



**Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

Officers Present: President Dave Hempson, Vice President Katie Armijo, Secretary Kathryn Carlson, Treasurer Maura Molnar

Trustees: Manny Arroyo, Ralph DeMasi, Jennifer Feeney, Susanne Guske, Kristin LaBeau, Bob Lotkowitz, Larry Palmieri, Cristina Pietropaoli, Amy Roller, Meghann Sandak

Staff: Library Director Nickie Marquis

Absent: Karen Bedard, Stephen McClintic, Paul Torrisi, Jr., Assistant Director Andea Snyder

Members of the Public: Barrow Executive Director Alexandra Perry, Paula Conan, Esq.

Call to order at 6:31 pm

Public Comment Period – no comments

Approval of the Minutes – Minutes were approved for the regular board meeting held on March 11, 2025

President's Report

President Hempson discussed the present status of the separation agreement with the Barrow gallery. He gave a brief history of the process of separation, stating that it began five years ago with a goal in Barrow's strategic plan. The Barrow management committee at that time believed that it was time for the Gallery to have a board focused solely on the Gallery's mission. The conjoining of the Barrow and the Library began in 1905 when John Barrow's trust gave the Barrow building and his painting collection to the library. In March of 1979, the trust was modified to make the Gallery a separate entity. The Barrow currently owns the gallery building and the collection of paintings, the library owns the land that the Barrow Gallery occupies. In 2024 a term sheet was finalized by the Barrow and the Library's task force describing the terms of separation. From that term sheet, a formal petition requesting separation has been developed to present to the Attorney General and the court. The petition has gone through a number of iterations, by the library and the gallery attorneys. Because the Attorney General of New York is charged with protecting the interests of the people with regard for the disposition of charitable assets, the process of separation and future sale of the building to the new Barrow is complex. The draft petition is approximately 17 pages long. It supports the concept of separating into two Boards with the justification for the request. The purpose statement has been modified to eliminate the wording that the Barrow Trust must mutually benefit the library, removing this statement and the use of the Barrow Gallery as a reading room eliminates the need to

return to the court when the library moves to a new building. A statement is being inserted that states that the two Boards will continue to work collaboratively. Once the trustees, acting first as the Barrow Board and then as the Library Board, approve the petition, it will go to the Attorney General and if that office approves, it will be forwarded to the Supreme Court for final approval.

Trustee Arroyo commented that if the new building does not get built, this will make for “strange bedfellows”. Director Marquis reassured the Board that there already is a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that spells out particulars of the relationship and it is renewed every year. It would still be in place in that unlikely circumstance. The Board will get the final petition and the 2025 MOU prior to the votes.

President Hempson also stated that the strategic plan committee is still open for members, and he proposed a first meeting on April 23 at 6:30 pm. There will also be a meeting of the book sale committee to coordinate this year’s sale.

Library Director’s Report

Director Marquis referred to the report she had previously submitted and asked for any questions or comments. She stated that the new OCPL Member Services Coordinator had been hired and it is a previous person who held that position so the transition would be smooth. She was wrapping up details for the previous NYS construction grant and was anticipating the new cycle coming up. Mah Jongg training was very popular and the next class had a waiting list.

She gave a recap of funding issues in NYS this coming year. The loss of \$8.1 million in IMLS federal grants to the state affects the state library employees. Of the 84 state library employees, 54 are funded with the federal money. They administer library aid and construction grants, among other critical statewide services. There are currently two lawsuits to restore IMLS funding. The state budget has not been finalized.

Financial

At six months into the fiscal year, the Library is in good shape cash-wise. We still have \$150K from this year’s levy and last year’s investment draw on hand. There was income of \$5,444 and expenses of \$39,208 for the month. Professional services saw a little bump last month. The new building fund saw income of \$51K from pledges and \$1642 in interest. There were expenses of \$9K. The total received to date is \$1.6M plus \$247K from library equity. Total spent has been \$1.2M.

Treasurer Molnar reminded the trustees of the library tax levy vote on May 20, in conjunction with the school tax levy vote. The library has proposed a \$25K increase in the total levy. A summary of the library tax levy proposal is on the website. A handout is also available. President Hempson thanked Treasurer Molnar for her good work.

Fundraising Update

President Hempson reported on fundraising. The sign for the Fennell Street site should be up in the next two weeks. Fund-raising Director McCormack is working on a digital and paper survey to understand what the community wants from a new library. On April 29, President Hempson and Fund-raising Director McCormack will meet with two local book clubs who have donated to update them and seek additional donations. Two new gifts are expected in the next month or two. There will be a major donor symposium in the future. There have been discussions with the Barrow Executive

Director Perry about the Barrow and Library working together to educate donors and the community about how building a new library benefits both organizations.

Director Marquis reported that we should hear about our \$1M state construction grant in September or October. She is anticipating applying for the next round as soon as the state opens the application process. She reported that assistant Director Snyder has submitted requests to the offices of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and will do the same with Representative Mannion's office once that application window opens.

Communication Committee

The Committee has decided to have quarterly meetings to coordinate efforts among Friends of the Library, Fundraising and Communications. The next meeting is June 18.

Barrow Art Gallery (BAG) Update

Barrow President Roller reported that there will be a new banner at the Barrow entrance. Fourteen paintings have been cleaned, restored and framed for display and loan. The gallery will be open every day in season. More volunteers have been trained. The docents recently spent a day on a private tour of the Seward House art collection.

Fennell Street New Building Committee

President Hempson reported that after the concerns expressed by the Village Planning Board that the current new building design is not "in the character of Skaneateles", the executive committee and the fund-raising committee met to discuss options. The group felt that the current cost of \$18M was unrealistic and recommended looking at a design that would cost \$12M to \$15M, with \$12M being preferred but maybe \$15M being more realistic in meeting the identified needs at today's costs. Options such as a two-story building, different materials, leaving part of the building unfinished for a while and other options were discussed. It was noted that at current cost per square foot was estimated at \$1000, and could that cost be brought down. The new building committee has charged Oudens Ello and LeChase with bringing design options to the next building committee meeting for discussion.

Trustee Arroyo agreed that \$18M was unrealistic and may have caused donors to hesitate. He also suggested options like a smaller building, with a second phase, or an unfinished second floor. He also clarified that the new building committee should make recommendations, but the full board should make final decisions. There was a discussion about the many details that the committee has reviewed over many meetings, and how best to keep the Board up-to-date without spending an unrealistic amount of time at the monthly meetings. The need for discipline and austerity versus future visioning and needs prediction were discussed. It was decided to devote time at the next meeting to review targets, best estimates and the choices that needs to be made to move the project forward. If trustees need to have more information, they are invited to the new building committee meeting at Monday April 14 at 5:30pm. There was a consensus that we need to make decisions that will get the new building over the finish line as quickly as possible.

Public Comment – Paula Conan thanked the members of the executive and building committees for the unbelievable amount of time and effort they have put in toward the new building project.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday May 13, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Library.