

SAUCON VALLEY LIBRARY TASK FORCE MEETING

August 11, 2011

5:03 p.m.

Hellertown Borough Hall

Meeting Minutes

Present were: Tina Krasnansky, Mike Evangelista, Tom Maxfield, Robin Rotherham, Allison Finkbeiner, Gail Nolf, Lamar Handwerk, Mike Karabin, and Cathy Kichline. Also see Sign-In Sheet.

1. Approval of Minutes from July 14, 2011, Meeting

Ms. Krasnansky- There was one typo that I noticed. It was on Page 2, in Paragraph 3. The sentence starts with Mr. Cahalan speaking and instead of "I order" it should be "in order".

Motion made by Tom Maxfield, seconded by Mike Karabin, to approve the July 14, 2011, meeting minutes with correction (Gail Nolf and Cathy Kichline abstained).

2. Committee Reports

a. Demographic/Statistics

Ms. Finkbeiner-I have nothing new to report. I emailed the Bethlehem Public Library again for more statistics and to break down the check-out by material type, the top three database being used, get the amount of Lower Saucon patrons who go to storytime and summer reading. I was told that Bethlehem does not keep those records. I think it is fair, as a taxpayer, to ask them to start keeping those statistics. I have heard nothing back from Lynn Kohler.

Cathy Wile, Bethlehem Library Trustee- Myself or the Director of the Library would be happy to get you statistics.

Mary Dawson- I would like to know why there are no Bethlehem Public Library employees on this committee?

Ms. Krasnansky- When the committee was formed, it was to only include persons from Hellertown Borough and Lower Saucon Township and was to only collect information. Eventually, a report will be given to both Councils. Lynn Kohler, who is a Lower Saucon

representative, is on the Bethlehem Board. She is not present at this meeting.

Ms. Dawson- I feel that it is important since we have Hellertown Library staff here that there should be staff from the Bethlehem Public Library.

Claudia Allen, Lower Saucon Township- I would like to know the make up of the board. What percentage is from Lower Saucon Township and from Hellertown Borough?

Ms. Krasnansky- It is equal.

Ms. Nolf- No decisions have been made yet. I feel uncomfortable with having a Bethlehem Public Library staff member as part of the Committee. They have no tax or residency ownership to the outcome. I feel that it is to their advantage to give us the information and statistics. This is only a fact-finding process.

b. Technology

Mr. Karabin- I do not have anything more to add other than what Mr. Cahalan had previously presented.

c. Building

Mr. Evangelista- We did not get any more results from the census. We did not receive any more questions from the other committees.

Ms. Nolf- Are we still looking at the same financial commitment numbers as far as expansion.

Mr. Evangelista- They have not changed. We would need to know how the library would need to look like shapewise to get a better estimate. We are still within our original amount. We are waiting on the other committees and public opinion at Community Day.

d. Finance

Ms. Krasnansky- We have nothing to report at this time.

3. Community Day- August 20, 2011

Ms. Krasnansky- Mr. Cahalan forwarded the Saucon Valley Library Task Force Sheet to everyone for comments or changes. He would like to present it at Community Day.

Various changes were made to the Saucon Valley Library Task Force sheet

Mr. Maxfield- I do not want to exclude the opinion of Hellertown Residents. Is there a way, other than Community Day, to get their opinion?

Ms. Kichline- Hellertown Borough could add a comments page on our website.

Motion made by Cathy Kichline, seconded by Mike Evangelista, to approve the Saucon Valley Library Task Force Sheet with changes.

4. Assignment of Next Meeting

Ms. Krasnansky- Ms. Finkbeiner, would you please email Lynn Kohler again.

Ms. Finkbeiner- I have the age and sex breakdown for the library usage. I am still waiting on the disability status.

Ms. Krasnansky read the public opinion letters. They are attached as part of the minutes.

Ms. Nolf- Does anyone know why Hellertown and Lower Saucon residents are not allowed to attend storytime?

Ms. Finkbeiner- Anyone who is an Access Member may not attend Bethlehem Public Library's children's events. Anyone who is from a taxpaying community may attend. They have to limit the number of participants.

Mr. Dawson – This is not just the Bethlehem Public Library. Most public libraries limit the session to the communities that belong to the library.

Ms. Rotherham- Hellertown Public Library is open to anyone for storytime.

5. Open Public Discussion

Ms. Dawson- As a former employee of the Bethlehem Public Library, I know that they have over 100 storytimes a year and they have waiting lists for their storytime. They do not have the capacity to open it up to Access communities.

Is the committee planning on the Access Program continuing?

Ms. Rotherham- It is an unfunded, mandated program at this time. I believe that the Commonwealth will not get rid of this program. We allow Lower Saucon residents to take out books even though we do not receive funding from them.

Bruce Dawson, Lower Saucon Township- There seems to be a lot of smaller libraries. Perhaps consolidation for Hellertown with the Bethlehem Public Library would save money and avoid duplication. I am concerned that a lot of money will be spent on additional resources and infrastructure and Lower Saucon Township regret the decision.

Mr. Maxfield – Some of our concerns with staying with the Bethlehem Public Library were the amount of money being spent, the fact that our money was going to fund services that most Lower Saucon residents were not going to use, and the lack of available parking. The Township has not incurred a fee raise in two years. Once the new census information becomes available, there will be a significant increase in the costs. We are not looking to build a library for now. We would be looking to the future and building for 10 years from now.

Ms. Finkbeiner- This also comes down to what is best for Hellertown Library. The library may decide that this is not in their best interest either.

Ms. Rotherham- As far as consolidation of the Hellertown Library, the residents of Hellertown did not want to be part of the Bethlehem Public Library and fought really hard to have the library built.

Mr. Karabin- Once we have gathered all of the information, I would like to put it on a referendum so we can truly get a public opinion.

Paul Huda, Lower Saucon Township- I love the idea of putting this decision on a referendum. I believe that this will elevate some of the perception that a decision has already been reached.

When did Lower Saucon Township decide to partner with the Bethlehem Public Library?

Ms. Rotherham- The Hellertown Library is only about 20 years old. The Township had partnered with the Bethlehem Public Library before that time.

Ms. Finkbeiner- Another misconception that I have been hearing and I feel should be cleared up is that the Hellertown Library approached Lower Saucon Township to get them to join the library. The Township approached the Hellertown Library. We did not try to "steal" them away from Bethlehem Public Library.

Ms. Allen- I also like the idea of a referendum. I feel that we would be taking a step backward if we would switch. I believe that it will take a long time for the Hellertown Library to catch up with the resources of the Bethlehem Public Library.

Jane Steveli- I feel that the committee is comparing apples to oranges. The selection is much smaller and seems older. The apple will never be an orange.

Is the task force supposed to make a decision or just make recommendations?

Mr. Karabin- We are supposed to create options and determine if they are feasible. We would never try to replicate the entire environment of the Bethlehem Public Library in Hellertown.

Ms. Rotherham- We do not have the space to replicate the Bethlehem Public Library. 28 percent of our budget is dedicated to materials so I feel that your comment about the age of the books is incorrect. Something

else residents should consider is the proximity to the school. The library is only 4 blocks from the Saucon Valley School District Campus.

Mr. Karabin- We are trying to determine what services the residents really want because there are some services that the Township is paying for at the Bethlehem Public Library that the residents are not utilizing. For example, the Township resident's usage of the South Side branch is almost non-existent but we are paying to maintain it.

Audience Member- It is my understanding that, if this merger comes to be, you would be looking for grant money for the expansion. With the economy, will there be money available?

Ms. Krasnansky- We will be seeking grant funding. There are grants available for library issues that are less restrictive.

Ms. Kichline- Grants are considered for a source of funding, but when we make budgets, we act as if they are not there. We cannot count on them.

Resident- What is the timeline to gather all of this information?

Ms. Krasnansky- The task force will be presenting to both Councils in 2012.

The next meeting will be September 8, 2011, at Lower Saucon Township.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 p.m.