

MEETING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, HELD IN A ZOOM ONLINE VIDEO CONFERENCE IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY ON TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.

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

1. Call to Order

President Abernathy called the meeting to order at 6:32 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. The meeting notice was amended at the outset of the Coronavirus-19 (Covid-19) emergency to provide the telephone conference number and access code in advance of the scheduled meeting.

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		
Ms. Amanda R. Blaney**	X		
Ms. Jennifer Evans, School Superintendent's Designee***	X		
Mr. Jason Freeman, Mayor's Designee***	X		
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani**	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.

---Dr. Abernathy: Welcomed Ms. Mirchandani to the board of trustees, and welcomed Mr. Freeman back as the mayor's *ex officio* representative.

3. Approval of Minutes

--Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there were any questions or corrections to the minutes of the March 24, 2020 board meeting. There being none, the minutes were added to the consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: There were no public comments.

5. Director's Report

---Mrs. Podles: Highlighted several items from the Director's Report: Statistics for the previous month are difficult to compile because the library was open in the first half of March but closed in the second half due to the Covid-19 emergency. Program videos have been posted to the web site. Covid-19 virus resources have been posted too, and are getting many hits. The new Literacy Coordinator has created and launched a new literacy page on the site. The library newsletter, which was formerly bi-weekly, is now emailed weekly; the marketing department is very busy. Everything possible is being done with media streaming and digital programming, e.g., Kanopy streaming programs are now free for children.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there has been an increase in streaming. Not so much in March, but there has been a very big increase in e-book downloads and streaming in April.

---Mrs. Podles: Continued the report: The Covid-19 emergency is also a learning experience about patrons and staff who do not have digital devices set up to work at home; as a result, technology borrowing has emerged as an important priority, and so is technology access for seniors. Library staff are doing "senior wellness" phone conferences and as part of this they are polling senior patrons to see what their needs are for technology and otherwise. Staff meetings are now online and most have 100% participation; also the Circulation staff is assisting the Programming staff because many circulation staffers are artists, performers, or other creative types; people are applying for library cards and registering for services, and staff is handling all of these requests from home. Staffers are also taking college-level classes in library- and administration-related subjects from home. Staff are looking for ways to roll out a reopening with services that do not require contact, i.e., materials lending might use a dropbox for patron pickups of materials. Library finances are stable for April; May finances might be manageable, too, but that will not be known for a while; checks will go out in May.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked what kind of analytics will be available for digital lending in the May report. There will be month-to-month analysis of digital lending.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked about the status of the 2020 Census and library participation in it. The library and staff are engaged with the city hall Census workgroup.

---Mr. Freeman: Asked if the library is seeking potential reimbursement from the U.S. stimulus package; City Hall is seeking reimbursement through FEMA. Discussion about coordinating a library application for reimbursement with City Hall.

---Mr. Silbert: Works as a volunteer with seniors, and noted Councilwoman Falco has launched a group on seniors that might be a basis for involvement. Discussion about what can be done, i.e., book deliveries, and how to see what the senior community needs from the library.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: As the library closure was prolonged, it has been possible to do much more interior cleaning and improvements. Deeper cleaning and disinfecting has been done; floors have been stripped and cleaned, woodwork polished and varnished, and extensive painting and other projects that were not easy or possible when the building was open. Contractors are coming in and working: the elevator has been serviced and inspected, and inside and outside push-buttons for handicapped access installed in

the outside elevator vestibule. Interior and exterior window washing was done and the exterior of Annex No. 2 at 258 Fifth Street has been painted.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee: There is no formal committee report this month. She described the financial matters before the board for approval: 1.) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no. 8484-8527 totaling \$62,648.28 and to pay via PayPal \$175.00 to Faronics, \$250.00 to Turtle Dance Music LLC, and \$319.66 to Zoom Video Communications; 2.) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 8528-8532 totaling \$28,722.46; and 3.) adopt resolution to void checks no. 8409, 8412, 8418, 8422, 8429, 8366, 8453, 8443, 8458, 8459, 8461 and 8466, which were mostly for cancelled programming during March and April. In addition, before the board is a resolution certifying the library will have necessary funds for a construction grant under the New Jersey Library Bond Construction Act.

---Mrs. Serrano: Asked if there were any questions about the bills to be paid, checks to be voided, or the resolution to apply for the grant funds.

---Ms. Blaney: Moved the board approve payment of Part B bills for library materials.

---Mrs. Serrano: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 1 ABSTAIN: 0

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

---Mrs. Podles: Reviewed the application certifying library funds for the grant: The estimate for the remaining renovations to the main building is \$9.2 million; the library presently has about \$4.5 million in its capital account; NJ Library Construction Bond Act grants are for 1:1 matching funds for the library’s capital expenditures, so the library contribution for the project would need to be \$4.6 million. It is anticipated the library will have the full \$4.6 million of capital funding to qualify for the grant award by the time the grant applications are evaluated.

---Mr. Freeman: Asked when the grant certification is due. It is due June 5th.

---Mr. Freeman: Noted the city has paused projects due to cash flow concerns during the Covid-19 quarantine; tax collections are delayed and he is concerned about encumbering funds at this time.

---Dr. Abernathy: Pointed out the application does not encumber city funds; it confirms eligibility for the grant on a 1:1 match basis for the \$9.2 million renovation project; the actual grants will not be awarded until autumn at the earliest. Discussion about parallel concerns about state funding and tax collections.

---Mr. Cerone: Noted that the funds for the Library Construction Bond Act were already allocated two years ago. Discussion about the possibility the allocated funds could be withdrawn by referendum. Further discussion about how the budget allocation could possibly be withdrawn.

---Mr. Thoens: Referred to Exhibit B of the application and asked if the mayor’s office needs to sign off on the application. No, the city is not responsible for any funding. Discussion about the mayor’s email on budgets and how it could affect the application. Further discussion about the budgeted funds being FY 2020 funds, which are allocated through year’s end, but the FY 2020 fiscal year is not closed until it is audited, roughly in June 2021.

---Dr. Abernathy: Added that as far as the library capital plan is concerned, losing or foregoing the grant would be a major change in the library’s strategic plan; he asked if library services could be provided to the city.

---Mrs. Podles: Library funding comes from the state 1/3 mil tax allocation; anything above that would involve the city but so far no city funding is forthcoming. Discussion of identifying ways that library staff could assist the city to save money, for example in senior services, Covid-19 contact tracing, research, etc. Further discussion about whether any provision of library services to the city would impact the library strategic plan with the NJ State Librarian. Further discussion about the response to the mayor’s e-mail on budgets; the library responded by sending the capital budget; discussion about delaying approval of the grant certification.

---Mr. Freeman: Moved to table the certification of funds for the grant application until the next board meeting.

---Ms. Mirchandani: Seconded.

---Mr. Cerone: Explained the grant process and related scoring process for applications; there is no advantage to applying early. He asked if city hall has had similar discussions with the Board of Education.

---Mr. Freeman: There have been discussions with the county and with the Board of Education. Discussion about the implications of delaying the application; the city is squeezed for tax revenue, but there is no negative impact to delaying until next month.

---Mrs. Podles: Asked about the status of the city’s grant-writing consultant from Millennium Strategies; the grant application itself is being prepared by the city’s consultant at the suggestion of city hall and all library documents and supporting materials are presently with the city’s consultant.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the library can get a copy of the application and work product of Millennium Strategies from the city, in case the city parts ways with them. Discussion about the mayor’s email and sharing it with all the trustees. He called for the vote on the motion before the trustees on postponing the NJ Construction Bond Act grant certification.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 6 NAYS: 2 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 ABSENT: 1

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain	Not Present
Ms. Blaney					X (lost connection)
Ms. Evans	X				
Mr. Freeman	X				
Ms. Mirchandani	X				
Ms. Murcko	X				
Mrs. Serrano		X			
Mr. Silbert		X			
Mr. Thoens	X				

Dr. Abernathy, President	X				
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---Dr. Abernathy: The certification of funds resolution was tabled for the next meeting; approval to pay the Part A bills and adopt the resolution to void checks was added to the consent agenda.

---Ms. Blaney: Rejoined the conference when her connection was restored around 8:07 p.m. For the record, she endorsed the vote delaying certification.

---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: In conjunction with the library's strategic plan, the director met with the committee to clarify her goals for the coming year. Because of the Covid-19 emergency and its impacts on library operations and plans, the director reshaped her goals and adapted them during the past month. The committee recommends the board adopt these revised goals for the director.

7. President's Report

---Dr. Abernathy: In the interest of time, had nothing further to report this month.

8. Library Foundation Report

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Library Foundation: The Foundation's board has decided to cancel the 130th Anniversary Banquet event due to the Covid-19 emergency and its impact on local businesses; the Foundation's feeling is that this is not the time to ask for large donations from local businesses or individuals due to the present uncertain business and financial climate.

9. Friends of the Library (FOTL) Report

---Dr. Abernathy: In the absence of an officer of the Friends, there will be no report.

10. Old Business and New Business

---Dr. Abernathy: There was no old or new business.

11. Executive Session

---Dr. Abernathy: Called for a motion for the scheduled Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board enter executive session.

---Ms. Murcko: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 9 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Ms. Blaney	X			
Ms. Evans	X			

Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Mirchandani	X			
Ms. Murcko	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			
Dr. Abernathy, President	X			

The board entered Executive Session at 8:12 p.m. and returned to open session at 8:27 p.m.

---Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the session: It concerned a personnel matter; no votes or actions were taken. Proposed to add the following resolution to the meeting consent agenda:

The board approves a raise for the library director in FY 2020 in the amount of two and one-quarter percent (2.25%), retroactive to January 1, 2020.

The resolution was added without objection.

11. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Accept minutes of meeting of March 24, 2020.
- b. Approve payment of FY 2020 Part A bills for non-media expenses and capital spending.
- c. Adopt resolution to void checks.
- d. Approve the 2020 Goals and Objectives for the Library Director.
- e. Approve resolution raising Library Director's compensation for 2020.

---Ms. Murcko: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 1

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

---Dr. Abernathy: Called for a vote to adjourn.

---Adopted by without objection by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 9 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The board of trustees adjourned at 8:34 p.m.