

MEETING OF TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2020

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY,
HELD IN THE SMALL PROGRAM ROOM IN THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, 500 PARK
AVENUE, HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.**

----- Meeting Excerpt -----

1. Call to Order

President Abernathy called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and certified that pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of the meeting had been given in the annual meeting notice, which was adopted at the July 23, 2019 meeting of the Library Board, which notice was provided to the Jersey Journal and the Hudson Reporter, had been posted at the Library and at Hoboken City Hall and filed with the Hoboken City Clerk.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was taken:

Attendance	Present	Absent	Notes
Dr. Jerome Abernathy, President	X		
Mrs. JoAnn Serrano, Treasurer	X		
Ms. Susan Murcko, Secretary	X		Joined at 6:36 p.m.
Ms. Amanda R. Blaney	X		
Ms. Jennifer Evans, School Superintendent's Designee*	X		
Mr. Stephen Marks, Mayor's Designee*		X	
Mr. Jack Silbert**	X		
Mr. Kurt Thoens	X		

**Ex officio* under NJ state law.

**Present via remote connection.

Also in attendance were: Library Director Lina Podles, Facilities Director Michael Chapka, Recording Secretary Clark Matthews, library counsel Michael Cerone, Esq. and members of the library staff and public.

3. Approval of Minutes

--Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there were any questions or corrections to the minutes of the December 17, 2019 board meeting. There being none, the minutes were added to the consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: Invited comments from the public. There was a discussion about the new funding initiative for the Mahwah public library.

5. Director's Report

---Mrs. Podles: Highlighted several items from the Director's Report: On more comprehensive review, 2019 was an exceptionally good year with increased circulation and program attendance; the library is being heavily used. The work at 258 Fifth Street is progressing but issues keep coming up. The new Children's Librarian, Valerie Coughlin from the Montclair library, has joined the staff; the new Literacy Specialist, Jade Mapp, from East Brunswick has joined the staff and will start by filling in at the Hoboken Housing Authority (HHA) center. The YA Librarian is leaving to work in Newark, but new applicants for that position look promising. In addition, two cultural exchange students from China will be joining the staff part time in the marketing department. There was a funding shortfall of FY 2019 funds, but the City of Hoboken was most helpful and provided funding in time to cover the bills and payroll.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked what caused the shortfall. Discussion about state law that mandates municipalities receive library funding and approve giving it to libraries, even though they do not have discretion over the funding; this can cause periodic shortfalls with new yearly budgets, which can be delayed as late as February.

---Ms. Murcko: Joined the meeting in progress at 6:36 p.m.

---Mrs. Podles: Continued her report: The library will be the subject of research by a Ph.D. candidate from Vanderbilt University, who will be gathering useful data over the next year. The new laptop lending kiosk and charging center are working out very well; patron computer appointments and laptop lending are running smoothly and the new kiosk has replaced the extension cords that had to be used previously. The proposed 2020 closing schedule is before the board for approval and it meets union requirements. The 2020 closing schedule was added to the consent agenda.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked about the data in the directors report; she asked whether the staff could break out data vs. previous month data as well as year-over-year, to document increases in patronage. Discussion about increasing patronage at the main library, Grand Street Branch, and the HHA center. Further discussion about presenting cumulative year-to-date data to account for seasonality.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked how the library is participating in the city's committee on the 2020 census. The library is represented on the committee and at the 2020 Census Job Fair in February.

6. Committee Reports, including Finance Committee and Payment of Bills

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: Despite complications, the work is about 90% complete at 258 Fifth Street; it will probably be finished by early February. A board action item (BAI) is before the board to approve a change order to the 258 Fifth St. plumbing repairs in order to replace the radiator with baseboard heating; also a water leak appeared and was repaired by our contractor with a lead line replacement before the deadline for Suez to get involved with mandatory and expensive repairs.

---Mrs. Podles: Continued the report: She explained the newly available New Jersey Construction Bond Grant; for the Winter 2020 cycle, applications can be submitted in March-April and the maximum grant size is \$12.5 million, i.e., \$500/sq. ft. for new construction or historic restoration. The library can apply for two grants of up to \$12.5 million: 1) the project to renovate the main library building, estimated at \$11,478,000 plus contingencies; and 2) a project to renovate the new additions on Fifth Street. The drawback is that the grants require matching funds, which the library does not presently have for the proposed new library annex at 256-258 Fifth Street. However, there will be additional grant cycles and by July 2020 the library will have the funds needed to comply with guidelines to submit an application for the main building grant amounts.

---Mrs. Podles: So BAIs are before the board to: 1) authorize the Director to submit these applications for the NJ Library Construction Grants; and 2) approve a resolution to apply for the grants. There is a timeline for the grants, which ultimately require legislative approval. Discussion about the grants, projects, matching funds in the library capital improvements account, and the resolution to apply for the grants. Further discussion about tabling the resolution to apply for the grants until next month.

---Dr. Abernathy: Added the BAI to authorize the Director to submit applications for the grants to the consent agenda. The resolution to apply for the grants was tabled.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked about reserve funds and committing all of the library’s capital spending account balance; he is concerned about keeping funds available in case of an emergency or a disaster like Hurricane Sandy. Discussion about how the capital reserve would be funded through 2020; further discussion about a reserve of at least several hundred thousand dollars if needed per the library’s current consolidated financial data. There was additional discussion about implications of the city’s possible budget shortfall for emergency funding.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked about the status of the HVAC replacement project and the implications for that project of committing the capital funds to the grants; is it possible to tolerate the present air conditioning situation for one more summer? Discussion about maintaining the present system and if necessary leasing an emergency cooling unit.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee: She described the financial matters before the board for approval (all in part 4 of the board package): 1.) for FY 2020, to pay from the capital improvement construction account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB) check no. 339 totaling \$72,707.43; 2.) in Part A, to pay FY 2019 library operating expenses with checks no. 8234-8266 and 8319 totaling \$107,277.63; 3) in Part A, to pay FY 2020 library operating expenses with checks no. 8271-8315 and 8322-8326 totaling \$60,696.51 and to pay via PayPal \$500.00 to Facebook and \$175.00 to Faronics; 4.) in Part B, to pay FY 2019 expenses for library materials with checks no. 8267-8270 and 8320-8321 totaling \$31,148.15; and 5.) in Part B, to pay FY 2020 expenses for library materials with checks no. 8316-8318 totaling \$9,077.35. Also, a resolution is before the board to void checks 8120 and 8184.

---Mrs. Serrano: Asked if there were questions about the bills to be paid, the resolution, or other matters. There were no questions; the FY 2019 and FY 2020 capital spending, Part A bills, and resolution to void checks were added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board approve payment of FY 2019 and FY 2020 Part B bills for library materials.

---Mr. Silbert: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 6 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 1 ABSTAIN: 0

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Ms. Blaney	X			
Ms. Evans	X			
Ms. Murcko			X	
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			
Dr. Abernathy, President	X			

---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: The new Emergency Action Plan developed by Atriade Consulting is an example of working together to benefit from best practices. The board evaluations of the Director and Trustees are starting for 2020. After discussion, the Emergency Action Plan was added to the consent agenda for adoption.

7. President's Report

---Dr. Abernathy: The Director's report covered most of the opportunities and developments for capital projects and funding. The town of Mahwah is holding a referendum to raise taxes to get more library funding; if Hoboken does a similar initiative, it would probably be contentious.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked about moving forward with bonding for library capital projects. Discussion about a meeting between the board president and the mayor about library funding and bonding, including the historic underfunding of the library before the appointment in 2008 of a state fiscal monitor. Further discussion about the fiduciary duty of the library board of trustees to retain library funds.

8. Library Foundation Report

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported that the Library Foundation signed up for the Hudson Gives campaign and raised \$691 in one day. Planning continues for the October 10, 2020 Library Foundation fundraiser gala dinner to be held in the Stevens Institute banquet room to mark the Hoboken Free Public Library's 130th anniversary.

9. Friends of the Library (FOTL) Report

---Mrs. Freiser: Reported for the Friends: Friends' ESL classes are ongoing and very popular. The city Constituent Affairs officer is referring constituents asking about language learning to the Friends; the FOTL is working on ways to evaluate the need for classes.

10. Old Business

---Dr. Abernathy: Called for any old business. There was none.

11. New Business

---Mrs. Podles: Read a letter from a patron complimenting the staff and leadership.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked whether the Ph.D. student from Vanderbilt University could come to a board meeting to discuss her data and conclusions.

12. Executive Session

---Ms. Murcko: Moved the board enter an executive session to discuss personnel matters.

---Ms. Blaney: Seconded.

---Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The board entered executive session at 7:54 p.m. and returned to public session at 7:59 p.m.

---Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the executive session: It concerned a personnel matter; no votes or board actions were taken.

---Dr. Abernathy: Added a resolution increasing the salary of the library Marketing Manager to the consent agenda.

13. Consent Agenda

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board approve the meeting consent agenda, as follows:

- a. Accept the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 2019.
- b. Adopt the proposed FY 2020 library closing schedule.
- c. Adopt BAI change order authorizing additional \$914.97 for plumbing repairs to 258 Fifth Street.
- d. Adopt BAI to authorize Director to submit application for NJ Library Construction Grant.
- e. Approve payment of FY 2019 and FY 2020 Part A bills for non-media expenses and capital spending.
- f. Adopt resolution to void checks.
- g. Adopt the Emergency Action Plan developed by Atriade Consulting.
- h. Adopt resolution raising compensation for the library Marketing Manager to \$71,575.00 effective January 2, 2020.

---Ms. Murcko: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Ms. Blaney	X			
Ms. Evans	X			
Ms. Murcko	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			
Dr. Abernathy, President	X			

---Ms. Evans: Moved to adjourn.

---Mrs. Serrano: Seconded.

---Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The board of trustees adjourned at 8:05 p.m.