded by Ms. Zacker and approved by all.

**7) Committee updates**

- a. *Finance:* Mr. O'Leary let the Board know that the Finance Committee met twice since the last meeting, once before the executive session held earlier this month and once again two weeks ago. Their discussions were in regards to the budget for 2024 and the recent Village budget meeting Ms. Faherty attended. The Village has since reached out and asked them to look at a variety of different spending scenarios. There is an interest in changing expenses in regards to the library. A specific request from them was received today and forwarded to Board

members. Mr. O’Leary stressed that this is something that will need a little time to think through before responding to. It is expected to affect the operating plan in a substantial way. This matter will be discussed in further detail during tonight's executive session.

Mr. O’Leary also wanted to welcome Ms. Pancholy to the Finance Committee as its newest member.

- b. *Personnel*: Mrs. Carroll informed the Board that there are no updates on the Personnel Committee since they last met. The committee will touch base soon and reach out to Ms. Faherty in the next couple weeks in regards to her latest performance review results.
- c. *Building Advisory (BAC)*: Prior to this meeting Ms. Faherty sent out the newest plans and cost estimates from architect Andrew Berman and his team. This is the estimate at 50% design. Ms. Karp stated that they were thrilled after many reviews that Mr. Berman was able to bring the costs in line with the budget. The plans have not changed in any substantial ways but they were able to bring it in by catching duplicate costs and changing minor things such as materials for things like stairs, the roof, etc.

Ms. Faherty shared some of the breakdown of the costs further and explained how the costs have been more inline with the budget with each set of estimates prior to this one. The Board extended their thanks to the Building Committee for managing and overseeing this process. The Village had expressed concerns about staying on budget and they are doing just that.

Mr. Haskins and Ms. Hilton are both members of the committee and expressed their opinions on the estimates. Ms. Hilton did cite her nervousness on how close the budget was and that the extra money from the Village is going quickly. Mr. Haskins agreed that it is good to be careful but what stood out to him was the good contingency percentages for costs. There is also a lot of community support for the project as reflected in the previously mentioned pledges of a million dollars with the Capital Campaign, much of which has already come in.

What Ms. Karp needs from the Board is for them to vote on an amendment that reaffirms the building plan with this new cost estimate. That can then be brought to the Village Trustees to be approved and then presented to the town.

## **8) Resolution:**

- a. *The SOPL Building Connections Project plans as provided by Andrew Berman Architect*: Ms. Faherty read out the amendment discussed above to approve the 2024 construction plans as presented by Andrew Berman Architect on February

20th, 2024. A motion to approve the amendment was made by Mr. O’Leary. It was seconded by Ms. Saeed and approved by all.

**9) Director’s Report:**

- a. *Interim location update:* Ms. Faherty announced that as of January 25th the library was officially open at the Walton location. The space is much smaller but she is happy to give a tour to any Board members who stop by. The address is 298 Walton Ave. and is the parking authority/DPW offices. The building is open to the public the same hours as the previous location. The space is very different as all services are in the front of the building. There is a circulation desk and an office with three public intranet computers as well as a reference desk. A majority of books are available for patrons to check out but not for browsing. Staff have to pull materials upon request as the collection is in a back storage area not entirely safe for browsing. About half of the collection is available, the other half does not fit on the shelves at this moment and are in storage.

In addition, as a full fledged BCCLS library there have been deliveries of bins everyday to Walton. It takes about an hour each day to unpack and process them. The bins contain both SOPL returns from other libraries and holds from other libraries. Staff are also fulfilling holds for other libraries to go out. Just the other day four bins were sent out, this is about 150 books. Because of the BCCLS activity there has been an increase in circulation numbers for the collection. Likewise patrons have access to the digital collection of other libraries through Libby and Overdrive as well as their physical collections.

In terms of staff for BCCLS it has been a big increase to their workload. People have been dedicated to fulfilling requests and pulling from an outgoing list three times a day. It takes about one to two staff members a day to handle BCCLS jobs. Ms. Faherty is aware that this is new work for the staff and they are adjusting jobs to accommodate it. It was asked if there were any benefits to returning books delivered from other libraries back to the original library to relieve staff work but Ms. Faherty said deliveries are happening no matter what so it does not make a difference. The service is about what is easiest for patrons.

The Board also asked what traffic to the new location was like so far. Ms. Faherty reported that it has fluctuated and times that were expected to be slow, like Sundays, have been unexpectedly busy. They did not expect this facility to attract families but a lot of people are bringing their children in. Because of this the staff has set up a number of shelves in the front hallway that does allow for limited browsing of childrens material. Evenings have been more inconsistent with traffic, especially with only three computers available for 30 minutes at a

time. Most people have come in to do their business and leave. People are coming in despite there being limited parking and less books to browse.

There have also been adjustments needed for the staff because of the smaller space they are working in. According to Ms. Faherty there used to be an average of 11 people working desks in the old building, now there are about four. A new job has also been created with running books back and forth to the storage room. The idea has been discussed of allowing patrons in the back with staff escorting them but it has not been deemed safe yet. Patrons also needed staff to show them how to browse virtually and look at other libraries catalogs. While BCCLS is very user friendly some people still need assistance. This means there has been a lot more in depth reference help. There is a lot more face to face interaction with patrons than previous.

Ms. Hilton gave an update for moving to the Baird and as of now she says it is looking to be open in late March. She says they are still working to get all necessary approvals. Issues have continued in regards to the elevator and fire suppression system as well finishing up the contractor's punch list. Ms. Karp expressed thanks on behalf of the Board to Ms. Hilton for all her advocacy on behalf of the library.

- b. *Review of services:* Ms. Faherty provided some statistics that will be reported in the NJSL Annual Report for 2023, which will be available to the Board once completed. Some key trends were:
- i. > 70K visited the library last year
  - ii. increase in library card holders. This is in part because of people wanting to take advantage of BCCLS.
  - iii. 1,595 people of all ages participated in the summer reading program and read 3,197 books
  - iv. 45 computers are provided for public usage; provided access internet access for 10,648 sessions
  - v. [sopl.org](http://sopl.org) was accessed 169,346 times for catalog and other database access
  - vi. 2% increase in circulation
  - vii. For programming there was a great turn out throughout the year, across all ages with about 14,000 attendees.

Right now the library is not offering programs but there have been a lot of requests from patrons for them. The staff is looking forward to starting up once more. This all does depend on looking at how budget cuts may affect staffing as well as needing space to host programs. It is the hope that the Baird will be open soon so that they can utilize the space for this.

Ms. Faherty shared that these stats are changing everyday and hopes to continue programs and great collection development along with the help of BCCLS. Ms. Karp stated that in terms of in person programming, the Board is committed to offering the same level of community support despite not being in the same space. Ms. Faherty said it might be hard to offer the same level but they've seen their numbers grow and are on the right path. She wants to make it clear to the community that the library has not been shut down and will continue to maintain a level of services. What this will exactly look like will depend on what the budget looks like.

She and the staff are aware that programming does attract people to the library. If they just offer a collection without any programming numbers will decrease. Ideas such as limiting the capacity of programs and having pre registrations have been suggested. There is less staff and less space to handle them. One program this will affect is the regular storytimes. The goal is to eventually hold them at the Baird as there is no space for programs at Walton except for possibly some book discussions. The staff has gone out into the community to local businesses to see about locations but all would invoice the library for use of the space. Other potential locations include the Skate House or SOPAC.

The Board along with Ms. Faherty recognize the importance of programs, especially children's programs, at the library for the community. Another idea Ms. Faherty mentioned is decreasing the capacity of programs like storytime, but increasing the frequency of them so more people have a chance to attend one. It was also pointed out that programming outside the library is not unusual. Traditionally about 30 to 40 programs a year have been done offsite. The challenge so far has just been finding a more permanent space to do them. Staff preparation for programs must also be taken into account. An average storytime may only take 15 to 30 minutes to plan while a more in depth one like a bird watching walk could take closer to an hour to prep and more time to promote it.

Dr. Bean-Folkes added how she thinks Ms. Faherty is on the right track with a focus on children's programs. In her professional experience she has seen a shift across the State to focusing on reading and a balance with phonetics. She predicts a flux back to public libraries when parents realize the importance of reading with their children.

Ms. Faherty agrees and said she already sees this. It is one of the reasons they created the shelf space at Walton for children's books. Youth Services Librarian. Keisha Miller, has already been working to maintain her already present connections with the school district. An early idea with the move was to

have her stationed at the schools a couple hours each week. This was something done by the Maplewood public library during their construction with their own teen librarian. Dr. Bean-Folkes pointed out that the high school library has been closed for its own construction and will be this summer. She believes the middle school one will be open though and a number of the elementary schools will be open for summer programs. Ms. Faherty said she and Ms. Miller will be in touch with Dr. Bean-Folkes soon to discuss this further and see where there is the most need for library services.

**10) Current and Upcoming:** The next Board meeting scheduled virtually for March 19th at 7:30pm. Meetings will continue virtually through March, after which they will evaluate a space to hold future meetings.

**11) Executive Session:** A motion was made at 8:45pm by Mr. O'Leary to go into executive session for the discussion of the 2024 SOPL budget and impact. These matters may be made public at a later date.

**12)** A motion to end the Executive Session and return to the public meeting was made by Mr. O'Leary and seconded by Dr. Bean-Folkes at 9:38. The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:38pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Jenna Leis*