

Watchung Library Advisory Committee Minutes, January 18, 2023 – **FINAL**

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

The meeting of the WLAB was held in person in the Bicentennial Room of the Watchung Library. The meeting was also held through an audio and video call. Please go to the Watchung Borough web site to view the video.

Please be advised that, pursuant to a Borough policy, all committee meetings will be recorded; at 5:36 PM all participants were alerted that recording had begun.

President Tamara Benc posted the agenda (which had been emailed in advance to all members), then opened and called the meeting to order at 5:44 PM.

Attendance:

Tamara Benc, President – present
Margaret Ellis, Vice President – present
Stella Couchells, former Treasurer – present via Zoom
Virginia Hartmann, Secretary – present
Bradford Leigh, new Treasurer – present via Zoom
Ann Cruz Koufomihalis – new WLAB member – present
Marianne Candiloros – new WLAB member -- present
Gail Tafaro O'Donnell, former WLAB member -- present
Wendy Robinson, Borough Council Member, former Library Liaison – absent
Paul Fischer, Borough Council Member, new Library Liaison -- present
George Alexis, School Superintendent – absent
Hannah Kerwin, Watchung Library Branch Manager – present
Patricia Keane, Valley View Librarian – present
Ron Jubin, Mayor, Watchung Borough – present

The first order of business was to swear in the new WLAB members. Ann Koufomihalis and Marianne Candiloros were both sworn in by Mayor Jubin.

Minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting were emailed to members in advance of the meeting for review. Ms. Ellis moved that the minutes be approved. Ms. Benc seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Dr. Couchells gave the following treasurer's report:

The WLAB escrow account totaled \$21,090.05 on November 16, 2022. The Aquarium Fund comprised \$3,772.11 of that total and \$17,317.94 remained in our general funds.

Two payments totaling \$180.00 were made to REEFCO for aquarium maintenance. There was one charge for \$80.00 on 11/15/2022 and one for their new fee of \$100.00 withdrawn on 12/12/2022 for basic cleaning.

I delivered a holiday luncheon platter to the library staff on Monday, December 6th on behalf of the WLAB. \$149.90 was deducted from our escrow account in payment for that.

I also asked Mr. Hance and Mr. Damato to deduct the charge of \$1534.00 for the outdoor chairs the WLAB purchased this summer from our escrow account and to replenish the Watchung Community Fund designated for the library by that amount. This was in accordance with our discussion at our November meeting. That money was deducted on 12/15/2022.

The \$10,977.00 Somerset County library subsidy received by the borough for 2022 was deposited in the WLAB escrow account again this year on 12/31/2022. Mr. Hance informed me that the Council has decided to make that an annual practice going forward.

I made an inquiry about the Legacy Books donations. The Borough Council voted to have those checks deposited in that same Watchung Community Fund designated for the library when they approved the installation of the box. Mr. Hance sent me a list of four deposits made to that account from 10/17/22 through 12/13/22. These deposits correspond to the amounts reported by Wendy Robinson at previous meetings. A fifth deposit of \$54.10 has been received, but not yet deposited in that account. My responsibilities, as WLAB Treasurer extend solely to our escrow account. I told Mr. Hance and Mr. Damato that I would report this to our board and direct any members with questions about the Community Fund to them for further clarification.

As of 1/05/2022, the WLAB Escrow Account totals \$30,203.15. Our Aquarium Fund accounts for \$3,592.11 of that total with \$26,611.04 remaining in general funds.

Ms. Hartmann moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Ms. Ellis seconded the motion. The report was approved.

Friends of the Watchung Library Report: Ms. Ellis gave a brief overview of recent Friends activities for the benefit of our new WLAB members:

The Friends had a drawing for holiday gifts. At least 224 entries were made. There were two winners. They picked up their prizes. Also, the Friends and the WLAB entered scarecrows in the Scarecrow Walk contest.

The Friends invited Dr. Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., who performs expert witness work for the legal community in the area of clinical toxicology, adverse drug reactions, and drug interactions, to present a program about a nurse who was murdering patients in hospitals. All seats were filled for this program.

Last August the Friends and the WLAB hosted the Sweet Starts program. About 200 people, about half of them children, attended to enjoy ice cream, make crafts, and receive new library cards.

On January 4, Tammy Benc, Marcia Walsh (of the Friends) and Hannah Kerwin represented Watchung at a meeting about programming held at Warren Library. Also in attendance were some Warren staff and board members. Darryl Voorhees, who manages SCLSNJ adult programming, represented SCLSNJ.

Everyone should support and suggest new programs. If the program is sponsored by the SCLSNJ, they will advertise the program in all their literature and websites. If the program is sponsored by the Friends, usually the advertising must be done on their own.

Watchung Library Branch Manager Report: Ms. Kerwin gave the following Branch Manager report:

Ms. Kerwin gave a short overview of the SCLSNJ for the benefit of the new WLAB members. SCLSNJ consists of fifteen member municipalities in Somerset County. Ten of these municipalities host library branches. The Watchung Library has the equivalent of five full time employees. The number of employees has been dwindling because the SCLSNJ has centralized programming, marketing, and the purchasing of materials. Ms. Kerwin reminded us that the libraries in our system have great resources. Research databases that are not available for free on the Internet are available at no cost through our libraries. Patrons should ask librarians about these resources. This is the answer to the misinformed comment that all we need is Google.

Ms. Kerwin announced an SCLSNJ program that will take place on February 6, 2023 in the Watchung Library: "SAT vs. ACT: Choosing the Right Test for You."

Our Branch Manager reminded us that any non-profit group that includes a library cardholder may use a meeting room in our library by making a reservation on the SCLSNJ website.

Old Business: Ms. Tafaro O'Donnell presented information regarding lighting our new Watchung Library sign so that it can be seen at night. She received a quote that lights would cost \$1,000. The electrician said it would cost an additional \$1,105.00 to install the lights. Mr. Leigh offered his opinion that we should wait until the Borough refurbishes the entire library before we install lighting. Ms. Kerwin replied that right now patrons are complaining that they had a great deal of trouble finding our library the first time. If we want the most residents possible using our library, they must be able to find it. Ms. Hartmann moved that the sign should be illuminated now. The motion was seconded and passed with the understanding that the project must be approved by the Borough Council.

Bradford Leigh said that the library survey he and Steve Pote devised is complete. No more answers to the survey will be accepted at this time. Mr. Leigh has compiled many statistics from the survey that he will share with us in the form of a report.

Ms. Benc said we should consider a completely new plan for our annual holiday luncheon. Thanks to Dr. Couchells for all her help with this year's holiday party. A sub-committee for next year's luncheon was formed: Ms. Candiloros, Ms. Koufomihalis, and Ms. Ellis will be the members of this committee.

Ms. Benc reminded us that the deadline for the Borough newsletter is this Friday. In further new business, Ms. Hartmann presented the bids to refinish the hardwood floor of the Bicentennial Room. She made a motion to gift the library with this improvement. The motion was seconded and approved. With the approval of the Borough, the floor will be refinished.

The 2023 WLAB meeting dates were decided:

March 15
May 17
July 19
September 13
November 15
January 17, 2024

Election of Officers:

Ms. Ellis moved that the following slate of officers be approved.

Tammy Benc, President
Margaret Ellis, Vice President
Virginia Hartmann, Secretary
Bradford Leigh, Treasurer

Ms. Candiloros seconded the motion and the slate was approved.

Ms. Candiloros suggested that teenagers should be asked to help at the library. Ms. Kerwin stated that there is already a system in place where teenagers can volunteer. Ms. Candiloros also suggested that the WLAB meet at a different time. Ms. Benc agreed to put her suggestion on the March meeting agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.