

## WATCHUNG LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 – 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 through an audio and video call, as all gatherings of ten or more people are prohibited due to the coronavirus pandemic. Please go to the Watchung Borough web site to view the video. The meeting was also held in person in the Bicentennial Room of the Watchung Library.

Please be advised that, pursuant to a Borough policy, all committee meetings will be recorded; at 4:01 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 4:08 PM.

Attendance:

Tamara Benc, President – present  
Margaret Ellis, Vice President – present  
Stella Couchells, Treasurer – present  
Virginia Hartmann, Secretary – present  
Bradford Leigh, WLAB member – present  
Barbara Steinfeld, WLAB member -- absent  
Lindsay Goodloe, Borough Council Member, Library Liaison – present  
George Alexis, School Superintendent – present  
Hannah Kerwin, Watchung Library Branch Manager – present  
Patricia Keane, Valley View Librarian – present  
Daryl Eisenberg Knegten, Borough Council Member -- present

Minutes of the July 21, 2021 meeting were e-mailed to members in advance of the meeting for review. Vice President Ellis made a motion to accept the minutes; the motion was seconded by Treasurer Couchells. The WLAB agreed to the motion and approved the minutes.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Couchells reported that the July 21, 2021 balance was \$10,588.64. Since the last meeting, \$160.00 was paid out to REEFCA Aquarium Services for library aquarium maintenance for August and September 2021. A deposit of \$19.03 in County fines distribution was made to the WLAB account on July 22, 2021. There is a balance of \$10,477.67 as of September 15, 2021.

**Friends of the Watchung Library Report:** Vice President Ellis reported that the Friends are restocking the book store. There are a few items downstairs to whet the appetite of potential buyers.

**Watchung Library Branch Manager Report:** Hannah Kerwin, Watchung Library Branch Manager, reported that the Somerset County Library System NJ gave each library in the system an AWE station. These stations are early literacy games.

Watchung Library hosted its first in person adult book discussion since March 2020. A therapy dog visited the library for a children's program. There was also a children's volcano information program. Mahjong has returned to the library. The players met upstairs in the Bicentennial Room because the carpet was wet in the lower level. The library received "Chase's Chair", a memorial rocking chair from a private donor.

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There was some damage from the latest hurricane. There was water dripping from Ms. Kerwin's office light fixture. There was a lesser leak in the youth services office. The basement carpet was wet from encroaching water. There is a rotting board in the vestibule due to some standing water on the floor. There is some moss on the roof.

The Watchung Garden Club did some gardening around the library. They will decorate for Christmas.

**Council Member Liaison Report:** Lindsay Goodloe, Borough Council Member and Library Liaison reported that Matt King has been hired to clean our Borough buildings. He will work 30 hours per week. Ms. Benc inquired as to whether the cleaner brings his own cleaning supplies. Ms. Kerwin stated that so far, the cleaner has only emptied the trash cans. Mr. Leigh stated he wants there to be a list of items to be cleaned given to Mr. King. Ms. Goodloe said she will get together with the Borough Council and Mr. King to work all that out.

The copy machine that the SCLSNJ recently gave to the Watchung Library is working fine. The painters who were painting the Watchung Arts Center completely blocked the Watchung Library driveway on one occasion.

**Old Business:** President Benc reminded the WLAB that one of the lessons learned at the mandatory training meeting held by the Borough was that we should stop using "reply all" in our emails to each other. Yes, it would be fine to send out a group email to remind members of a meeting. But only reply to the sender to say you will not attend. In fact, only reply to the sender for all emails to avoid the appearance of a meeting with a quorum. Ms. Benc also requested that we return to the Borough the page from the meeting that says we attended.

Ms. Benc reported that she gave about ten items about the Library Advisory Board to Ms. Gil for the new Borough website. She also submitted a page of information for the Borough newsletter.

**New Business:** Secretary Hartmann suggested we reduce or eliminate the expenditure for cleaning and maintaining the Library aquarium since it seems likely that the county is going to permanently eliminate fines and we have no other way to continue to add to the WLAB Escrow funds. She suggested we might train a volunteer but Ms. Benc said it had been tried in the past and had not worked well. Ms. Hartmann stated that just because something has not succeeded in the past does not mean it could never succeed. Dr. Couchells suggested we have something else in place that we are sure would work before discontinuing the current professional service because, although the cost does add up, REEFCO has been giving us a good rate and we might not get them back at the same price if we fired them. So, for the time being, nothing will change.

Ms. Kerwin offered that she took pictures of the 9/11 ceremony and that they are available for us to view.

Inside Library programs are now available. COVID restrictions are loosening. Mr. Chris Korenowsky passes on rules for COVID. No masks are required now. But we still have shields at the front desk and there are fewer chairs in the library in order to promote social distancing. There is no more quarantining of returned library books.

The staff and volunteer holiday luncheon will be held in December in person. We will have to discuss it in detail at the next meeting.

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Daryl Eisenberg Knegten suggested that we discuss moving our meeting time to 7:00 PM on Wednesdays. Ms. Benc said she will send out an email to all Board members asking for their opinions on this change. Please reply to Ms. Benc. Do not “reply all.”

The next WLAB meeting will be November 17, 2021 at 4:00 PM in the Bicentennial Room. If an in-person meeting is not to your liking, you may attend by Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.