

MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2021

Approved at Board Meeting of January 25, 2022

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 21, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.

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

1. Call to Order

Board 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 27, 2021 meeting of the Library Board, and 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 as amended at the outset of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) emergency provides the internet and 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	Schedule conflict

**Ex officio* under NJ state law.

**Present via remote connection.

Also in attendance were: Library Director Jennie Pu, Recording Secretary Clark Matthews and members of the library staff and public.

---Dr. Abernathy: Proposed excusing the absence of Mr. Thoens; this was added to the consent agenda.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if trustees had any comments or corrections to the minutes of the November 16, 2021 meeting. There being none, acceptance of the minutes was added to the consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: Invited comments from the public. There were no public comments.

5. Director's Report

---Ms. Pu: Highlighted several items from the Director's Report: The Jersey Journal had an article with pictures of the discovered third floor pocket doors; NBC's Today program visited the library to interview children about vaccinations; the new "Meet the Staff" directory is now online with pictures of the staff; and the November 16th Staff Development Day went well and received compliments from the staff. Some changes have been made in the staff organization charts: the programming team has been recast into the Engagement Team with broader scope of adult programming and digital literacy. A design team called Felt Hat has been retained and is conducting interviews as part of rebranding the library as part of the third floor reopening. There was a reading of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" in the large program room, with trustee Jack Silbert playing several roles. A box of unwrapped toys was donated to the Hoboken University Medical Center. There are two late-breaking developments: 1) there are Covid cases among the staff, and the library is responding with the Covid Response and Safety Plan developed by the New Jersey Department of Health and BCCLS, including staff adjustments; and 2) the library did not receive a 2021 NJ Construction Bond (NJCB) grant. According to a review by the state librarian, the NJCB grant winners had marquee projects, many involving HVAC, and also demonstrated lots of local support, including matching funds and letters of municipal support. In anticipation of a third round of NJCB awards, the director reached out to the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) to join its public policy committee to facilitate the process, which will involve participating in an NJLA task force on state policy initiatives to create permanent funding sources for library construction; NJLA members said that some major factors in the successful community grants were involvement in the legislation and hard lobbying for projects.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: The additional asbestos abatement work was completed in November and the sites are cleared to open. The HVAC work is making good progress; all parts are in the attic and vents are being run down to the second floor; preparations are underway to install the equipment on the roof. Work on the second floor restroom has started. The new tin ceiling plates are due for delivery Christmas week. He and the committee are still working with architects Clarke Caton Hintz (CCH) and general contractor Merrill and Garaguso to price the proposed Maker Space. Also, there have been Covid exposures among the staff and he is working with Facilities Manager Raoul Sanguinetti to do building sanitizing and other anti-Covid measures, as previously during the pandemic.

---Mrs. Serrano: Asked if the entire tin ceiling was being replaced. Probably yes; there may be a small area of original tin being preserved, but most of the 1896 tin ceiling will be the new replica.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee: The draft 2022 library operating budget is included in this month's board package for review. She described the financial matters before the board for approval: 1.) in Part A, to pay from the capital improvement Construction Account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB) checks no. 359-362 totaling \$1,071,445.32; 2.) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no. 9710-9753 totaling \$262,159.77 and to pay via PayPal \$22.00 to Wordpress.com; 3) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 9700-9709 totaling \$27,975.63; and 4) to disburse \$300 to Raul Sanguinetti for petty cash. Also before the board is a resolution to void check no. 9610.

---Mrs. Serrano: She asked if there were any questions about the bills or resolution. There being none, approval of the Part A bills and the resolution was added to the consent agenda.

---Ms. Evans: Moved to pay the Part B bills for library materials.

---Ms. Blaney: 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	X			

---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: The committee met about salaries and an action item is before the board to approve a new salary chart that is compliant with New Jersey Library Association guidelines; the committee recommends adopting salary chart. She solicited feedback from the trustees about an executive session on readjusting the director's goals on her 6-month anniversary. Concerning the board retreat, the plan is still to meet in person with the speaker in attendance; the large program room would be used for the meeting to maintain distancing. The committee has also developed a list of five strategic planning consultants and will start evaluating them after New Year's to begin updating the library Strategic Plan. After discussion, the board action item (BAI) approving the new salary chart was added to the meeting consent agenda.

7. President's Report

---Dr. Abernathy: Has been focusing on developing closer relationships with people in town, helped by Mr. Chapka who is now based at City Hall. There is \$250,000 in seed money for a public broadband project and he is building a relationship with the NYCNet public broadband activists. He met with Dr. Johnson of the Board of Education about coordination of a broader array of services that are needed by students who require educational

assistance; he is also looking to demonstrate how much value the library provides to the community in other ways. The fundraising consultants gave the trustees homework to do for the board retreat: 1. identify who are the centers of influence in the community; and 2. identify who is “the library”, e.g., the board, staff, Friends of the Library, Library Foundation? Discussion about whether the homework needs to be done in advance of the board retreat, or will be done at the retreat.

8. Library Foundation Report and Friends of the Library (FOTL)

---Ms. Blaney: Reported for the Library Foundation: The Foundation and Friends are working with their attorney on the merger of both groups, it is hoped by January 2022. The Foundation’s 2021 Annual Appeal is ongoing and so far has collected about \$5,000 from its email blast and a small postal mailing. There was discussion about a name for the merged organization; the name is not public yet.

9. Old Business

---Ms. Pu: Described the revised public meeting notice that is before the board for adoption: Because the governor’s Covid executive order will expire in January, the revised public meeting notice sets times and places for in-person board meetings, with provisions for online attendance via Zoom as well. Discussion about ways to quickly switch back to remote meetings if the Covid emergency resumes. Further discussion about the public notice for the board retreat.

10. New Business

---Dr. Abernathy: Advised the board that he had received notice from the New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission advising of a hearing in January concerning the library union voting to join the Communications Workers of America (CWA), which represents employees at other libraries in New Jersey. There are expected to be further developments in the first quarter of 2022 and the union will want to open negotiations.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if the library staff have voted to join the CWA. Not at this time.

11. Consent Agenda

---Mr. Silbert: Moved the board approve the meeting consent agenda as follows:

- a. Excuse the absence of Mr. Thoens.
- b. Accept the minutes of the November 16, 2021 board meeting.
- c. Approve payment of Part A bills, BCB bills for capital improvements, and Part B bills for library materials.
- d. Approve resolution to void check.

- e. Approve BAI to conform salaries to New Jersey Library Association guidelines.
- f. Adopt amended public meeting notice and dates.

---Mrs. Serrano: 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	X			

12. Trustee Comments

---Mr. Silbert: Recently he realized how much the staff travels between the various buildings; he thought there should be an acknowledgment of the time staff needs to be outside in the weather to keep things running. There was discussion about what has been involved in persevering through the pandemic and the new wave of Covid. After further discussion the board extended its thanks to the staff for their extraordinary efforts over the last two years.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved to adjourn.

---Ms. Evans: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.