

Susquehanna Historical Society & Free Library Association

458 High School Road Montrose, PA 18801

January 27, 2025

Agenda

The meeting was held at the Montrose Library Meeting Room.

Call to Order: At 6:00 by Stephen Spero, President

Acting Secretary: Dawn Augenti

Attendees: Steve Spero, President, Vicky Calby, Vice-President

Will Squier, Fred Cicilioni, (by zoom) Dawn Augenti, Angie Zick, Lorraine Chidester, Craig Benson (by phone)

New Members: Steve Hinds, Eric Powers, Ginny Lewis and Aaron Boyce (by zoom)

Introduction of Board Members, they were asked by the President to state their name.

Motion to approve Minutes of the December 2024 Board Meeting

1st: Angie Zick 2nd: Lorraine Chidester Dawn Augenti Abstaining, stating that she had not received the minutes of the private meeting for review. They were not given to the Board.

Yes: 10 No: Table

Motion made by Vicky Calby to name the 6 Board members by name in the minutes that voted to lay Kris Ely off and the names of the four who did not.

1st Vicky Calby 2nd Eileen Baessler Yes: No: the motion was defeated
There was a discussion on the names being added to the minutes. Lorraine Chidester stated the public already knew who they were by a newspaper article giving the information from a private Board meeting to the Rocket Courier by the Board President. Further the article was shared extensively on social media.

Motion to approve the written reports.

1st Lorraine Chidester 2nd Will Squier Yes: No: so moved.

President Steve Spero opened the floor for discussion thanking the attendees for their support of the library. He then limited the speakers to three minutes and asked that the speakers give their name and if they possessed a library card. There was a discussion regarding the library card as to the necessity.

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SPEAKERS:

- **Kris Ely.**

She stated that she was fired on December 16, 2025. She named individual Board Members by name stating they were cowardly, and they waited for an opportune number of votes to fire her. She further stated she has no respect for the Board members.

She further stated that paying Lorraine Chidester was illegal and the current plan for management will not fix the budget deficit and demanded to know what Ms. Chidester is being paid.

She also stated that we were at risk of losing our state funding by not having a librarian administrator. She further stated that we did not care about two violations with the State the other being the 12% annual book buy. This would be on us and not her.

She voiced her concern with the newly appointed Board members stating she doubted that they would make good decisions. She further stated that “we broke it and now own it”. She has no Confidence in any of us.

- **Dr. Ken Latimore.**

He stated that this is not a position in which anyone would like to find themselves. In his career he has dealt with various minorities in the community. He stated that the Commissioners acknowledge suicide prevention. He also mentioned the sign regarding all being welcome. An employee did reply that all are welcome and challenged why the sign.

- **Jenny Castrogiovanni.** previous Board member. She stated that she did not feel welcome when she first moved to Montrose. The Library welcomed her. The Board needs to look at things from everyone's perspective.

- **Courtney Tyler-** Story hour graduate. The library is where everyone has always felt welcome. She stated that she did read through the minutes. She feels that we are not working for all to feel welcome. Only if they are like you. We need to respect everyone.

- **Barbara Scott-** Love the library. She is concerned about a Board member taking over a position of the person who was let go, The library is where people are given an opportunity to be given an education. The library should reflect various points of view such as Black History and make an effort to bring awareness.

- **Nat Bowman** He stated he possesses a library card and is a tax payer. He is concerned about a wrongful termination lawsuit and the taxpayers suffering the consequences. He asked what measures have been put in place to alleviate this concern.

Dava Cowan- She stated she is from Brooklyn Township. She was looking for the Board to answer the question. Steve Spero asked the Board not to answer the question without the Board consulting an attorney. Will Squier did answer her question that the Association

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has the right to hire and fire at will. There are a lot of pieces that cannot be shared. Steve Spero also stated that he is with Will Squier on legal issues, and they cannot be shared.

- **Dava Cowan** Had a number of questions concerning, funds being misappropriated. The money used by the library, which 50% comes from the taxpayers. She was asking for transparency on issues such as co-mingling of funds, employee lawsuit and other investigations.
- **Bruce Baessler-** He stated that he is the husband of Board member Eileen Baessler and touched on her health issues stating that she was not present at the Library Board meeting due to her health. He continued calling the meeting a coup a word he used several times. He further stated that the full Board was not given notice of the vote to lay off the administrator
- **Brenda Sincovich-** She said she needs to renew her card. She is a High School English teacher. She supports teachers who are against taking books off the library shelves. The community needs to feel supported and that they are recruiting people into a group. At the library you can find books that make you feel not alone. She then asked the Board how they feel about censorship. Will Squier answered her question, stating there is no consideration of burning or banning any books. Steve Spero added that there has not been a request to remove a book.
- **Valerie Senesee-** Her first concern was the financial condition concerning other Association. She also voiced her opinion that libraries should not consider banning books. She stated that she had been asked to support a petition to censor books, which she refused. She further stated the LGBTQ should feel supported. She posed several questions to the Board and asked for clear and effective communication regarding the finances and asked if there will be transparency. She questioned a hostile work environment lawsuit brought against the Association by an employee; the question of the use of a deceased administrator's credit card; the use of the funds from the Ellie McKeage Endowment and a possible investigation concerning finances.
- **Kate Bowman-** She questioned the hiring and firing process at the Association and stated her concern regarding the hiring of the right person to select books and complete the annual report. She asked who will do it.
- **Ron Parsons-** States he has been involved with the library since August and has not heard of anyone mentioning banning books. He is concerned about what books are put in front of what person. The American Library Association opens everything to all ages, exposing children to everything. He was challenged by Brenda Sincovich. He further questioned the difference between hanging a Christian flag instead of a rainbow flag.
- **Molly Reardon-** Stated that she is library patron who reads approximately 300 to 500 books a year. Parents are the ones who should be talking to their children about books. She further said she is the parent and her job is to have the conversation with her children

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about googling, about what to read. She as a parent has had arguments about parenting. Children deserve to read books.

- **Nona Williams-** Said she has a library card. She said that there are things going on that we don't need the full story about. Hopefully the Board will clarify whether Ms. Ely was laid off or fired. She is hoping the layoff was fiscal. She thanked the Board for making hard decisions. Will Squier clarified that Ms. Ely was laid off- not fired.
- **Michell Legate-** District Representative from the Lackawanna County library. She stated that laying off a librarian with a master's in library science will put your state aid in question. You will further need to rehire and complete your 12% obligation in book buys in order to receive state funding.

Jordan Aton- She stated she was alone a lot and at a dark point found salvation in books. She went to reference suicide statistics and referenced that in Communities where all are welcome there is 50% lower incidence of suicide.

- **Dr. Ken Lattimore** responded to Ron Parsons. He stated that children do not catch LGBTQ and deserve compassion, caring and love.
- **Nicholas Nowalk** from Hop Bottom. He stated the library should be a gateway to growth regardless of orientation. He referenced the Board as opportunistic and that the library is contingent upon having an Administrator with a MLS on staff. He further referenced us as misrepresenting policy. Parents have the right to oversee their children.

CLOSE OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Regular Agenda:

Motion to nominate the following:

Will Squier- President

Fred Cicilioni – Vice President

Dawn Augenti- Secretary

Lorraine Chidester- Treasurer

1st:Lorraine 2nd: Dawn All in favor Fred and Craig. Vicky Calby abstained. NO other opposition.

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Steve Spero and Vicky Calby left the meeting at this time.

Will Squier acknowledged Steve's leadership and tried to encourage him to stay.

Motion to accept with regret the following Board member resignations:

James O'Pecko, effective December 16, 2024

Joann Reimel, effective December 17, 2024

Rob Vermette, effective December 19, 2024

Kathy Harter, effective December 31, 2024

Kathy Matis, effective December 31, 2024

Steve Spero, effective January 27, 2025

Vicky Calby, effective January 27, 2025

1st:Dawn 2nd: Lorraine Craig in favor. No opposition.

Welcome to new Board Members

Eric Powers- He is a long time educator and has a lot of energy and a passion for History.

Steve Hinds- He is local business owner with a Business Administration degree. He is glad to step in and do his part for the community

Virginia Lewis- She is the Historical Society Liaison.

Aaron Boyce

Explanation of the position of Interim Chief Operating Officer.

Lorraine Chidester is filling the position of Interim Chief Operating Officer. She has not received pay for this position. She will currently be filling the position of Treasurer and will receive no compensation as a board member in this position.

Motion to approve Steve Hinds, Will Squier, Dawn Augenti and Eileen Baessler as check signers.

1st:Dawn 2nd: Lorraine Craig in favor

All Board members to be on committees.

Blueberry Festival Meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2025 at 6:00 at the main library meeting room.

The next Board Meeting will be held on February 24, 2025,, at the Historical Society building at Monument Square.

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PUBLIC COMMENT WAS REOPENED TO ACCOMMODATE SEVERAL MORE
SPEAKERS:

Doug Sivers- Questioned if there were plans in place for a new librarian and what process is coming. Will there be a discussion going forward?

Linda Whitney – Questioned the difference between being laid off and fired.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:15PM.

The Board went into Executive session