

MEETING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021

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 27, 2021 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 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, Recording Secretary Clark Matthews, Library Counsel Michael Cerone, Esq., Ms. Kaitlin Donohue Osborne of Stevens Institute and members of the library staff and public.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the trustees had any comments or corrections for the minutes of the March 23, 2021 trustees' meeting. There being none, the minutes were added to the meeting consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: Invited comments from the public. There were no public comments; there was discussion about a survey concerning appointment of an interim Library Director.

5. Report on Hoboken Library Staff and User Survey

---Mrs. Podles: Introduced Ms. Kaitlin Donahue Osborne of the Stevens Institute, who is an Ed.D. candidate at Vanderbilt University, to present some of the survey findings of her doctoral study on the library and its relationship to the Hoboken community. The study involved surveys of both patrons and staff, along with interviews over a period of 18 months, and it collected considerable information which Ms. Osborne agreed to share with the board.

---Ms. Osborne: Thanked the director and the trustees and presented a summary of her findings and data:

Her research involved a study of the relationship and values alignment between the library and its patrons. The study was conducted in three stages: 1. interviews with library staff with analysis of responses and themes; 2. creation of an e-mail survey of library patrons with quantitative analysis of the survey results; and 3. comparing the staff interview themes with patron responses to analyze alignment of issues and service quality of the library. The staff interviews produced a number of recurring themes, including the perceived need to add space to the library as well as satellite locations, increasing the number of cardholders, the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, better accessibility including connections with the schools, and others. The cardholder survey in Fall 2020 was created based on themes from the staff interviews; it measured attitude and perception to capture patron satisfaction and priorities for the survey topics, and it also segmented responders by age and their location in town. The cardholder survey was conducted using the library's Constant Contact email base of 11,701 contacts and achieved a 30% open rate for the first email, which is very good, and a 13% survey open rate, which is below average for non-profits; the survey questions consciously targeted adult patrons and not children.

The survey identified patron priorities and confirmed that the library was very important to the responders and that they primarily used it for borrowing library materials, using BCCLS inter-library loans (ILL), and to lesser degrees for other uses ranging from physically using the building, accessing library staff, attending programs, using technology, and getting delivery services and research assistance. Patron responses indicated that offering more circulating materials would have the greatest impact for them, as opposed to adding more space, programming, or remote programs; 68% of respondents felt it was important to have access to library staff. Overall patron satisfaction was very high, with ILL satisfaction highest of all, and very low levels of dissatisfaction for all surveyed categories. Patrons mainly find out about library offerings and activities through the library newsletter and website, with signage, staff contacts and social media much less influential. Free-form comments in the surveys were very positive about available services, staff, programming and the grab-and-go pickup shelves; there were requests for more and faster materials and ILL loans, community meet-ups for different groups, quiet spaces and co-working spaces, e-books and tutoring. In conclusion, project findings were that space is very important to the library staff; the library collections are very important to both staff and patrons; cardholders would like to see more materials and ILL access in the future; cardholders value access to the library staff; and the library email newsletter and website are the most effective ways to reach patrons. She thanked the director and trustees for their time and support over the last 18 months throughout the study.

---Ms. Murcko: Thanked Ms. Osborne for the presentation and the work that went into the study; she asked if the board would have access to her work in the future, especially for library strategic planning later this year. Yes, the survey results and Ms. Osborne's dissertation will all be available to the board.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked about the preference shown by patrons to physical library materials and why the survey only represents adults and young adults, but not families with young children. Discussion about the circulating collections and the legal consent requirements for surveying young children and identifying ways to work with younger children and their families.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked what Ms. Osborne thought about the low performance of social media versus high performance of the library website and newsletter for patron communications. Discussion about how adult patrons could use social media to supplement other library communications and age differences of users.

---Ms. Murcko: Thought that adding more space seemed to be the key takeaway of the patron surveys. Discussion about the present collection totaling about 90,000 items when it should be about 140,000 due to lack of space. Further discussion about the surveys supporting a finding that patrons want physical materials, not just digital ones.

6. Director's Report

---Mrs. Podles: Highlighted several items from the Director's Report: Circulation continues to be very good with a 7% increase from March and good library use. The staff is experimenting with in-person programming that is held outdoors; as the weather improves it will be possible to do this more, meanwhile children's programming and storytime in the park are getting a good response from parents. Ms. Mirchandani's book launch is also planned for the park on May 8th and "Open Mic in the Park" will be restored, coordinated by library staffer Sacha Chavez. A number of candidates for the Library Director position have been selected so far and the candidate screening continues. The library is continuing to work with the Launch Hoboken Innovation Center project on the topic of community space and how people want to use it. Discussions with the Hoboken Housing Authority (HHA) continue about setting up a branch at the HHA Fox Hill housing complex; the community room proposed as a library branch location remains closed due to COVID-19, however, and there are problems opening it for library use at this time.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: The bid process for the second and third floor renovation is complete and the contract award recommended by the committee is before the board for approval. The recommended winning bid was submitted by Merrell & Garaguso and totals \$5,001,700.00 for the project; the bid amount does not include the two additional alternate projects for 1.) a rooftop solar array and 2.) renovation of the second-floor bathroom. The committee recommends board approval of the bid; upon approval, it will immediately begin the pre-construction phase of work with the General Contractor.

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if there were any questions about the contract award or the scope of the project. There being none, the resolution approving the bid was added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee; there was no committee report this month. She described the financial matters before the board for approval: 1.) to pay from the capital improvement Construction Account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB) check no. 346 for \$1999.99; 2.) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no. 9196-9253 totaling \$116,423.13 and to pay via Paypal \$1,000.00 to

Facebook and \$599.60 to Zoom Video Communications; 3) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 9254-9260 totaling \$26,303.36.

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

---Ms. Blaney: 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 | X | | | |

8. President's Report

---Dr. Abernathy: He had discussions with Mr. Freeman concerning grant funds due the library and the city will forward the FEMA grant award of over \$700,000 to the library this year. In addition, he participated in multiple calls about the library's application for the second round of New Jersey Library Construction Bond Grant awards this spring. Also, the City of Hoboken was awarded a \$100,000 grant from Propelify to study creation of an Innovation Center and the charter for that center includes features like community maker spaces, which could be implemented in a library annex.

---Ms. Murcko: Added a report from the Personnel and Policy Committee on the Library Director search: So far two dozen serious candidates have been identified, most from the region and nearby. The search consultants are doing phone interviews with each candidate, which will narrow the group down to approximately nine individuals; the search committee will then narrow down this group further to three candidates for interviews with the board.

9. Executive Session

---Dr. Abernathy: An executive session has been scheduled to discuss personnel matters.

---Ms. Mirchandani: Moved the board enter Executive Session.

---Ms. Blaney: Seconded.

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

---The board entered executive session at 7:27 p.m. and returned to open session at 7:51 p.m.

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

10. Library Foundation Report

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Library Foundation: Reminded trustees that the foundation is participating in this year's "Hudson Gives," which takes place on May 15th.

---Ms. Blaney: Added that the joint committee of the Foundation and the Friends of the Library (FOTL) are discussing a merger and bylaws with library fundraising consultant Peter Peterson; the hope is for a kickoff of the merged groups in 2022.

11. Friends of the Library

---Dr. Abernathy: There is no report from the Friends this month.

12. Old Business

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

13. New Business

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

14. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Accept the minutes of the March 23, 2021 board meeting.
- b. Adopt resolution authorizing bid award for renovations for \$5,001,700.00 to Merrell & Garaguso, Inc.
- c. Approve payment of Part A bills.

---Ms. Blaney: 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 | X | | | |
|---------------|---|--|--|--|

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved to adjourn.

---Ms. Evans: Seconded.

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

The board of trustees adjourned at 7:56 p.m.