

SAUCON VALLEY LIBRARY TASK FORCE MEETING

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2011
Time: 5:10 PM
Location: Lower Saucon Township

Present: Lower Saucon Township: Mike Karabin, Lynn Koehler, Tom Maxfield, Cathy Gorman, Jack Cahalan, Kim LaBrake
Hellertown Borough: Joe Pampanin, Tina Krasnansky
Hellertown Area Library: Jessica Goedel, Alison Finkbeiner, Robin Rotherham, Mike Evangelista

Committees:

Demographic/Statistics:

Alison Finkbeiner
Lynn Koehler
Jessica Goedel

Building:

Kim LaBrake
Joe Pampanin
Mike Evangelista

Technology:

Gail Nolf
Mike Karabin
Jack Cahalan

Finance:

Reverend Lamar Handwerk
Tom Maxfield
Cathy Gorman
Tina Krasnansky

1. Approval of Minutes from March 10th meeting – Jack said let him know if there are any corrections. Otherwise, they'll post them on the library page on the Township website.

2. Committee Reports –

- Demographic/Statistics – Jessica said there were some statistics passed out already. Lynn went over the BAPL's statistics. Someone said that goes into Mike's question a little bit, how many children are using the BAPL, at least for Lower Saucon. Lynn said she just got the 2010 figures last week, so she wasn't able to do a comparison. They wanted to do a survey a little more in-depth. She'd like to make it one page. If there are any questions, you want answered, ask them now or email them to her. Jessica said she can go over the Hellertown numbers. The census numbers are cut and dry. When more numbers come out, she will fill them in. You can see how many cardholders they have from 18017 and 18015 zip codes. Cathy said 18015 is Lower Saucon. Jack said he's surprised there is that many. Someone said Hellertown is really close to the residents on the east side of Lower Saucon and they may say they are not going over the Bethlehem when it's a mile away from her house. Jack asked if there were any new patrons from 2010? When you say non-resident, are they Lower Saucon? Someone said 99% of them are Lower Saucon residents. There may be a few from Freemansburg and some even from Bethlehem. Kim said the PA ACCESS goal is not that much under the Hellertown goal. Cathy said it's almost like a 50/50 split. Robin said the maximum they have for story time is 12 as the Mom's stay. They have taken waiting lists. Jessica said they have their annual Sweetheart fund which is just donations. They have how many people from Lower Saucon donated to the fund. Kim said the HAL a great library for its size. Lynn said they are going to do another survey. Kim said is there a way, based on the question, to do a survey monkey? Lynn said yes. Someone said they are going to be holding a book sale this summer at the high school, and they usually have to pay to get in, but they can say it's free to Lower Saucon and Hellertown residents only for the first day and that way everyone who is there is from Lower Saucon or Hellertown and we could administer a survey that way. Robin said they sent a newsletter to about 300 people and she could go through it and see who is from Lower Saucon and who is from Hellertown. We could do some things on Community Day and events like that. If we get a lack of responses, then we could consider doing something pushier. Lynn said maybe we could do something at Community Day and have the Task Force there. Jack said that's a good idea. Lynn said this would be the first survey to see what people want, what they'd like to have, and what they like already. Jack said it's a general survey? Lynn

said they are looking for statistics. Jack said he was thinking we could also tell them something about what we are doing but we won't know that until we get further along in the process. Lynn said there can be a second survey. Someone said the Community Day idea was good. We should consider having a stand there as that's a great place to introduce this and people can sit and ask questions. Jack said you can do that at the Farmer's Market also and they will give you space. You can give them information and collect emails. Jack said we could pick a Sunday and get some volunteers and go down there. It's from 9 AM to 1 PM. Joe said if we do a general survey, they did one for Parks, and they were able to get a lot of information, just by the way they worded it. Someone said when they get their survey together, they can email it to everyone and get some input. Kim said at some point, there's going to be a public meeting that puts things on the table that have been produced and/or requested and depending on how that's received, is really the point where those numbers come together. We're going to say we have three options we thought would work and it works for so many things, and that's where you take it and put it back into one option and get your final numbers.

- Technology – Jack said he, Gail and Mike K. sent out a technology questionnaire to the Bethlehem, Area Public Library (BAPL), the Hellertown Area Library (HAL), Easton Area Library, Allentown Public Library, and Southern Lehigh. They got responses back from BAPL, HAL, and Easton. It's mostly yes and no questions that were on that questionnaire. All three of them have a technology plan and he has copies of them. They haven't really gone through them yet. It's something we can all think about. This gives you a snap shot of some of the side-by-side comparisons. Basically, they are about the same. Robin indicated at the top of the questionnaire they do not have adequate internet connections or adequate public internet workstations. Everything else seems to be all the same for the three agencies. On the last question about data bases, this is something they will look into. They are still gathering information and hopefully they will get responses from Allentown and Southern Lehigh. They should have a good sampling of all of the libraries. There are state standards for library technology. Mike K. said he did witness, which we don't have here right now, when BAPL takes you through their technology storage capacity, it's rather large in comparison to what he knows about HAL. Is it worth its weight? He doesn't know until we go through and study the other parts of it. It is somewhat impressive. Robin said the Bethlehem Area District Library, is made up of Hellertown, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Northampton, and the state is now mandating that you seek a broader consortium called the Lehigh Valley District, which is Allentown District, Bethlehem District, Easton District, and also Reading District. It's a huge geographic area. She doesn't know how much money is going to come in through that. There is some technology that is coming through that. There's an overdrive, which is a downloadable E-software that the district is going to purchase with State funds and share. She would anticipate in the future there will be more Lehigh Valley District sharing. It just makes sense. Jack said he wondered how much of that helps them out with the technology operations. Robin said they also have Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton and Moravian Libraries. About two years ago, they set up another uniform catalog which is all their holdings. If you search the Allentown's library catalog, you have holdings for all those libraries. They actually have a consortium manager that manages all those things. They get all kinds of software and servers and they manage that. At the time, there were several other libraries, Hellertown included, that asked if they could get in on that, and tell us what it would cost. Jessica said speaking of demographics, they didn't gather it yet, but try to break down the numbers of Lower Saucon residents and how many people are using the computers. Kim said based on the consortium, if it was made of up of Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton and Reading Districts, and if any of those smaller libraries who belonged to that district, which Hellertown used to be part of, if they are accessing it as BAPL, she would assume everyone would have equal access, as that's the idea of a consortium. Jack said the district services are kind of nebulous. Robin said the BAPL is paid by the state to be the Bethlehem Area District Library and they get at least a quarter of a million dollars to be a district library center, and that's to provide service for three other little district libraries, including themselves. The District Librarian became the District Director. There is a new District Librarian, and she is trying very hard to figure out how she can benefit the district. Jack said we need to explore what should be available. Someone from HAL said they are concerned how the district is spending the money and where the money is going. Is the district spending money on reference books? We want the money to be spent on things like data bases and

Regina is coming to their board meeting in June, so they may be able to bring more information to the table. Jack asked if there was anything they could look at that shows the scope of what these services are? They are supposed to be available. Robin said it's in the state's standards. There are your local library standards. There are district library standards; and then there are regional library standards, which right now are Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. What the regional libraries do, Philadelphia in particular, those databases are open to anybody. She uses them all the time, along with Atlantic City as she has Ali's library card. She can't go and use the BAPL data base as you have to have a BAPL card. Jack said they can look into that. Tom said is there any kind of formation document when the consortium was first formed? Robin said she doesn't know. Tom said do you have any idea how long ago? Robin said with Reading, that's just been in the last six months. They do sign a district agreement and will sign it in May. This is what a district library will do. She can bring a copy along to the next meeting. Jack distributed a copy of a newspaper article that has to do about the concept of library with no books inside of it and very little staff. Jack said we need to come up with what we want to have and go back to the wish list.

- **Building** – Kim said what she did was scan in all the plans for the HAL. They also lined up an additional volunteer to do manipulation of the plans, who is an intern in Kim's office, and its part of her training. She's agreed to get the base plan on AutoCAD so they can have colors and use it for presentations. She will work with them on that. For those of you who were on the Rails to Trails committee, she worked with Steve and kept in contact with the Eagle Scout to put up the kiosk and helped with the design details. She said she'd love to do this too. For the next meeting, hopefully they will have the base plan. Joe said he just started to look at the population statistics, but hasn't gotten anywhere with them. He'll do that this month. Kim said they are trying to use it as a tool to understand how many people, based on conventional sizes of buildings, population, use the library and try to get a scoping of what that building needs to be in size. They will update the statistics. They will get who has actually been using BAPL, what's going on now. Someone said are you also looking at the HAL space to be utilized as is? For example, if you came and joined us, how best they could move things around? Kim said that's the key. We don't want to say we'll build an addition if there is space in the building. By doing that program analysis, to find out how much space you have now and how it's being used, the first option is always can we rearrange what we have now to make it work? Then if we can't, where should the most efficient and smartest addition be where you get the most bang for your bucks. There will be a different couple of options and let's see what we can make work now based on demographics and see if that means using the basement, etc. They will meld everything into one plan. The goal is to figure out if we can use what we have now and if we can't, the best way to fix that. Lynn said if the addition would be built, you wouldn't make any major changes to the layout, but the building may not be ready and might have to move some things around and make some space. Kim said the other thing they are looking at is based on the site, and where it sits on the site, the parking and the building, they are going to look at site wise the best place to expand. If they are looking at putting things together, you can park on the street now, but how many places is that.
- **Finance** – Cathy said last month you had requested the last three years actual expenses from both libraries and she has the information. Kim said that's part of the building issue. Once you build, how much does it cost to maintain it? If we look at the numbers, we can do a forecast. Cathy said the first two pages are BAPL's 2008 through 2010 actual figures and the last two pages are HAL's actual figures. Lynn said the 2009 and 2010 numbers are still not 100% correct from the adjustments they made with some money coming in late and things were shifted around. Cathy said if you look on the second page, there are certain things the City of Bethlehem pays on behalf of the library that are not actually shown in their fiscal budget. Lynn said some of those things are changing and they are not going to be paying as much as they don't have the money to cover it. She mentioned once before at a different meeting, every income isn't shown. The budget doesn't show grants and donations. Cathy said the library has different funds for things like endowments and other operating expenses. Kim said basically BAPL's state revenue for 2010 is up in the air. Lynn said it's a fiscal year, so yes. Lynn said she was talking about district services at the board meeting and they are going to look into that. They talked about sharing some services, but the district should or could be providing additional data base services at a lower fee than if you went

out on your own or letting the book mobile go out on Saturday's, and you could pay a rental for that. The big concept is, what we are aiming for, is a district or county or even a Lehigh Valley system, but that will take time. There may be some ways to upset what we'll be paying down the road.

3. Assignments for next meeting.

Kim said everyone knows what they need to do at this point. If there's any thing that we need from each other, they can email each other back and forth or get in touch with Jack.

4. Open Public Discussion – Kim asked if there was anyone in the public who wanted to ask questions or voice their opinion?

- Joel Katz, resident, was present. He said how many people generally speaking use the BAPL? Jack said this group's mission is not to analyze the services at the BAPL. That's under the purview of the Township Library Committee who has been doing that for the past two or three years. They make recommendations to the Township Council. That's a separate thing. What they were looking for with this body was representation from Hellertown Borough, and their Council appointed people, and the Township Council appointed representatives. We wanted representation from the HAL. The purpose of this group is to try and do a feasibility study of whether we can, as a Township, consolidate our library services at their facility. Joel said the purpose of the task force is to switch Township library services from the BAPL to HAL. Clearly, that's what you are doing. Jack said the feasibility part of study is answering the question: can we or can't we do this? Joel said the alternatives aren't whether you can. He knows the HAL, he's been there. He's proud to say they even had a book he wanted. It's like comparing a good car, and he's not talking about a Cadillac with a tiny little car. You can certainly save money by buying this tiny little car, but that's not what this decision is about. If you are telling him you can save him money by buying a tiny little car for two people and somehow expand it to four people, you can do that. If you are talking about having a library, and being useful, as a whole, you are not talking about that. One of the questions on the survey that was answered was that it's a good library for its size. It's a great library. The BAPL is a good library for its size and its size happens to be ten times more the size than the HAL. Jack said we are not here just to propose taking everyone from the large Bethlehem operation and then shifting them to the smaller Hellertown facility and try to sell that to the Township Council. That's not what the purpose of this group is for. We're trying to look for equal library services for our residents. Joel said the purpose is to save money. Jack said they are always looking to economize on services the Township purchases. Joel said he pays taxes and doesn't like paying anymore than anybody else. In his mind, you can save money by supporting the HAL, although he doesn't know what the costs are involved in that. Kim said at this point, they don't know what the costs would be. Joel said when the Planning Commission turned down the project by Meadows Road, that would have saved the Township well over a million dollars. What will happen is they will build right next to us. Joel asked about grants. Lynn said the way grants work, you apply for them and she doesn't think Lower Saucon switching from Bethlehem would pull a grant from Bethlehem. We could apply for a Keystone grant and Bethlehem could apply for a Keystone grant at the same time and they could both get approved. Everybody is going after the same private grant pool now. Joel said obviously if you have two libraries competing, the pool of money is going to be the same. It's from the State, Federal government and private. Someone said there are specific grants for expansion. Bethlehem got grants for their expansion. Joel said you are reducing BAPL's grants. Kim said if there's \$100,000.00 and we're not expanding HAL, we wouldn't be going after that grant. If BAPL was, they'd be getting a better shot and getting the money because there's less. Lynn said BAPL said they applied for money for programs, and they got it. They are not going to expand and the children's section is going to be updated, so that money is okay. Joel said he assumes everyone's budget is settled by now. Lynn said if you are talking about the money, and ask what does BAPL need? If we are talking about a new computer system, we might be applying to the Bill & Melinda Gates fund. Hellertown may be applying for the same thing, all the money is in a general fund. HAL would be asking for money anyway, so it's not going to affect them. The real number you should be concerned about is the money the state

gives to libraries to operate. If Lower Saucon leaves the library, that percent of the numbers will not be in the state budget and Hellertown would get money for that. There are so many grants and foundations out there. Joel said he thinks the issue here is preserving the BAPL. Jack said the Library Committee all supports the BAPL. At the same time, we also recognize that 50% of the people going to the HAL are Lower Saucon Township residents. Joel said what are you talking about? Robin said he is talking about the PA ACCESS number which for Lower Saucon is about 37,000 and Hellertown is about 41,000. These are people who have BAPL cards, but they are going to HAL. Jack said there is a segment of Township residents who like the BAPL. There is also a significant segment of Township residents who rave about the HAL. Robin said if we switch, the same number of people are going to stay at the HAL, and the same number will go to BAPL. Lower Saucon people can still go to the BAPL. The BAPL has a \$3 million budget and 80% of that is salaries. Mike E. said he's a Hellertown resident and he uses the HAL a lot and he used the BAPL. He doesn't want anything to happen to the BAPL. He doesn't want it to go under. There are times when he needs to get something from the BAPL. Joel said he talked to someone from BAPL, and she was fearful about Lower Saucon going with the HAL because it is extremely valuable to our community. It is anti-intellectual to believe that a small library has resources like the BAPL. The HAL does have nice facilities for children and they aren't bad people, and he's not saying they aren't intellectual. Ali said you are saying that people who go to the HAL do not read and are not into research. They work at the HAL and answer plenty of reference questions. She could ask both of them in a library with a \$3 million budget or a budget like HAL. Jack said the Task Force is looking for equal library services. Joel said you can't have equal library services. It's impossible. Robin said the Township has a unique possibility of creating a library expressly for Lower Saucon and for Hellertown – a community library. Not a big city library supported by city funds. A community library. They can create that they way they want it. Joel said you've heard of the New York Public Library and it has a main building. It's a fantastic facility by anyone's standards. If NY City was to decide that they didn't want that library, you wouldn't give up that library for 409 local libraries. The point he's trying to make is that library is not useful because it's a community library. Someone said they are not trying to close the BAPL. Cathy said the BAPL recognizes community libraries. They have the Southside Branch library. Lynn said it's a great library and focuses on the people who live in that community. BAPL was her main library before she moved, and it's a phenomenal library. She would never dream of having it closed just because Lower Saucon moves. Look at BAPL's number, how much the funding has dropped and look at HAL's number to see how much the funding has dropped. You really need to go to your State lawmakers. Joel said he understands that and that's the economy we live in. Someone said BAPL is not going to close because of this decision. Tom M. said with the ACCESS PA we can go there and still get books. You call BAPL a Cadillac and the HAL a two-seater, but part of what they are doing is looking at this whole situation and deciding if we need a Cadillac. Jessica said Joel commented in his article he wrote about if Lower Saucon went to BAPL, they would be mooching on Bethlehem. That's not the case at all. Half of our patrons are from Lower Saucon. Bethlehem makes a ton of money with Lower Saucon as patrons. Robin said how much funding do we get from Lower Saucon? None and 45% of our patrons are from the Township. We don't get any money from the Township. We don't get any money from the State. Jack said we still have a lot of work to do. No decisions have been made.

5. Next Meeting Date – Kim said the next meeting date is Thursday, May 12th at 5:00 PM at Lower Saucon Township Town Hall.
6. Motion to Adjourn: Meeting adjourned. The time was 6:25 PM.