

## SAUCON VALLEY LIBRARY TASK FORCE MEETING

Date: Thursday, September 8, 2011  
Time: 5:01 PM  
Location: Lower Saucon Township

Present: Lower Saucon Township: Jack Cahalan, Tom Maxfield, Kim LaBrake, Mike Karabin, Cathy Gorman  
Hellertown Borough: Joseph Pampanin, Tina Krasnansky, Lamar Handwerk, Cathy Kichline  
Hellertown Area Library: Jessica Goedtel, Robin Rotherham,

Committees:

**Demographic/Statistics:**

Alison Finkbeiner  
Lynn Koehler  
Jessica Goedtel

**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 August 11<sup>th</sup> meeting – Motion for approval of the August 11<sup>th</sup> minutes. All in favor.

2. Committee Reports:

- Demographic/Statistics – Jessica said they have some handouts. They also have some new census data from Lower Saucon and Hellertown Borough which she didn't get to look over yet. Jack said the total population for Lower Saucon is 10,772 and Hellertown Borough is 5,198. Robin had some statistics on their summer reading program that is toddler through teen. It shows the total number of sign ups from Hellertown Borough, Lower Saucon Township, and Bucks County. They offer six different programs throughout the summer. The numbers include a parent. The first program was a magician. There were 28 attendees from the Township and 22 from the Borough. One of the events was a build a bottle powered rocket. There were 5 children there from Lower Saucon and 3 from Hellertown. They had an eight-week workshop where they visited different countries of the world for one hour a week. There were 5 that attended from the Township and 3 from Hellertown. They had two movie nights. The total for both movie nights was 10 from the Township, and one from the Borough. When she compiled these statistics, they had not yet had their closing party which was an around the world party, but it was probably equally attended by both Lower Saucon and Hellertown. They offered three story times throughout the summer. The first was four weeks there were 7 from Lower Saucon and 6 from Hellertown. A four week story time for ages 3 to 4, there were 5 from Lower Saucon and 4 from the Borough. They had a one day craft story time, ages K to 2, and that was 2 each. The total sign ups were 105, Lower Saucon was 47, which is about 45% of the total.

Gail asked Mike Karabin if he could give her an objective sense of how you feel the residents of Lower Saucon are viewing this? She has read the letters. Mike said the sense he is getting from Lower Saucon Township is they do not want to leave the Bethlehem Area Public Library. Gail said the letters she has seen, it seems half the people want to and half don't. She asked if the Lower Saucon visitors support the HAL? Robin said she actually gave the Task Force the figures for that. For the fund drive they had in February, they had more people donate from the Township than from the Borough. Gail said do they also participate in the drawings, the sales, and the special events? Robin said she would say they participate in all of the activities. They are very supportive. Gail asked what does the HAL lose if Lower Saucon does not participate? Robin said nothing.

Gail asked what does the HAL gain? Robin said there's a sense of more community involvement. Gail said she represents Hellertown's interest. When the library was first established, it was supposed to be non-tax supported. Then it was tax supportive. She's a huge fan of the HAL and doesn't have a problem of it being tax supported. It adds a lot to the quality of their community. HAL does a fantastic job and it's a quality product. She wants to think realistically about this. If Lower Saucon doesn't want it, it doesn't hurt HAL at all. She's not going to say she's for it or against it. Mike said he has talked to some residents of Hellertown and they think it's great Lower Saucon is coming to Hellertown. They seemed very supportive. Someone said Hellertown residents won't be exposed to this issue, as nothing will happen to them.

Tom said the comments and questions frustrate him a little bit. A lot of the letters that they receive, the individuals are suffering from the misinformation that is being put out in the editorials. There seems to be an assumption that we would just dive into the HAL, and nothing would change. Our whole conversation here is what we can do with technology and those kinds of things. We have a lot of comments coming from older residents, who of course, are going to be uncomfortable with the loss of books. He doesn't want to characterize the Lower Saucon people as not wanting to do this. We have heard from only a small section of people and there are assumptions that just aren't the case. It wouldn't be possible to join HAL and maintain it the way it is. That would be silly. It's an extra load; it's an extra burden. There's extra money that could go into it, why not build for the future. Let's look to the future. We'd be ignorant to not look at the trends that are happening. He's frustrated when he reads them as they've put out statements numerous times and it's like we said nothing. That comes from Hellertown and Lower Saucon. Gail said she likes his thought process. They are not trying to duplicate BAPL. They are trying to move into something that is more relevant into what our community needs. They are moving into a new technology and offering services which BAPL doesn't offer. That makes sense to her. Tom said or offer it to them in a different way. They were listening to a couple of comments from the public like the book mobile. A resident said they can go to the bookmobile and order a book and the next time the bookmobile comes, it's usually there. Tom said go on line and order it and have it delivered or pick it up. It's twice as easy to do that. Let's think about what is possible for the future. He's very hopeful about this process and very excited about the communities working together, about the new attitudes, and to him, this is a combination of how we are working together as communities to make it better for everyone.

- Technology – Jack said he and Mike will be getting together. Someone said they did have some data come back from Bethlehem. She will pass it on to Jack. It's what gets used more there on a daily basis. Gail said we can look at what kind of technologies are coming off the horizon for libraries, other than looking at what's always been done.
- Building – Kim said they are on hold right now because of the census numbers, but now they know how many people are in Hellertown and Lower Saucon Township.
- Finance – No report.

3. Community Day Statement and Editorial - Discussion – Kim said we had Community Day and there was information handed out. When she talked to people, she didn't ask if they were from Hellertown or Lower Saucon. Robin said she got positive responses like it was time for this to be looked at. Why is it taking so long? Those kinds of responses. She didn't get any comments from anyone saying don't do this. Kim said her responses were all positive. A good portion of them were based on a community level, the economics and what's going on, not only for the library, but the police department and the fire department and looking at combining services overall to help stabilize the financial base for both communities. It may be a way to bring the community together and function as a unit. Mike asked how many pamphlets were passed out at Community Day? Kim said they made about 125 pamphlets and most of them were passed out. The one comment she did receive from a woman was she wanted to tell her a story that happened this week. There was a new best seller out that she was interested in reading. She had gotten it and her friend said she was on the waiting list to get it at BAPL. The friend wanted to borrow it, but was told no, that she wanted to get it back to the library for whoever was next on the waiting list. She was going to take it back to the HAL the

next week. The friend said she's been on the waiting list at the BAPL for a lot of books. She was sort of not happy that the book was not there. The woman told her to go to the HAL with her card and you'll be able to get it there. Kim and Robin positioned themselves at the little train where there was a younger age demographic and they tried to hit everyone in-between. She probably talked to half Lower Saucon and half Hellertown. Someone said he was down at the Lions stand and he heard a lot of negative comments about the book mobile being there. He told them this was a Township event and the book mobile does serve the Township. Jack said the word got out from Lynn Koehler about getting the book mobile at Community Day. It was an interesting addition to the whole celebration. They offered a story time and were offering crafts.

Jack said the Letter to the Editor was published in the Valley Voice, the Bethlehem Press, Morning Call and Express Times. We got all the coverage we were trying to catch. It went on the PATCH and stayed on for a couple of days. Jessica wrote on the PATCH, and she wanted to comment as the facts that kept coming out from Bethlehem were not true and she kept her comments as basic as she could.

Robin said it's just a suggestion to the Task Force. The ACCESS PA program keeps coming up. She doesn't have the answers to that. It may be wise for the Task Force to invite someone from the Commonwealth Libraries to come to the Task Force. She's sure they would be happy to come and address the ACCESS PA as it seems to be a big issue. She will contact them and see if they can make the next meeting.

4. Assignments for next meeting – The Demographics Committee will get more statistics together. The Building Committee will try to get some new numbers on square footage. Tom said the statistics given about how many Lower Saucon people use the HAL and he was wondering if we would go with HAL, how much would the usage really change. Someone said they don't know how you can answer that. There seems to be a lot of people are for it or against it and they are going to stay with BAPL or go with HAL. With the numbers, they got quite a few of Lower Saucon patrons already coming to the HAL. It's going to be a tough question to answer. Tom said it is going to depend on a lot of factors. He would think with the new census, it won't jump that much. Kim said there are a high percentage of Lower Saucon residents already using the HAL, so it comes down to how to make that correlation. Do you assume a 20% jump and it really comes down to the demographics. It's going to be a tough one.

5. Open Public Discussion

- Someone said what is the contract total for the BAPL? Jack said about \$173,000.00 a year. He asked what about HAL? Someone said HAL doesn't get anything. The person said is there any idea what HAL would charge the Township? Someone said the plan presented to Lower Saucon, the first two years they would charge \$15.00 per capita if they were to switch. Now they are paying \$17.65/person at BAPL. Then at HAL, the third year, it would drop to whatever Hellertown is paying the HAL, and that is currently \$10.65. That again was the initial proposal presented. Nothing is set in stone. It was presented to Lower Saucon so they would see the immediate savings, and then the long-term savings as well. Tom said we are paying about \$17.00 plus per capita at BAPL. It's been kept low the last couple of years because we complained about it. It's been capped. It normally would be higher than that now, and we expect when the new census numbers come out, it will be higher.
- Eileen said her concern is the book mobile. She came from Allentown. She and her son really depend on the book mobile. If there was public transportation to take her to Hellertown, that would be great. Someone from HAL said they may be able to get a book mobile for Lower Saucon. Jack said the book mobile stop is in that area, how do you get to it? Eileen said she walks to it. Someone said the most important thing is everyone has access to all the information they want. Kim said that's another piece of information. What is the radius and where do they stop. They can look at the map and see how far people are walking. The demographic committee can put some information together on the book mobile and how far people are walking and who is using it. Tom said the feeling he gets from the other members is it's a balance. Achieving a balance. Nobody wants to do anything if the majority of the people aren't satisfied. Lower Saucon residents

can go on paying that money, and it's not going to break out budget, and we did have comments and we felt we weren't getting the service we deserved.

Someone said they got a \$10.00 parking ticket right outside the BAPL and if you don't pay it within a certain time, it goes up. Just half a block up, it's residential and they have parking in the rear of the homes, but there is ample parking in front of their homes.

A resident asked can people still go to the BAPL? Someone said PA has a program called ACCESS. If you were a Hellertown Borough resident, and you went to BAPL, Bethlehem would get some of the money. Now they stopped funding it, but if you were to go to BAPL, they wouldn't get any money from ACCESS. It's been unfunded for many years now. As long as you have a library card, you can go to any library in PA.

Gail asked if there was no public transportation in Lower Saucon? Jack said it's on 412 and ends at the Giant. Gail asked the resident how she then got to the BAPL? The resident said sometimes she will go with someone. A resident said HAL would have to get a bigger building. Kim said that's what they are talking about. Tom said we know what the offerings are from the BAPL and we wanted to explore other options.

- The representative from BAPL said there wouldn't be an increase in the per capita this year according to the preliminary budget. One thing would happen if Lower Saucon decides to disengage itself from the BAPL, you still would be able to take out materials from the BAPL, but there would be no participation in programming for children or adults. The library code she read last year said you will have to have a referendum if you are going to do this. How much input will the public have? Is it the Council who will have the decision or the community? Tom said if it goes by referendum, it's the citizens. The Council would make a decision on whether to proceed with it. Someone said they should get someone here from the BAPL to sit with this committee. Gail said she gets the feeling that Bethlehem wasn't very receptive to the committee's requests. They were a little bit angry, scared and upset. She personally doesn't have a problem with them sitting here. That's up to the committee to decide though. If the BAPL comes and sits on this board, then they need to present information objectively and not come in with the attitude of threats and being non-responsive to information. From what she's hearing, people have asked for things three times and it's at BAPL's advantage to show that information. If Bethlehem has a better product, they need to be a better communicator. We are not a voting board. They will come up with a consensus to present to Lower Saucon at the end and a consensus to present to Hellertown Board. They will issue a report with a recommendation.

Jack said from the Township's perspective, the BAPL has always been cooperative with the Township and they've always been responsive. Gail said she feels they are not responsive to this committee. Jack said Lynn Koehler is very valuable and she answers any questions that are asked. Some data isn't available. Gail said maybe it would be a good idea to invite them so there is a direct communication. Jack said in the beginning we didn't want this to be HAL versus BAPL back and forth. This is a fact finding group who is supposed to come up with information about a concept of a library. It doesn't specifically mean that BAPL or HAL is lacking. Kim said the invitation was put out to the BAPL that this is an open, public meeting. All of the meeting minutes are recorded and they are all on the website. Jack said they usually bring the minutes to the next meeting and they are approved.

Gail said maybe a formal invitation would be appropriate to invite someone from the BAPL to the next meeting. She doesn't feel any animosity from Hellertown to Bethlehem, but she's feeling it from Bethlehem to Hellertown. Bethlehem feels threatened as they could lose up to \$200,000.00 and they feel it's going to impact services. She feels residents of Lower Saucon Township feel threatened as the information is never going to get out there the way we talk about it here. Number one, it's an emotional issue, number two, it's a financial issue, so she thinks we do need someone from BAPL invited to come and sit and share their thoughts and concerns with us so we can work those issues out and have some direct communication. Mike said it's been said before, we have a

task, and that's why it's called a Task Force. If we don't have an answer from BAPL or HAL, it's the Task Force's job to get an answer. If we don't get answers, we will be coming forward without a complete recommendation. He finds it hard to believe that BAPL would not respond to us. It's our job to make sure we get all those answers to the questions we are asked.

Someone said the editorials had untrue information in them? What was it? Kim said it was the same editorial run in quite a few newspapers by BAPL. The main issue was they said that HAL would be charging Lower Saucon \$15.00 as opposed to \$17.75 and that it was a very small amount of money. The truth is that was for the first two years to cover any costs incurred, then after two years, then it would reset to whatever Hellertown is paying which is \$10.65, and that's a significant difference. In reality, it wasn't a minimal price difference. Tom said when we first started looking into the issues that Council needed information from BAPL, the information wasn't available, but they were also amazed that it wasn't available. There were things that they couldn't give us number on how many books were taken out and how many residents from Lower Saucon actually used the library. If one resident came in and took out 20 books, the number that was used was 20. They were looking for specific information at that time as they wanted to evaluate if their money was being spent wisely and they couldn't get that information because it didn't exist. Those are the kinds of things we need to know. Someone said does Hellertown track by patron how many books they take out. If she was from Bethlehem Township, would you be able to tell. Robin said it's for library card holders. No one from Bethlehem Township comes, but they could. The majority of their card holders with a Bethlehem address are from Lower Saucon. Jack said we are looking for data and in some cases it doesn't exist. It's the way their system is set up. Tom said then again if you are asking communities for that kind of money, the community should have that information. We needed to know how many residents are using the BAPL and couldn't get that information. Someone said she thinks they do have that data, that's what she got from Lynn. Kim said if we got that information now, that's great. If there are 10,000 residents, and 9,000 people are using it or it is 9,000 books? That's the difference.

Someone said there should be a town hall meeting. Jack said they will have a community meeting at some point. They will have a presentation for the public for questions and answers. Jack said the Task Force role is not to be swayed one way or another, it's to collect data. That doesn't change the direction of this Task Force. Someone said they can break it down by book, type, check out, age, by district. Looking at the numbers, HAL gets more check outs from Lower Saucon residents than BAPL does. Kim said this is based on the numbers that BAPL provided. BAPL cards check out more books at HAL than Lower Saucon patrons do at BAPL.

Tom said he feels bad that as a Lower Saucon resident, we aren't giving Hellertown any money right now. Someone said the PA ACCESS program has these benefits and it's common all over the State of PA. You are still serving people and you don't tell them you can't come here.

Gail said do Lower Saucon residents contribute in some way with fundraising? Robin said they do and they volunteer and donate books. Someone asked how many computers do you have to serve the community? Robin said presently they have seven public access computers to serve about 5,000 people. There is one in the teen area. Tom said that is something they would definitely have to upgrade if we joined together. Robin said they have a waiting time now as she's sure BAPL does too. They limit it to 30 minutes.

Kim said do we want to make a specific invitation just like we are inviting PA ACCESS. Someone said we could ask a staff member to come and speak. Mike said if we are having a regional rep come in, instead of printing out the invitation, he'd like to hear them as a Task force and compile some questions for anyone who would be coming from BAPL. Kim said is everyone okay with having a staff member from BAPL at future meetings? Someone said he's against it if they are coming to the Task Force meeting. It defeats the purpose. Tom said he agreed. Kim said they are always welcome as it's a public meeting and it's been open. At this point, one of the tasks we will review the past minutes and notes and if there's anything specific you may want to ask directly. Mike said he doesn't want them here too soon. We have to be educated enough. Kim said the next

assignment is what questions do you want answered. Someone said they will forward the demographics that Lynn sent to her. Kim said at least we'll have some questions and if it's a demographic issue, that they can be released ahead of time to BAPL. That way the staff member who comes is prepared and has the answers. Kim said we are tasked with a final report to Hellertown and Lower Saucon in July 2012. This is a long term fact finding mission. There are staffs from both the Borough and the Township. Mike said it will probably go out to referendum. Tom said it's really, really important for that voter to be informed. He asked if it would bother anyone if someone from BAPL staff came and he asked financial questions like the financial health of the BAPL, what the future is of the library, what is the outlook for the next five years? Their feeling was the BAPL was having financial problems. Someone said she thinks every library is. It's a valid question, but libraries all over the country, it's hard. Tom said some of the services now that exist may not exist in the future. If he was a librarian, and working out really tough finances, he would look at things like the book mobile. Kim said if we have those questions ahead of time, that might be better. Someone said we are hearing things from the public, and it's in the minutes, they are not allowed to use the story time as they are not Bethlehem residents. Someone said you can if you are in the system. Robin said that's not true as Hellertown residents cannot come to your story times. Someone said you are not in the system. Someone said we need to get the facts and get those questions answered.

Jack said current services offered to Township residents at the BAPL are actually under the purview of the Township Library Committee, they are tasked by the Council to look at those services and if they feel something needs to be fixed or added, they communicate that. That wasn't a task for the Task Force. It was to talk about and to gather data about a concept of a joint consolidation of library services. When this group talks about a building or library services, they are talking about a concept. They are not talking about breaking ground or adding an addition to the HAL. We are talking about an idea and trying to put all the nuts and bolts into it so the public has an idea. What something like this would cost the residents and then make a decision. In order to get to that concept, we have to talk about buildings, numbers, technology, but that doesn't mean we are all ready to go out and build it tomorrow. That's not what our job is. It's to come up with a concept for a consolidated library and see if it works. Tom said it's a feasibility study.

6. Next Meeting Date – October 13, 2011 at 5:00 pm.
7. Motion to Adjourn: Meeting adjourned. The time was 6:30 PM.