

**MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 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, DECEMBER 24, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.**

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

**1. Call to Order**

President Abernathy called the meeting to order at 6:34 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 28, 2020 meeting of the Library Board, which notice was provided to the Jersey Journal and the Hudson Reporter, was posted at the Library website 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 and members of the library staff and public.

**3. Acceptance of Minutes**

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the trustees had any corrections or comments regarding the minutes of the board meeting of November 24, 2020. There being none, approval of the minutes was added to the consent agenda.

**4. Public Comments**



---Dr. Abernathy: Invited comments from the public. There were none.

## **5. Director's Report**

---Mrs. Podles: Highlighted several items from the Director's Report: Statistics on circulation, programs, and patron visits continue to be very good and the library is getting very good use within its capacity restrictions, about 400-500 patrons per day. The Buildings and Grounds Committee has been very busy reviewing options for renovation work and developing related action items for board approval. A survey of library services, mainly for adults, was conducted by a Notre Dame Ph.D. candidate, who interviewed the staff; she will report her findings to the board and wants to stay in touch with the library afterward. The Director met with the Friends of the Library (FOTL) and the Library Foundation separately as well as with library development consultant Peter Peterson; a joint FOTL-Foundation meeting is planned for January; it is recommended that the groups form a joint committee to plan for combined and streamlined work and fundraising; the merger should take about 5-6 months. Programs have been active with many holiday programs involving crafts; this year there was also caroling in the park and library marketing director Marc Curiale did a Veterans Day program in his uniform. Library finances are stretched because operating funds checks have not been received from the city for November and December.

---Mr. Freeman: The city council is set to approve the funding tomorrow for both months; by law, the council has to approve every check over a certain amount, which was the cause of the delay.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: Major snow is forecast and the maintenance staff is ready with the snow blower, snow-melt crystals, etc. for daytime as well as for a possible early closing; work to winterize library facilities including the annexes is also underway to prevent frozen pipes, etc. The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit and deep cleaning has been increased to once per week, and can be more if needed; they are watching the governor's office for announcements of changed Covid policies. The Hoboken Housing Authority (HHA) has been asking when library services can resume at the Learning Center there; a custom window was ordered for the HHA facility to permit patrons to pick up their materials from outside, but the pandemic hit the window factory and that has delayed delivery and installation.

---Mr. Freeman: Asked if an early library closure could happen during the snowstorm. It could during the afternoon, before dark; also a delayed opening is possible on Thursday.

---Dr. Abernathy: Continued the committee report: Explained the Board Action Item (BAI) in the board package authorizing the Director to begin work on third-floor renovations and HVAC replacement: the committee and library architects studied the tradeoff of self-funding the renovations versus keeping the funds available to match a possible 2021 grant award under the NJ Library Construction Bond Act. Waiting for the 2021 grant awards would delay work and probably maximize disruption because work would take place as the Covid pandemic ends in 2022; doing the work in 2021 would cut into the library's capital reserve, but it would minimize the disruption. The library staff unanimously advised proceeding with third-floor and HVAC renovations in 2021 to minimize the impact of the project. In consultation with the architects, the committee advises applying for a smaller 2021 NJ grant award of up to \$2.5 million based on the square footage of the first and second floors. Based on this analysis, the committee and the library architects recommend proceeding with third floor and HVAC work in 2021, using the three pre-approved contractors. The BAI authorizes the Director to start this process.



---Ms. Murcko: Noted that the 2020 grants seemed to emphasize HVAC upgrades; she asked if the 2021 work might undercut our chances for a grant award. Discussion about the HVAC needs of the first and second floors, which also need HVAC work.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if doing renovations with library funds would result in compromises in the work. Discussion about the analysis of the work; on examination it appears that there will not need to be major compromises in the scope of the project.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked how it was possible to avoid potential Covid spread due to the presence of outside workers doing the work. The architect advised revising the workspace and isolating work areas where workers will be; job specs to do this are being developed by the architect.

---Mr. Freeman: Noted that since the loss of the 2020 NJ library construction grant, he has been discussing with the president how the library can involve the city in order to improve chances for a 2021 grant; a working committee of city council members and the administration is being assembled to make the library part of city development plans. Discussion about such a planning initiative. The BAI authorizing the Library Director to begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and HVAC replacement project was added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee; there will be a committee report this month on the proposed 2021 library operating budget. She described the financial matters before the board for approval: 1.) this month there were no payments from the capital improvement construction account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB); 2.) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no. 8947-8988 totaling \$33,215.41, to pay via PayPal \$22.00 to Wordpress.com, and to pay to Raul Sanguinetti \$300.00 for the petty cash fund; 3.) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 8989-8993 totaling \$16,60893; and 4.) to approve a board resolution to reserve the remaining unspent FY 2020 operating funds determined by the audit of library financial statements for that year be reserved for capital improvement projects.

---Mrs. Serrano: Asked if there were any questions about the bills to be paid or the resolution to transfer unspent FY 2020 operating funds for capital projects. There being none, the Part A bills to be approved for payment and the resolution to transfer funds for capital improvement projects were all added to the consent agenda.

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

---Ms. Mirchandani: 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			



---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: She updated the board on the Library Director search; the committee reached out to the search firms recommended by the Director and is waiting to hear proposals from them.

## **7. President's Report**

---Dr. Abernathy: Expects 2021 to be an extraordinarily busy and challenging year: The board will conduct a director search; the Friends of the Library and Library Foundation will be reorganized along with a joint post-Covid fundraising initiative; the library will likely move to integrate with the city's development plans; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor renovation and HVAC project will be going on, too. This is a lot, and the pace will be fast during the first half of the year at least; it's a time for everyone to step up and keep these initiatives moving forward on time.

---Dr. Abernathy: Also, regarding the Budget and Finance Committee report, the draft FY 2021 budget that was introduced at November's meeting is before the board for approval. He asked if there were any questions about the draft budget; there being none, it was added to the consent agenda.

## **8. Friends of the Library (FOTL)**

---Dr. Abernathy: There is no report from the Friends but discussions about working jointly with the Library Foundation and fundraising consultant are under way with a joint meeting planned for January.

## **9. Library Foundation Report**

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Library Foundation: The 2020 Annual Appeal of the Foundation was mailed and e-mailed, with \$3,000 received so far. Unfortunately because of the Covid emergency the expectation is for a slow fundraising year.

---Ms. Blaney: Added that the new Library Foundation website, with a PayPal button, is now up and running.

## **10. Old Business**

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

## **11. New Business**

---Dr. Abernathy: The library's 2021 closing dates are before the board for approval; most of the holiday closures are contractual and involve weekend days that are observed as holidays. Discussion about the city's floating holidays, especially the new Juneteenth holiday. Further discussion about programming that will definitely observe the holiday. The 2021 closing dates were added to the consent agenda.

## **12. Trustee Comments**

---Ms. Mirchandani: Asked if Sunday reopening was planned. Not yet, the Sunday closure is a mandatory Covid response; the library can reopen on Sundays as soon as the emergency is over.



### 13. Consent Agenda

---Ms. Mirchandani: Moved the board approve the meeting consent agenda as follows:

- a. Accept minutes of board meeting of November 24, 2020.
- b. Approve Board Action Item Authorizing Director to Begin 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Renovation.
- c. Approve payment of Part A bills for non-media operating expenses and for petty cash.
- d. Adopt resolution to reserve any remaining unspent FY 2020 operating funds for capital improvement projects after the library audit.
- e. Adopt proposed FY 2021 Library Budget.
- f. Adopt proposed 2021 Library Closing Dates.

---Mr. Silbert: 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			

---Mr. Thoens: Continued the trustee discussion about community Covid response and the new vaccine; he asked if the library would be involved in vaccinations. There is no plan to involve the library in vaccinations; the refrigerated storage container for the vaccine costs about \$70,000. Further discussion about Hoboken's Covid testing program. The trustees wished each other a happy holiday season and looked ahead to 2021.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved to adjourn.

---Ms. Mirchandani: Seconded.

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

The board of trustees adjourned at 7:32 p.m.