

**Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting
Bernardsville Public Library
August 23, 2011**

Attendance: All Trustees were present (Patrice Cummings arrived at 5:35 pm). Karen Brodsky, Executive Director, Bernardsville Public Library (BPL); Rosalie Baker, Technical Services Coordinator, BPL and a member of the Bernardsville Green Team; John Deibert, President, Friends of the BPL; Ralph Maresca, Bernardsville Borough Administrator; Steve Pearlman, special counsel to the Somerset County Improvement Authority ([Inglesino, Pearlman, Wyciskala & Talyor, LLC](#)); and Jessica Vogel, Birdsall Engineering Group, also advising the Somerset County Improvement Authority, were also present.

President Donald Burset called the Board of Trustees (“Board”) meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and read the Open Meeting Notice. Secretary Terry Thompson called the roll.

Mr. Burset then moved to item 4 on the agenda, Solar Panels Information, and turned the meeting over to Mr. Pearlman and Ms. Vogel, who had been invited to attend to provide such information.

Mr. Pearlman began by explaining the two main ways of providing solar energy to local government units: either the unit can purchase and install its own solar panels, getting the full benefit of the energy savings but making the capital and operating outlays to purchase, install and maintain the panels, or they can enter into purchase power agreements (PPAs) with an entrepreneur which will own, install and maintain the solar panels and require the local unit to purchase the power derived from the panels at a price usually lower than the price the local unit would pay to a power company. Under the PPA approach, there is no capital, installation or maintenance cost to the local unit.

Somerset County, through its Improvement Authority, has put together a consortium through which such PPAs can be offered to local units throughout the county, using the county’s ability to finance at very reasonable rates by bonding. The county guarantees the local unit arrangements with the entrepreneur, reviews all the proposals and selects the entrepreneur to do the actual installation and maintenance of solar panels on the premises of local units.

The PPA under which panels will be placed on the BPL roof will require the purchase of the electricity produced by the panels at an initial price of 4.1 cents per kilowatt-hour (kwh), as opposed to the 12 cent per kwh price the library has just negotiated with a seller. However, the arrangement is in place for fifteen years, and there is a fixed escalation in the price per kwh of 3% per year. A board member commented that the new deal reduces our aggregate cost from \$.12 to \$.1155 per kwh and that spread will get smaller over the next three years due to the escalation of 3% per year in their pricing versus the fixed rate we have recently negotiated.

Board members questioned the amount of savings if, as many expect, the future widespread availability of shale gas drives down the cost of purchased power. They also questioned the actual savings per year BPL would experience. Ms. Brodsky said that she thought it would be

between \$3,000 and \$4,000 in the first year and that the solar panels would supply only 9% of the library's annual electricity usage.

Ms. Vogel described her company's role as inspecting proposed sites and developing technical specifications. As to the BPL, she said that they had proposed erecting a carport in the parking lot to be covered with additional panels, which would have increased the percentage of power supplied by the panels and therefore, the savings, but that this had been rejected by the borough. Ms. Brodsky said that she understood that the proposed carport would have impeded snow plowing and required tree removal.

Ms. Vogel also said the scheduling of the work among the various sites had not been commenced and that she had not even seen a draft, but that the "queuing" would be the contractor's first planning after the bond issue closes.

Mr. Pearlman confirmed that each local unit would be signing a license and access agreement with the contractor to permit the work to go forward on the local unit premises, and that that agreement included indemnity and insurance provisions running to the local unit. The contractor has also put up a performance and completion bond for the full cost of the project, approximately \$38 million. A board member noted that the insurance was limited to \$1 million but was reminded that the borough also has insurance and an obligation to indemnify BPL trustees.

At 6:20 pm Mr. Buset thanked Mr. Pearlman and Ms. Vogel for their participation, and declared a five-minute break.

At 6:23 pm, Peter Miller moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters. Ms. Thompson seconded the motion, which carried. All guests left the room.

At 7:05 pm, the meeting returned to public session. Mr. Miller left to attend a school district meeting. Ms. Brodsky rejoined the meeting. Mr. Buset said that Mr. Deibert had had to leave, but that the Friends had no comments to offer and were reviewing the draft MOU that he had sent to them.

Minutes: John La Duc moved to approve the July minutes as corrected (removed a duplication); Patrice Cummings seconded the motion, which carried.

Director's Report: Ms. Brodsky presented highlights and additions to her written report, as follows:

- She has received recent compliments from patrons on: the new lighting; the British collection; and the new newspaper display holders, which were a gift from the Gelfand family.
- **Meli Melo** has made a \$1000 donation resulting from its April fundraiser to benefit the library.
- Board issues: Ms. Thompson moved that the Board permit and support Ms. Brodsky's application for the *Leadership Somerset Program*; Mr. La Duc seconded the motion, which carried. Mrs. Cummings moved that the Board accept the fundraiser offer from Innovative Document Imaging; the motion was seconded simultaneously by Ms. Southworth and Mr. La Duc, and carried.
- Mrs. Cummings asked for a longer discussion of the circulation trends, not at this meeting. Ms. Brodsky mentioned Appendix B to the board package, *Director's Report*

on Analysis of Circulation Changes. Ms. Thompson said the circulation trends and the report would be considered by the Long-Range Planning Committee and a report brought back to the Board.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. La Duc presented the Treasurer's Report, pointing out the new tracking of net cash. John McCrossan asked about opportunities for savings as opposed to year-end loaded expenses. Mr. La Duc said that he and Mmes. Brodsky and English were being watchful for such opportunities. Ms. Thompson moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, to pay the new bills received from August 1-23, 2011 and to ratify the payment of bills received and paid from July 20-31, 2011. Lucy Orfan seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Committee Reports:

Finance, Long-Range Planning, No reports, but LRP will schedule a meeting.

Personnel and Policy: After brief discussion, Mike Gouldin moved to adopt the "Health Benefits Opt Out" Section 125 plan, based on the Borough's Section 125 plan, as presented. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which carried.

Communications: Mr. Bursset circulated two letters to the editor from Ms. Brodsky and himself.

Unfinished Business: Solar Panels: Mr. McCrossan asked that the Board take a straw poll on whether, having heard tonight's discussion, it would support the solar project. There was no support for the solar project. Ms. Thompson moved to ask John McCrossan to contact the Borough Council and ask it to rescind its participation in the solar program for the library. Mr. Gouldin seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (8-0, Mr. Miller having left the Library Board meeting to attend another meeting).

New Business: Discussion of the possibility of opening meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance was postponed until a later meeting.

At 7:35 Mr. Gouldin moved to go into Executive Session. Ms. Thompson seconded the motion, which carried. At 7:37 the meeting returned to public session and Mr. La Duc moved to adjourn. Mr. Gouldin seconded the motion, which carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry A. Thompson
Secretary