

MEETING OF TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 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, FEBRUARY 23, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.

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

1. Call to Order

Board Secretary Murcko 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		Joined at 6:36 p.m.
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., Mr. Michael Hanrahan and Mr. Tom Ryan of Clarke Caton Hintz Architects, Ms. Jobeth Bradbury of Bradbury-Miller Associates and members of the library staff and public.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

---Ms. Murcko: The minutes of the January 28, 2020 trustees' meeting will be distributed at the March trustees meeting for consideration next month.

4. Public Comments

---Ms. Murcko: Invited comments from the public. There were none.

5. Presentation by Library Architects Clarke Caton Hintz (CCH)

---Mrs. Podles: Introduced Michael Hanrahan, partner at library architects Clark Caton Hintz (CCH) and his associate Tom Ryan, the CCH project architect for the third-floor and HVAC renovation project.

---Mr. Hanrahan: Thanked the board for the opportunity to present CCH's updated Library Master Plan. The plan has been modified to make its scope smaller and therefore more affordable, so it can be paid for with the library's capital funds and possible future grants from the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act (LCBA) and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Trust (NJHPT).

---Mr. Hanrahan: Presented CCH's revised plan floor-by-floor. On the library's first floor, work will now include removal and abatement of certain asbestos flooring that needs to be removed, along with related removal of mechanicals and repairs, in order to permit three HVAC shafts to be added for the new heating/cooling system; in addition the bathroom ceiling and light fixtures will be replaced. Eliminated from first floor renovation plans are: restoration of the rear stairs, which instead will only be stabilized; custom cabinets surrounding the mechanical HVAC units will not be installed; new soffits for duct work will not be installed; certain lighting work will not be performed. On the mezzanine, the existing mechanical equipment will be removed and two cooling units will be added; the plan now eliminates the proposed casework surrounding the cooling units.

On the second floor, work now includes removing and abating asbestos in the parts of the floor that mirror the first floor work to make space for HVAC mechanical systems and shafts, removing existing mechanical equipment, patching walls, restoring or replacing the pressed metal ceiling where necessary, doing minimal work on the bathrooms, and providing a new janitor's closet; eliminated are restoration of the back stairs and the book processing room, reconfiguration of the Sinatra rear stack area, and installing casework surrounding the new HVAC mechanical units, along with some lighting and finishes.

On the third floor, the scope of the project has not changed. It is expected that the HVAC equipment will be located in the library's cupola and on the flat roof. Renderings of possible furniture and configurations of the children's room and YA room were presented. Two alternate additions were also presented: 1.) a rooftop solar array could be installed; and 2.) a second floor restroom could be installed.

Bid packages for the prequalified contractors will be ready to be issued by March 1 with a non-mandatory pre-bid meeting for contractors on March 10; contractors' questions would be accepted until March 15 and would be answered by March 18, when any addenda for the project will also be issued; bids would be due to the library on April 6 and the project would be awarded on April 8. The 13-month construction window is projected to be from April 12, 2021-May 12, 2022.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked how much the proposed solar array would be able to power in the event of a power failure. There was no certain answer for that eventuality. Discussion about grant proposals being helped by resilience features such as the solar array. Further discussion about possible state regulations or rules requiring such solar power to be sent to the grid.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked whether the HVAC filters will stop COVID-19 transmission and provide the 6-9 times air exchange rate circulation recommended by the CDC. CCH will review the HVAC specs to obtain answers. Further discussion about letting the public know that the library will be CDC-compliant and has anti-COVID

filtering. Further discussion about public awareness that the project will also deliver an energy-efficient LEED-certified building.

---Ms. Murcko: Noted the CCH presentation was informational; no board action is needed to proceed with the proposed bid schedule. The board thanked Mr. Hanrahan and Mr. Ryan for the presentation and information.

---Mr. Hanrahan and Mr. Ryan left the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

6. Presentation by Jobeth Bradbury of Bradbury Miller Associates

---Ms. Murcko: Introduced Ms. Jobeth Bradbury, Managing Consultant of the search firm Bradbury Miller Associates on the Library Director Search.

---Ms. Bradbury: Thanked the board and introduced herself and her firm. She has had meetings with the Library Director and the board Search Committee; the goal is to have a recommended search program by March 1st with advertising for the position to run from March 1-April 18. Recruitment will target people “who aren’t looking for a job” and the campaign will start in New Jersey, then move into surrounding states, and then nationally; by April 18 she thinks they will probably have about 25 candidates. She will then meet with the Search Committee on April 29 with the goal of selecting 7-9 semi-finalists who will meet with the Search Committee with a goal of selecting 3 or 4 finalists to meet with the board; she is hoping that the finalists will also be able to meet with library staff. She asked whether the board and staff could make themselves available to meet the finalists on May 19-20.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if Thursday, May 20th was okay for the trustees, and whether these would be Zoom meetings. After discussion the trustees agreed to a May 20th meeting at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Bradbury noted that this likely will be a 3-5 hour meeting to allow about one hour for each candidate and additional time for discussion.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked the trustees and staff who have not completed the Bradbury-Miller surveys to please do so. The surveys will remain available to be completed until May 20.

---Ms. Bradbury: Asked that key library staff and stakeholders like the Friends of the Library and Library Foundation make themselves available to meet with the candidates via Zoom on May 19th; these staff meetings are not formal interviews but rather conversations, and are a useful part of the process.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked Ms. Bradbury’s opinion of the job requirements drafted by the committee. She thought they were the standard requirements.

---Ms. Bradbury: After the May 19-20 Zoom meetings, her firm would facilitate the hiring process with arrangements, including background checks and possible relocation arrangements, with a target date of completing the process by May 28th. This would enable the successful candidate to start in early July; a search schedule will be provided to the board. There was discussion about arrangements for the timing and attendance at the May 19-20 Zoom meetings, and allowing 5 or more hours for each of them; the board agreed to meet to interview candidates at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 20th; the board encouraged the staff to make themselves available for the May 19th Zoom meeting and take the opportunity for input into the process.

---Mr. Cerone: Asked if Bradbury-Miller was aware that this is a civil service jurisdiction. Bradbury-Miller is aware that it is a civil service position and also that the library is unionized; there is a civil service examination that must be passed within one year of being in the position and the position is provisional pending the results of the examination.

---Mr. Cerone: Noted that in New Jersey, the Jersey First Act would require the new director to move into New Jersey within the first 365 days of taking the position. Bradbury-Miller is aware of this, and also that there is no residency requirement to live in Hoboken.

---Ms. Bradbury: Added that she had already heard unsolicited from four colleagues that the Hoboken Library has an excellent reputation. The firm will send non-confidential updates on the search every ten days or so, which can be shared with the staff.

---Ms. Murcko: Along with the trustees, thanked Ms. Bradbury.

---Ms. Bradbury left the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

7. Director's Report: 2020 Annual Report

---Mrs. Podles: Referred the trustees to her written Director's Report distributed with the board package and presented the Annual Report for 2020. It is titled "A year like none other" because 2020 brought unprecedented challenges for the library.

The library has a total of 44 personnel, 32 full time and 12 part time, and three sites: the main building, the Grand Street branch, and the Learning Center at the Hoboken Housing Authority (HHA). The library board of trustees includes *ex officio* representation of the mayor and superintendent of schools, as well as Mayor Bhalla and Superintendent Johnson, and library staff. The library board has adopted a mission statement to guide its work: to support connecting people with each other, with ideas, and with opportunities for lifelong learning, personal growth, and community development.

The library's community support organizations are the Friends of the Library (FOTL) and Hoboken Library Foundation. FOTL provides museum passes for loan to patrons, English as a second language (ESL) classes, and Saturday FUNday classes (classes are now virtual); FOTL supports its operations with book sales, Novel and Novella Night social events, and membership fees. The Library Foundation's mission is to provide long-term, stable support for resources and services the library requires to meet the evolving educational, social, cultural, technological and informational needs of the community; its Annual Appeal and other fundraising supports landscaping and maintenance of the Reading Garden as well as capital projects like the Third Floor Renovation and Restoration. Discussions between the Friends and the Foundation are underway to operate jointly.

Library circulation during 2020 was down 17%, reflecting the pandemic shutdown for in-person services from mid-March to June, but almost 238,000 books, media, downloads, and streamable media did circulate and there were over 72,466 patron visits, with controlled entry after the main library reopened; the number of library programs actually increased 3% to 1,328, mostly virtual, with total program attendance of 115,561; virtual programs accounted for almost 100,000 attendees.

The 2020 library budget was \$5,937,247, with personnel costs accounting for \$3,155,000, operations accounting for \$2,782,247 and capital expenditures accounting for only \$85,477 due to the pandemic, but these expenditures did include some improvements made to the adjacent Library Annex 2.

The 2020 year started normally in January-February with preparations for the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act (NJCBA) grant application and the first-floor renovation. March-April were extremely busy because of the COVID-19 shutdown and emergency transition by staff to remote work and maintaining services remotely, including arranging for digital lending, digital library cards, virtual programming, etc. In April the library's COVID-19 Assistance Web page for the Hoboken community was developed and went live; it has been adopted by many other BCCLS libraries since then and continues to be updated as reliable information becomes available.

Also in April, physical changes were made inside the library including repurposing rooms for extensive new sanitary operating protocols, installing plexiglass barriers and signage for the staff, and planning for the eventual return of patrons. In May-June, staff were divided into alternating teams that worked on different shifts to anticipate possible staff quarantines, protocols for sanitizing and circulating materials were developed, the book return box reopened and curbside pickup was started. In July-August, the stacks remained closed but the building re-opened for computer visits by appointment, a new outside unattended locker system was installed for 24/7 materials pickups; Grab-and-Go service started in August, as did the meeScan app for patrons. In September-October, Grab-and-Go service and computer use increased and the library reopened the stacks to limited numbers of patrons starting on September 21. October marked the library's 130th Anniversary, with a full program of virtual and pre-recorded events and activities and decorations and projections on the outside of the building. November-December saw increases in programs, the gradual reopening of the Grand Street Branch, and expanded use of the meeScan app with a checkout station on the first floor.

New in 2020 were an increased focus on literacy; a literacy specialist has been hired and literacy programs have expanded considerably; ESL classes are now run virtually and are very popular; also new are literacy classes for new parents, career-change workshops and virtual school class visits. Virtual collections were another major focus and access to ebooks and streaming media services were expanded considerably. Year-long library advertising and signage campaigns kept the community aware of the library and promoted the Web site and the growing number of available services throughout the year.

Library space planning and expansion were impacted by the pandemic but several things were accomplished: The third floor was emptied out in preparation for renovations and new HVAC, but was then returned to temporary use as the Young Adult room compliant with distancing rules; the library applied for the 2020 NJ LCBA grant and prepared for other grant applications; renovations were completed at neighboring Annex 2; and the new custom-built walk-up window for patrons was obtained for the Learning Center at HHA (installed January 2021). Library Wi-Fi service was expanded into the northern areas of Church Square Park.

Fundraising was seriously impacted by the pandemic: the 130th Anniversary Fundraising event had to be canceled, but the Library Foundation's Annual Appeal mailing took place and its new Web site went live; the Friends and Foundation are discussing joint fundraising.

In 2021 and the future, the third-floor renovation will proceed as planned but with reduced renovations on the lower floors, as discussed by CCH previously in the meeting. A new grant application will be prepared for the 2021 NJ LCBA grant cycle; library services will be incorporated into available space at library Annex 1 and Annex 2 at 256-258 Fifth Street. The 2021 Annual Library Fair is planned in some form for summer in Church Square Park. Lastly, if renovations proceed as scheduled, the new third-floor children's room could re-open by the end of the year, with state-of-the-art HVAC, while work continues on the other floors.

The 2020 report concluded with the quote from a local patron thanking "Hoboken's intellectual first responders" for the continued community service and help during the pandemic, and with an appreciation of the staff and the trustees for being part of the very challenging year.

---Ms. Murcko, Mrs. Serrano, and staffer Ashley Hoffman: all thanked the director for the presentation and the leadership during 2020. The board concurred.

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

---Mrs. Podles: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: She referred the trustees to the written report, in the interest of time. Two big projects were completed: the new, sliding window was installed at the Learning Center at HHA and the new, all-hours pickup lockers are now in operation at the Grand Street Branch.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee; there will be no committee report this month. 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 FY2020 library operating expenses with checks no. 9121-9123 totaling \$9,570.48; 3) in Part A, to pay FY2021 library operating expenses with checks no. 9067-9114 totaling \$63,724.60, and to pay via PayPal \$175.00 to PayPro Global; 4.) in Part B, to pay FY2020 expenses for library materials with check no. 9124 for \$1,569.35; and 5) in Part B, to pay FY2021 expenses for library materials with checks no. 9115-9120 totaling \$15,408.50.

---Mrs. Serrano: In addition, before the board is a resolution to reserve FY2020 operating funds for capital improvements; it authorizes moving \$500,000 from FY2020 operating funds to the BCB Construction Account. She asked if there were any questions about the bills to be paid or the resolution. There being none, the FY2020 and FY2021 Part A bills to be approved for payment and the resolution to transfer FY2020 funds to the capital improvements account were added to the consent agenda.

---Mr. Freeman: Moved the board approve paying the FY2020 and FY2021 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			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Murcko			X	
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			

10. Executive Session

---Ms. Murcko: An executive session has been scheduled to discuss personnel matters. She moved the board enter Executive Session.

---Mr. Freeman: 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			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Murcko	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			

---The board entered executive session at 7:46 p.m. and returned to open session at 8:28 p.m.

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

---Ms. Murcko: Added the following four resolutions to the meeting consent agenda: 1.) Resolution to increase the salary of library staff IT Specialist Phil Mendez to \$66,462.50; 2.) resolution to increase the salary of library Buildings and Grounds Director Mike Chapka to \$86,912.50; 3.) resolution to revise the base salary for administrative assistant Faith Fitzsimmons with Union support to \$60,808.45 and to keep her longevity at 14%; and 4.) resolution to revise the job description of the Library Director to bring it into conformance with the position now being advertised.

---Ms. Murcko: Noted that the board considered an additional personnel-related resolution that needed further review, and so that resolution concerning the Director's retirement package had to be tabled for a later vote.

9. President's Report

---Ms. Murcko: In Dr. Abernathy's absence there is no report this month.

10. Friends of the Library (FOTL)

---Ms. Murcko: There is no report from the Friends this month.

11. Library Foundation Report

---Ms. Blaney: Reported for the Library Foundation: The foundation remains in discussions with the Friends and library fundraising consultant Peter Peterson of Library Development Solutions. Also, the Foundation has signed up to participate in this year's "Hudson Gives," which takes place on May 13th.

12. Old Business

---Ms. Murcko: Called for any old business; there was none.

13. New Business

---Ms. Murcko: Called for any new business; there was none.

14. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Excuse the absences of Dr. Abernathy and Ms. Mirchandani.
- b. Approve payment of FY2020 and FY2021 Part A bills for non-media operating expenses.
- c. Adopt resolution to reserve \$500,000 in FY2020 operating funds for capital improvements.
- d. Approve resolution on salary upgrade for library IT specialist Phil Mendez.

- e. Approve resolution on salary upgrade for library Buildings and Grounds Director Michael Chapka.
- f. Approve resolution on salary change and adjustment for library administrative assistant Faith Fitzsimmons.
- g. Approve revision of the Library Director's job description to conform to the description being advertised.

---Ms. Blaney: 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			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Murcko	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			

15. Trustee Comments

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if there were any trustee comments. There were none.

---Mrs. Podles: Asked why the resolution for her retirement benefit was not approved because it was equivalent to the union staff contract.

---Ms. Murcko: Stated that the board felt it needed more information and a review by counsel. The Director replied that she had forwarded the draft earlier and asked if there were any questions and there were none at that time. Discussion about the full board realizing at this time that there were things the Personnel and Policy Committee and the full board did not know that they felt needed to be understood before voting.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if there were any reasons why the vote could not be postponed until the next meeting.

---Mrs. Podles: Replied no, there was no such reason, but she wanted to be on record regarding her disappointment that such an important matter for her was not resolved and would be delayed for another month. She asked that the minutes of the meeting reflect this.

---Mr. Thoens: Added that the delay was not related to the Director, but only to legal restrictions that the trustees wanted library counsel to review further.

---Mr. Freeman: Moved to adjourn.

---Ms. Evans: Seconded.

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

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