

Watchung Library Advisory Committee Minutes-  
January 27, 2021

Mission statement: The mission of the Watchung Library Advisory Board is to advise, support, and promote the interests of the Watchung Borough Free Public Library.

A reorganization meeting of the WLAB was held through this link (<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/913760517>)--an audio and video call--as all gatherings of ten or more people are prohibited due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Please be advised that, pursuant to a new borough policy, all committee meetings will be recorded; at 4:01 PM, all participants were alerted that recording had begun.

President Amy Fiorilla posted the agenda (which had been emailed in advance to all members) then opened and called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

In attendance:

- \*Amy Fiorilla, President
- \*Margaret Ellis, Vice President
- \*Tamara Benc, Secretary
- \*Hannah Kerwin, Watchung Library Branch Manager
- \*Virginia Hartmann, newly-appointed member
- \*Bradford Leigh, newly-appointed member
- \*Barbara Steinfeld, newly-appointed member
- \*Lindsay Goodloe, Borough Council member
- \*Daryl Eisenberg Knegten, Borough Council member
- \*Pietro Martino, Borough Council member
- \*Tricia Keane, Valley View Librarian
- \*Andy Baldassarre
- \*Maureen Hemsworth
- \*Nina Leach
- \*A tile titled "Borough" also appeared on the screen; there was no way to determine with whom this tile may have been associated.
- \* Mayor Keith Balla (joined late in meeting)

Mayor Keith Balla made the following appointments to this committee at the Borough Council Meeting on January 7, 2021:

Barbara Steinfeld: Filling unexpired term ending 12/31/2022

Bradford Leigh: Three year term ending 12/31/2023

Virginia Hartmann: Three year term ending 12/31/2023

Minutes of the November 2020 meeting were e-mailed to members in advance of the meeting for review. Vice President Ellis made a motion to accept the minutes; the motion was seconded by President Fiorilla.

Treasurer Couchells, who was unable to attend this meeting, shared the WLAB financial report with President Fiorilla and Secretary Benc in advance of the meeting via e-mail. Highlights appear below:

The last report dated 11/16/2021 showed a balance of **\$11,214.00**.

Treasurer Couchells has not received a finance report from Borough CFO William Hance since November 2020. However, REEFACO Aquarium services submitted invoices for \$80.00 each for December 2020 and January 2021 which have been paid, resulting in an anticipated balance of **\$11,054.00**.

There is also a small check for \$6.87 from the SCLS which will be deposited in the WLAB account; after that transaction posts, the updated balance is expected to be **\$11,060.87**.

The new library refrigerator purchased by the borough is now scheduled to be delivered by Home Depot on February 4. The old refrigerator is on order to be hauled away at delivery.

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, the borough stopped water cooler service in all town buildings. The fish food at the library was running out in December. The Friends of the Watchung Library donated a supply of water bottles to the library for staff use. This was a time-sensitive issue necessitating an expenditure of a small amount. In her written notes to President Fiorilla, Treasurer Couchells made the following suggestion: "The board should discuss instituting a more streamlined process of authorizing and obtaining funds for the library for small purchases without having to call a meeting of the entire board. If we had some rule allowing for a maximum amount of say, \$50-\$100 to be spent for necessary items after being approved by the President, the Treasurer, and maybe one other board member, it would have made life a little easier for us all. A number of e-mails and discussions around purchasing a supply of fish food and water bottles for the staff ensued and it took about two weeks to get what was needed for the library." In summation, there would not be a physical cash box but an expectation that expenses of this size would be reimbursed. Branch manager Kerwin suggested a maximum of \$100. per occurrence. Council Member Martino read from the borough ordinance that all "expenditures are subject to borough approval." The police chief and administrator/clerk have a petty cash account. He suggested that further clarification be obtained from Jim D'Amato and Bill Hance. President Fiorilla tabled the discussion until a conversation takes place with Mr. D'Amato.

Vice President Ellis presented the Friends of the Watchung Library report. Used books in excellent condition were donated to the Cresthaven Charter School in Plainfield and K-12 schools in the Philippines. The Friends are also helping to restock the Little Free Library in Watchung. Members of the Friends' group are eagerly looking forward to doing more of the things they used to do in the near future.

Library Services Manager Chris Korwenowsky was not present to provide a report.

Regarding the New Jersey State Library Grant Fund, President Fiorilla noted that one of the criteria for the award is that there is demonstrable support for the library amongst the community. How can we show greater support for the Watchung Library to improve our grant application? Fiorilla suggested we form a subcommittee to explore options for increasing community awareness. Ellis, Hartmann, Leigh and Steinfeld volunteered for this subcommittee; Steinfeld will serve as the alternate member.

Hannah Kerwin, Watchung Library Branch Manager, presented her report. She noted that a great deal of library use at this time is digital: downloading, virtual programs, etc. Any reports relating to library usage should rely on data from pre-covid times; data from the immediate past year is singular and would provide an inaccurate picture of library usage. On a related note: Digital data cannot be attributed to one branch; the library system does not attribute digital loans or usage by branch designation.

Branch Manager Kerwin welcomed new members Hartmann, Leigh, and Steinfeld to the board and offered to give them a personalized tour of the library and to introduce them to staff members.

She also noted that the previous Watchung Library Branch Manager, Doug Poswencyk, retired at the end of the previous year. He served in the library system for 30+ years, many years at WGL.

Kerwin also described the "Civic Services" offered by the library system. It is the name of a sort of "catch all" for services like passport information, notary services, outreach services, volunteers, etc. Examples of services

include community living outreach provided to Brandywine and the home delivery pilot program (details of which are still being worked out.)

Reefco Services came recently and all is well with the fish. In fact, the fish are thriving and quite popular with patrons.

To conclude her remarks, Kerwin thanked President Fiorilla for her service. She was often present in the library and well-versed about its history and services. Kerwin mentioned Fiorilla's efforts to photograph other libraries as she (Fiorilla) helped prepare and author this board's subcommittee report about necessary features in a new library/community center. She concluded by stating that the library staff feels fortunate to have had President Fiorilla leading the Watchung Library Advisory Board. Vice President Ellis echoed these sentiments and thanked Fiorilla for her many years of dedicated service.

Lighting in the library parking lot was discussed. The dim lights in the parking lot were addressed at a meeting with Charles Gunther in 2020, who was looking into replacing the existing fixtures with brighter LED lighting. These do not appear to have been upgraded. This is a public safety hazard and could lead to slips and falls, and open the town to liabilities.

Councilman Martino reported that there are some trying times ahead of the borough, but upkeep at the library (including trees marked along the Best Lake parking lot) is still at the top of the list. Board members noted that the parking lot lighting is dim and inadequate and this presents a public safety hazard that could lead to slips and falls, causing personal injury and opening the town to liabilities.

President Fiorilla noted that the county library commission meets the first Wednesday of every month. This month's meeting will be held at 7 PM on February 3. The commission is in charge of the entire county library system; WLAB members are encouraged to attend meetings (which are currently held virtually, with a link on the commission's website.)

Lindsay Goodloe, council liaison, thanked WLAB members for their service and welcomed new members. On a separate note, she shared that committee reports to council will now be presented only monthly. She reached out to Borough Administrator James D'Amato and Chief Financial Officer Bill Hance during the course of this meeting regarding the suggested establishment of a petty cash-like fund and will continue to discuss the plan. She stated this use is not related to the borough ordinance.

There was no new business, so prior to adjournment, the annual reorganization portion of the meeting, including the election of officers, took place. Amy Fiorilla nominated Tamara Benc as President; the nomination was seconded by Vice President Ellis. The vote was unanimous in favor of Benc.

Fiorilla suggested Ellis continue in her position as Vice President. Benc nominated Hartmann to serve as Secretary, and she accepted the nomination. President Fiorilla confirmed that Treasurer Couchells was willing to continue in her position as Treasurer. Voting took place; all officers were unanimously elected.

The next scheduled WLAB meeting dates are March 17, May 19, July 21, September 15, November 17, January 19 (2022)

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Benc