

MEETING OF TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 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, NOVEMBER 24, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.

----- 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		Joined at 6:40 p.m.
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani**	X		Joined at 6:45 p.m.
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. Acceptance of Minutes

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the trustees had any corrections or comments regarding the minutes of the board meeting of October 27, 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: October statistics on circulation, programs, and patron visits are all very good. The library remains open with capacity limits so lending is not just digital, but also print and recorded materials from the stacks; the outside lockers are also being used a lot. She shared a message to the library from a patron saying that the community was "immeasurably" grateful for the library's "intellectual first responders."

---Mr. Freeman: Joined at 6:40 p.m.

Unfortunately, the library was not awarded a NJ Library Construction Bond (NJLCB) grant in the 2020 round of awards; as a result, a decision will need to be made about whether to wait for the 2021 grant awards or to start proposed renovations using the library capital reserve funds that were to be matching funds for the NJ construction bond grant. A new library staffer and library assistant were hired in the past month, and interviews are underway to hire two additional library assistants. A revised policy for library digital and historical collections is before the board for adoption; it was developed by staff over several months and reviewed by the Personnel and Policy Committee. Other revised policies are being developed and will be before the board in coming months. Because of new COVID-19 restrictions, the library is going back to curbside pickup but without phone calls to patrons, using a scheduling software app instead; the software is expected and the hope is to implement it in December. Programs continue to do very well and they now include Grab+Go kits of materials for program attendees. She attended a meeting with the Friends of the Library (FOTL) about restarting their activities and ways the library can assist.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there were any questions about the updated Collection Development Policy for board adoption. There being none, it was added to the consent agenda.

---Ms. Mirchandani: Joined at 6:45 p.m.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: Highlighted two items from the report: First, building sanitation protocols are changing with two new procedures being used. "Ultra-fogging" disinfects all parts of the building once per week with a fine aerosol fog; also, electrostatic cleaning is now being used to sanitize surfaces. The library purchased the equipment for both ultra-fogging and electrostatic cleaning and they have paid for themselves on the first use, compared to the cost of using outside consultants. Second, the boiler is up and running for the winter, with no issues so far; it was inspected and seems fine, and can be quickly fixed if needed. The air conditioning is now off; it was repaired last summer and will be serviced. There is a monthly maintenance plan with monthly inspections going forward.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if it was possible to get feedback about the NJLCB 2020 grant. The president is doing an open public records act request to obtain information on the grant awards.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if this was the first time the library used a grant-preparation firm. No, grant consultants and experts were used previously; discussion about grants and bonding support to get matching funds for grants; further discussion about the large grants to other Hudson County library systems totaling almost \$25 million, which may have superseded available funding for us.

---Mrs. Murcko: Asked if a new application has to be submitted for the 2021 NJLCB grant cycle. A new application will need to be prepared and will include some modifications.

---Dr. Abernathy: Noted he met with the Buildings and Grounds Committee about work that needs to be done, especially HVAC and the boiler; if capital funds are used for that work it will reduce the library's available matching funds for a 2021 grant. The committee will meet to formulate recommendations. Discussion about the 2020 grant awards seeming to emphasize HVAC systems, which might be a better prospect for a grant. Further discussion about whether any funds are available to do further work on the 2nd and 3rd floors; the feeling was there are not enough such funds. Additional discussion about waiting on such work until next year if there is a reasonable chance in the 2021 NJ Construction Bond grants; going ahead now with library funds alone would result in major compromises on all the 2nd and 3rd floor work and there would be no capital reserve left after the work.

---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. 8888-8936 totaling \$96,894.27 and to pay via PayPal \$74.94 to Mojang; 3.) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 8937-8943 totaling \$43,101.13; 4.) to approve a resolution to void check no. 8840; and 5.) to approve a board resolution to reserve \$255,996 of remaining FY 2019 operating funds for capital improvement projects.

---Mrs. Serrano: Asked if there were any questions about the bills to be paid, the resolution to void the check, or the resolution to transfer funds for capital projects. There being none, the Part A bills to be approved for payment, the resolution to void the check and the resolution to transfer operating 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.

---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			

---Mr. Freeman: Asked for an explanation of what happens to operating funds that are not spent.

---Dr. Abernathy: Explained that unspent operating funds can be swept into the capital reserve after the annual audit for the fiscal year is completed; there is a 20% threshold of operating funds that may be reserved in this way, but the proposed \$255,996 surplus is well below the 20% threshold of the library's \$5,846,247 FY 2019 budget.

---Mr. Cerone: Explained the law regarding sweeping of operating funds into the capital reserve; the board can move capital reserve funds back into operating funds if required. Discussion about capital projects.

---Mrs. Podles: Continued the Budget and Finance Committee report: She presented the draft 2021 library operating budget of \$5,814,926, which is New Jersey statutory funding of 1/3 mil. of county property taxes. The 2021 budget represents a decline in this funding of about \$70,000 from 2020. Some highlights of the 2021 budget are a decrease in the programming budget during the pandemic because most programs are produced by library staff now; also, the materials budget allocation for digital materials is much higher, now 50% for print materials and 50% for digital, demonstrating that the pandemic has accelerated the trend toward digital lending.

---Dr. Abernathy: This meeting introduces the draft FY 2021 budget for a board vote in December; he asked the trustees to reach out to the director with questions about the proposed budget.

---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: The committee met to review the library Collections Development Policy and update it to cover digital materials as well as the fact that the historical collection has grown. The president has created a Library Director Search Subcommittee of the Personnel and Policy Committee.

---Dr. Abernathy: Explained the plan for the search subcommittee; it will use the best practices of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) and will comprise Ms. Murcko as chair of the Personnel and Policy Committee, Ms. Evans as Board of Education liaison, Ms. Mirchandani with expertise in diversity and inclusivity, and Dr. Abernathy as president. It will start work using Mrs. Podles' draft search plan.

---Ms. Murcko: Described the draft search plan: It will rely on a consultant to do much of the groundwork to identify a process, salary target, and so forth. It might not be possible to recruit a consultant for consideration by the December board meeting, so a special meeting may be needed before the scheduled January board meeting.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked if internal candidates will be considered for the position. Yes, all candidates will be considered.

7. President's Report

---Dr. Abernathy: His report is pretty much covered by the discussions of the Buildings and Grounds Committee and NJLCB grant and OPRA requests.

8. Executive Session

---Dr. Abernathy: A personnel matter is before the board that will require an executive session.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board enter executive session to discuss the personnel matter.

---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 went into Executive Session at 7:34 and returned at 7:40 p.m.

---Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the session: it concerned a personnel matter and no actions or votes were taken.

---Dr. Abernathy: Before the board is an application for unpaid leave for library staffer Samantha Evaristo from November 24, 2020 until March 23, 2021. Without objection, the application was added to the consent agenda.

7. Friends of the Library (FOTL)

---Dr. Abernathy: There is no report from the Friends but discussions about working jointly with the Library Foundation are under way, starting with a joint meeting of their respective boards.

10. Library Foundation Report

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Library Foundation: The 2020 Annual Appeal of the Foundation has been mailed and e-mailed. There were good discussions with the Friends of the Library about joint fundraising.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked if any of the modifications discussed with the fundraising consultant were implemented. Several were; the same mailing lists were used but Ms. Blaney created new content and a scan-able QR Code for PayPal donations for the revamped website, including a discussion about the library response to the pandemic.

11. Old Business

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

12. New Business

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked the library counsel to discuss a proposed new policy on online trustees' meetings.

---Mr. Cerone: Described how the state legislature authorized an emergency regulation under the Open Public Meetings Act requiring that public organizations adopt appropriate open meetings policies for online meetings. The proposed library online meeting policy was added to the consent agenda.

12. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Accept minutes of board meeting of October 24, 2020.
- b. Approve payment of Part A bills for non-media operating expenses.
- c. Adopt resolution to void check.
- d. Adopt resolution authorizing transfer of remaining \$255,996 of FY 2019 operating funds for capital improvement projects.
- e. Adopt updated Collection Development Policy.
- f. Approve proposed plan for hiring a new Hoboken Public Library Director.
- g. Approve unpaid leave for Samantha Evaristo from November 24, 2020 to March 23, 2021.
- h. Adopt proposed online meeting policy for public meetings.

---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			

13. Trustee Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there were any trustee comments.

---Ms. Blaney: Added that the QR code to donate via the Library Foundation's web site isn't working yet because PayPal still needs to approve it.

---Ms. Evans: Moved to adjourn.

---Dr. Abernathy: Seconded.

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

The board of trustees adjourned at 7:55 p.m.