

Watchung Library Advisory Committee Minutes, July 19, 2023 -

**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 recorded. 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 6:00 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 6:00 PM.

Attendance:

Tamara Benc, President – present  
Margaret Ellis, Vice President – absent  
Virginia Hartmann, Secretary/Treasurer – present  
Marianne Candiloros –absent  
Catherine Leigh (sworn in at the meeting) -- present  
Paul Fischer, Borough Council Member – present  
Ms. Rovtar – acting Superintendent -- absent  
M. Miracle, Watchung Library Branch Manager – present  
Patricia Keane, Valley View Librarian – absent

Ann Cruz Koufomihalis – present at 6:50 PM

Catherine Leigh was sworn in as a new member of the Watchung Library Advisory Committee. Mayor Jubin performed the swearing-in virtually from an outdoor location.

Minutes of the May 17, 2023 meeting were emailed to members in advance of the meeting for review.

**Treasurer's Report:** Ms. Hartmann gave the following treasurer's report:

The WLAB escrow account totaled \$29,315.33 as of April 21, 2023. The Aquarium Fund accounted for \$2,976.12 of that total with \$26,339.21 remaining in general funds.

On May 12, 2023 a \$100.00 payment was made to Reefco Aquarium Service, LLC for aquarium services. On June 9, 2023 a \$150.00 payment was made to Reefco for aquarium services plus a new LED light for the fish.

On June 9, 2023 a \$150.58 payment was made to Virginia P. Hartmann for the supplies used in sanding the picnic table, painting and sealing the checkerboard on the table, and buying checkers and tic tac toe pieces.

As of June 9, 2023 the WLAB escrow account totaled \$28,914.75. The Aquarium Fund accounts for \$2,726.12 of that total with \$26,188.63 remaining in general funds.

#### Watchung Community Fund

As of April 30, 2023, the Watchung Library portion of the Community Fund totaled \$2,211.42.

On May 18, 2023 the Library portion of the fund received \$84.05 from New Legacy Books. On June 30, 2023 the Library portion of the fund received \$66.45 from New Legacy Books.

As of June 30, 2023 the Watchung Library portion of the Community Fund totaled \$2,361.92.

**Friends of the Watchung Library Report:** Ms. Ellis presented this written report via a link in the agenda:

Sales in the Friends bookstore, Second Story Books, continue to do well. We attribute the improved sales to several factors including the much-improved appearance of the Bicentennial Room and the fact that people are coming back to the library after Covid.

The Friends drew names and awarded 30 tickets to see the May 17th Somerset Patriots' baseball game. WLAB members Tammy Benc and Virginia Hartmann greeted those who enjoyed the game. (The Patriots won.)

Thanks to Friends' Board member Amy Fiorilla, the Friends completed a fairy village, which can be viewed through the picture window in the children's area of the library. The fairy village was featured on the front page of our local newspaper.

At the end of May, the Friends hosted a farewell to our former library manager Hannah Kerwin, who is moving on to a position we hope she will find very rewarding.

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

**NEWS FROM SCLSNJ** Staff from throughout the library system, including Watchung, are providing outreach at the Somerset County Food Bank, connecting local residents to services. Katie Salerno, Watchung's Youth Services librarian will host a story time at the annual Somerset County 4-H Fair on Thursday, August 10 from 2-3 p.m. (4-H Fair runs from Aug. 9-11). The

MOMA pass expires at the end of July and we will not renew it due to a federal embargo and the Museum of the Dog pass will not be renewed due to low usage, however, SCLSNJ is looking at adding passes to the MET and to the Wildflower Preserve.

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT THE WATCHUNG BRANCH** We will be hosting 16 different programs at the Watchung Library in August including a highly anticipated Escape the Room program that the Youth Services Librarian designed. In-person programming for both children & adults is being scheduled for Dec-March. We will be adding one-on-one tech appointments for adults every other Saturday as well as a monthly craft program hosted by Denise Berlin. Virtual programming continues to be offered as well, especially for adults. You may find a list of the programs being offered from now through November for the entire library community via this link: <https://sclsnj.libnet.info/events>. You may change the location to Watchung to locate programs specific to our branch.

**BRANCH NEWS** We removed the display table from the center of the main room in the library and re-taped the wires that hung loosely on the walls in high-traffic areas. Watchung Library will start booking artists for two-month exhibits. SCLSNJ will be adding Watchung to the website as hosting art exhibits at <https://sclsnj.org/programs-events/art-spaces-exhibits/>. There is now a guest book available to sign for the art gallery. We moved a table by the exhibit to serve this purpose. We are looking to create opportunities for engagement at different touchpoints throughout the library. Watchung received two new computer keyboards replacing outdated ones at the Circ Desk. We assembled a children's wooden toy grocery cart and placed it in the Children's Room.

**YOUTH SERVICES UPDATES** Katie Salerno reported that the Summer Reading program has already surpassed last year's totals with 54 Watchung Library readers registered and 51 readers regularly logging their reading. This helps our community avoid the "summer-slide" that is a documented summer break phenomenon. In July we will have hosted 14 staff-led programs for the under 18 crowd and 2 presenter led programs.

**ADULT SERVICES UPDATES** Craft Classes with Denise Berlin is garnering interest and attendance. Adults had one craft program, one book discussion and one presenter-led program for July.

**CIRCULATION SERVICES UPDATES** We are circulating new hotspots that are reportedly easier to use and have a better battery life. Our highest circulating collections are children's fiction, adult fiction, and adult video.

**FACILITY UPDATES** We had to close for the evening on June 6 due to the smoke in the air. While the upstairs was comfortable, the main floor of the library was unusable due to the air quality.

**OUTREACH:** Watchung Library is now regularly participating in the Farmers Market with a booth, activities, and information. So far, we have signed up new patrons and increased

knowledge about the library's upcoming events and services. The Youth Services Librarian provides weekly outreach to Bayberry School- preschool Extended School Year program. Branch Manager attended the Watchung Council meeting on July 13 and a Friends of the Library Meeting on July 11

### **New Business:**

The Liaison from the Borough Council, Mr. Fischer, was asked to contact the Department of Public Works and ask them to determine a definite schedule of when they will mow the library's back lawn and remove weeds from the front of the library. The grass and weeds grow to great heights until someone complains, and then the grass is cut. We would rather not have to complain in the future.

Mr. Fischer was also asked to find out if the Library Advisory Board may give money for scholarships. A contest for art work featuring Watchung scenes for our new art display area, an essay contest about Watchung, etc. would result in college scholarships provided by funds from the WLAB treasury, if allowed.

Finally, Mr. Fischer was asked to inquire about an additional street sign provided by Somerset County that indicates where our library is located. These signs are public, metal signs (blue background) that depict a reader and a book with an arrow pointing to the library. There are two streets that lead to the Watchung Library; therefore, we are requesting information about the installation of at least one additional street sign.

The subject of providing a "Library Parking" sign was revisited. This idea was first discussed last year after the new "Watchung Library" sign was purchased. We have an excellent relationship with Quarry Tex Signs who made our last sign. They even offered to give us a substantial discount for a second sign. Catherine Leigh agreed to spearhead this project. She will be provided with contact information for a previous board member who already completed some groundwork regarding a new sign. Ms. Leigh will provide an update/new information at the September meeting.

The painting of a checkerboard on the library's picnic bench has been completed by Ms. Hartmann. Thank you to Ms. Hartmann and her husband Tom Hartmann for their work on this project.

Ms. Benc reminded members to please continue to submit ideas for new programs to SCLSNJ. Our president wishes to have a program that assists parents and students with college applications; she has already submitted this idea through the SCLSNJ website.

To date, there has still been no activity in Community Conversations.

Our Branch Manager, Ms. Miracle, has requested donations of acorns in the months of September and October for library crafts.

Our president reminded all at the meeting that the Borough newsletter has an August first deadline for submissions. Any member who has suggestions for the WLAB portion of the newsletter should share them with Ms. Benc by August 1.

The principal of Bayberry School will soon confirm the date and time of Meet Your Teacher. The time of the Second Annual Sweet Start event will coincide with the school event.

The library will be hosting a table at the Farmers Market in Watchung. Questions about the location of our library (visible from the Farmers Market!), library cards and library programs will all be answered.

Our holiday party will probably be held in November near Thanksgiving since the party's purpose is to thank volunteers and library staff for all they do. This will be discussed at our September meeting.

Ms. Hartmann presented a Power Point show on benches. Several benches were displayed that were researched by the bench sub-committee. Three benches were shown with pictures, prices and dimensions that are ideal for beneath the children's area picture widow.

At this time, Ann Koufomihalis joined the meeting. A quorum was formed so we could vote on which bench the Advisory Board will buy for the children's area. Bench Number 1 was the favorite. Ms. Hartmann, our Treasurer, confirmed that she would tell Mr. Hance of our decision so that the bench could be purchased with Advisory Board funds.

The Advisory Committee could also now vote to approve the minutes and the treasurer report. Both the minutes and the treasurer report were approved. Ann Koufomihalis was asked to participate on the "Library Parking" sign committee. She declined.

Ms. Benc shared that the device used at this meeting to record the meeting and provide Zoom capability will not be available for use at future meetings as it will be returned to her school. In addition, any correspondence related to WLAB business must be emailed through the WLAB account – not personal accounts.

The next meetings will be held on September 13, 2023 and November 15, 2023 at 6:00 PM. This meeting was adjourned at 7:21 PM.