

Southern Lehigh Public Library

Board of Directors Meeting • General Business Meeting

September 20, 2022 Minutes

Call to order: President Bruce Eames at 6:32

Board members in attendance: Bruce Eames, Candi Kruse, John Schubert, Rachel Pfeiffer, Ryan Fields, Kat Moyer. Also attending: Karley Sebia, BOD Solicitor and Mark Sullivan, Allentown District Consultant.

Community Members in attendance: Jennifer Romendio, Vicki Maund, Jennifer Wayock, Karen Klutinoty, Nancy Weeks (Bucks County), Colleen Gorsky (Palmer Township), Allison Floray (Bethlehem), Tom Beil (representing Upper Saucon Township), Andrea Wittchen (Lower Saucon Township)

Consent Agenda Items:

- Approval of minutes of general business meeting of August 2022
- Approval of Treasurer's Report. We are slightly ahead on revenue and slightly behind on expense.
- Librarian's Report: The highlight is that we had more than a thousand participants in the summer reading program!

Motion by Candi Kruse, second by Kat Moyer: Consent Agenda approved by unanimous voice vote.

Community resident comments:

Tom Beil said the library board should seek approval from Upper Saucon supervisors for the bylaws change. John Schubert replied that the one major requested change that Upper Saucon had previously communicated to him, longer term limits, had already been enacted.

Old Business:

Review of the bylaws final draft (Bruce Eames, Lynette Saeger):

After a brief discussion, there was a motion by Candi Kruse, seconded by Ryan Fields, to approve the bylaws change, subject to minor copy editing by the board solicitor. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

The board acknowledged a need to form a committee to meet with Upper Saucon supervisors to discuss the bylaws changes. Candi Kruse, Mark Sullivan, Lynette Saeger and Bruce Eames agreed to be that committee.

The library board was informed that Upper Saucon Township's October 10 supervisors meeting might be canceled.

Lower Saucon Township's request to join Southern Lehigh Public Library:

The personnel and facilities committees gave their findings on the proposed change: State law requires an additional 3.5 full time equivalent employees. In order to attract these employees, we anticipate having to provide health insurance at an annual cost of ~\$38,000. Employee office space is already fully utilized. The estimate for an additional 450 square feet, to accommodate the new employees' office space needs, is \$150,000. The library would need to spend substantially more on its book collection to comply with the state requirement that 12 percent of the budget be spent on collection.

The budget committee took these numbers and drafted proposed 2023 budgets with and without Lower Saucon Township's participation. The assumption was that Lower Saucon would pay the same per capita funding as Upper Saucon currently does (\$11.99). This assumption would barely cover the wages of additional personnel, based on \$15 per hour.

Mark Sullivan noted that the state library code was written in 1960 so that no resident would be more than 20 minutes from a library.

The budget committee's conclusions:

- Without Lower Saucon's participation, the budget has a shortfall of \$23,024.
- With Lower Saucon's participation, the budget shortfall *increases* to \$153,217.
- Even with these losses showing, the draft budgets are not padded enough to account for inevitable unforeseen problems. Loss of funding from existing sources is a distinct possibility. A possible increase in state funding is not guaranteed, and even if it occurs, it may take a revenue cycle or two to occur.

The board developed a draft list of items that need to be completed before we can seriously consider the Lower Saucon request:

- Hellertown Area Library and Lower Saucon Township must both formally notify the Office of Commonwealth Libraries of their separation.
- Southern Lehigh Public Library proposes a trial period of one year, after which Southern Lehigh could discontinue the Lower Saucon connection.
- Lower Saucon and Hellertown Area Library must both notify the Governor's Advisory Board that they wish to get on the agenda for approval of this change. (This move is necessary because Lower Saucon's proposal crosses county lines and library districts.)
- Lower Saucon Township representatives must start attending Southern Lehigh Public Library Board meetings.
- Lower Milford Township and Coopersburg Borough will continue to have voting members on the board of the Southern Lehigh Public Library. This is in accord with the Southern Lehigh Public Library's continuing tradition of having representation for all in our service area. 2023 is the 60th anniversary of the founding of Southern Lehigh Public Library.
- Lower Saucon Township's per capita payment to the library budget would be the same as the sum of Upper Saucon's payment (\$11.99) and Southern Lehigh School District's (\$3.06), giving a total of \$15.06.
- Lower Saucon Township would pay a one-time non-refundable fee of \$300,000 to join Southern Lehigh Public Library's service area.
- Lower Saucon Council would be informed of the impacts on staffing and finance, and make a binding commitment to abide by the agreements.
- Should a state funding shortfall occur (it would be roughly \$25,000), Lower Saucon Township would pay that difference to the library.
- Lower Saucon Township government shall make an official presentation to the Southern Lehigh Public Library community, detailing the benefits their involvement will bring to existing Southern Lehigh Public Library patrons. This presentation will discuss how services will be improved, budgetary numbers, and other appropriate facts.
- Southern Lehigh Public Library board implores Lower Saucon Township Council to add to their public meeting agenda the topic of Lower Saucon Township joining the Southern Lehigh Public Library service area. A detailed description of this agenda item must be on the public agenda, published in advance of the meeting. Southern Lehigh Public Library Board

further urges Lower Saucon Township council to allow unlimited public comment from their constituents.

The Southern Lehigh Public Library board and staff shall not take further action on the Lower Saucon matter until these items have been addressed and complied with.

(Through the access program, Hellertown can, at their discretion, allow access to our access program. Financially, it makes sense for Hellertown to not allow it.)

Additional budget concerns:

Several years ago, the library did a 25-year maintenance study. We haven't been able to get grants for many of the projects, due in part to staffing shortages that mean there is less time for pursuing grants. One major need: we have \$90,000 worth of lighting that needs to be replaced.

Candi Kruse reported that the library didn't meet the state requirement for 12 percent of our money being spent on the collection. The library was able to obtain a waiver for that.

Strategic Plan:

The board moved this presentation to October 18. Ryan Fields reported that Lower Milford thinks Lower Saucon should share in the strategic plan.

Fund development:

Candi Kruse reported that the library will have a paper art fundraising event, Strings Across the Stacks. The cost of putting on this event is low, and fundraising forms will be available soon.

Kat Moyer reported that Read Between the Wines is "picking up steam," and that the public responds favorably to, "We are drinking in the library. Cool!" Advertising signs have been posted on area roadways, and as of the meeting, 20 tickets have been sold. Volunteers can attend for free. The library has gotten more sponsors and silent auction baskets. Thanks to Faith Ann Ryan, the library has many more food donations.

The last day to add sponsors to Read Between the Wines is September 30, because then the program book goes to the printer.

The Read Between the Wines group's next scheduled in-person meeting is the evening of Sept 27.

Kat Moyer reported that the library had a successful appearance at Coopersburg Community Day.

The library will also appear at Lower Milford Fall Festival this Saturday.

Statement and commentary by Library Director Lynnette Saeger:

Upper Saucon Township has asked for a review of the library board structure, specifically to explore removing Lower Milford Township and Coopersburg Borough's voting board members from the board. In response to this, Saeger asked that this statement be read into the minutes:

Our library is coming up on its 60th anniversary, and we have always served everyone in the community without discrimination. I think it is shameful that Upper Saucon would want to take total control of the library board.

Saeger further noted other issues:

The only representation from the Upper Saucon Township government we get here at these meetings is Tom Beil. The supervisors who are threatening us do not come.

Since January, I have spent 74.5 hours of unpaid time because of the Lower Saucon issue. You all heard tonight from our staff that there are daily operations that are not being taken care of because of this issue. These two entities have not come here in a public forum.

Kat Moyer noted that Lower Milford Commissioners have also never attended a library board meeting.

Saeger said, "We're requesting/demanding that Lower Saucon Council members — not their attorney — come and talk to us. She asked the library board that the board and staff cease doing any more work on the Lower Saucon proposal until the library board hears from both Upper Saucon Supervisors and Lower Saucon council in a public forum. Saeger noted, "We were summoned to another meeting [at Upper Saucon], and that's not a public meeting."

"If they want to threaten the library and threaten to refuse to pass our bylaws, they should do it in a public meeting."

Ryan Fields said, "I'm uncomfortable with Lower Saucon not being here."

Resolution on the Lower Saucon Township issue:

The Southern Lehigh Library board shall take no further action on the Lower Saucon Township proposal until:

(1) Lower Saucon Township Council shall have a clearly worded agenda item at a forthcoming public council meeting about them joining our library service area, with public comment, and after that:

(2) Lower Saucon Council sends a council member to the Southern Lehigh Public Library board meeting to make a factual presentation to the Southern Lehigh board about the benefits to Southern Lehigh about Lower Saucon joining Southern Lehigh's library service area.

This resolution was made on a motion by Candi Kruse and seconded by Ryan Fields. With the urging of Library Director Lynnette Saeger, it was passed unanimously.

Municipal Budget Presentations:

Municipal budget presentations are scheduled for September 27 for Upper Saucon Township and October 4 for Coopersburg Borough. The Library Director will contact Lower Milford Township and request time to make a budget presentation.

Tax Referendum Discussion:

Bruce Eames and Lynnette Saeger have discussed tax referendums with other libraries that have successfully passed tax referendums: Lower Macungie, Parkland, Easton and Wissahoning. The consensus from these discussions was, "It's a lot of work, but we're glad we did it."

Bruce Eames noted that there is a Pennsylvania tax referendum handbook, which can be found by typing "Pennsylvania tax referendum handbook" into a search engine.

Bruce Eames has asked the school district for their cooperation. Mark Sullivan noted, "The school district would be sponsoring getting it on the ballot. This does not imply approval or disapproval." Without the cooperation of the school district, the library would need to get petition signatures to put the question on the ballot in each of the three municipalities in the service area.

Replacing the fire alarm system:

Saeger gave the board a comparison of the proposals from several different companies, including two new estimates that arrived last week.

Saeger recommended the proposal from Kistler O'Brien, because we would not be forced to use them for ongoing service. They use Siemens equipment, which other companies can service, and if we wanted another company to take over the service, we would have Kistler O'Brien give that company our passcode.

Candi Kruse motioned, and Kat Moyer seconded, to accept the proposal from Kistler O'Brien. The motion was unanimously approved.

Community Room policy:

Saeger presented a revised community room rental policy. The revisions will ease the burden on the library staff, while maintaining maximum availability of the community room.

In discussion, the board agreed that some minor wordsmithing by the solicitor should be performed.

Kat Moyer motioned, and Candi Kruse seconded, that the new policy be accepted, subject to the solicitor's revisions. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Attending other community events:

Library representatives will attend the Lower Milford Township fall festival and the Southern Lehigh Chamber of Commerce fall festival.

Visitor Comments:

Andrea Wittichen thanked the board and library director "for standing up to the bullies who run [Lower Saucon] Township."

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

— John Schubert, substitute secretary