

**MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 25, 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, MAY 25, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.**

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

**1. Call to Order**

Board Secretary Murcko called the meeting to order at 6:30 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., and members of the library staff and public.

---Ms. Murcko: A motion to excuse the absence of Dr. Abernathy due to a schedule conflict was added to the meeting consent agenda.

**3. Acceptance of Minutes**

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if trustees had any comments or corrections to the minutes of the April 27, 2021 meeting and or May 5, 2021 special meeting. There being none, the minutes were added to the consent agenda.

#### **4. Public Comments**

---Ms. Murcko: Invited comments from the public.

---Mr. Sacha Chavez: On behalf of the staff union chapter, thanked the Library Director for the experience of the last 20 years and the many improvements that have taken place. Other attendees joined in with his remarks.

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

---Mrs. Podles: Introduced Ms. Rosary VanIngen, the Head of Adult Services, the proposed interim Director after Mrs. Podles's retirement on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. VanIngen has been with the library for over 25 years, starting as a part-time circulation assistant and rising to become circulation director and attend library school; she will direct library operations pending a permanent replacement being named by the board of trustees.

The financial transition to a new director will happen on Thursday, May 27, with changing of signature cards at the library's banks to include a new authorized signer for checks. The governor's new COVID-19 guidelines will become effective on May 28<sup>th</sup>; these permit reopening at 100% of building capacity, mask-free; in-person programs will also restart in the small program room. But because Hoboken vaccination rates are well below statewide averages and large numbers of children are in the library, a resolution to extend the library's mask mandate for 30 days past May 28<sup>th</sup> is before the board for approval, with a reassessment of the mask requirement at the end of that time. Also before the board is a resolution approving the application for a 2021 grant under the New Jersey Library Construction Act and certifying the library has matching funds for the grant.

Mrs. Podles concluded by saying that a great many things had been accomplished at Hoboken's Free Public Library over the past twenty years, but more remained to be done. She thanked the board and the board thanked her.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: The Hoboken Buildings Department has issued all necessary building permits for the third-floor renovation, so work can start. He met with General Contractor Merrell & Garaguso (the "GC") and it was agreed to move the start date up from June 10<sup>th</sup> to June 3<sup>rd</sup>; the third floor will therefore be closed to the public early. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, the main library building will be closed completely for the asbestos abatement phase of the project; he has arranged for storage for the materials that are being relocated. The "Toybrary" in Annex 2 will be used for operations and storage during the main building closure. The GC still does not have a fixed schedule for the project but they will deliver one with a termination date in June or July of 2022.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked about the schedule conflict of the Grand Street Branch closing as part of the Multi-Service Center summer closure, and whether the main and Grand Street closures could be coordinated to maximize availability for patrons. The projects are both underway; it is not definite at this point whether they can be staggered.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked if the library annexes can be used more. Space is limited but they can be used; the plan is to rely more on BCCLS lending services while both buildings are closed.

---Mrs. Podles: Added that there is a board action item to approve paying \$35,000 for additional costs for project administration to library architects Clarke Caton Hintz (CCH). The action item was added to the meeting consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee: There is committee report this month concerning the 2020 library audit report.

---Mrs. Podles: The 2020 audit by Wielkottz & Company is complete with no auditor's notes and the report has been reviewed by the Finance Committee, which recommends board acceptance of the 2020 audit. She also acknowledged the management and preparation for the audit by library bookkeeper Carolyn Hartwick, which led to a clean, timely audit with no notes.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked when the next audit should start. Experience has shown that February is best, so all prior year bills and costs can be included; the goal is to close the 2021 books completely in February before starting the audit.

---Mrs. Serrano: Continued the Budget and Finance Committee report: 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. 347 for \$3,468.60; 2.) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no. 9263-9313 totaling \$275,761.37; 3) in Part B, to pay expenses for library materials with checks no. 9314-9320 totaling \$24,299.15. Also before the board is a resolution to void BCB check no. 346 for \$1,999.99. Approval of the Part A bills and resolution to void the check were added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board approve paying the Part B bills for library materials.

---Ms. Blaney: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 1 ABSTAIN: 0

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Ms. Blaney	X			
Ms. Evans	X			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Mirchandani	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			
Ms. Murcko (presiding)			X	

---Mrs. Podles: Also before the board is a resolution approved by the Budget and Finance Committee approving the library's application for a 2021 grant under the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act in the amount of \$2,909,167.00, and also certifying that the Hoboken Public Library has matching funds for such grant in the same amount. The resolution was added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Podles: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: Out of an abundance of caution to protect the library staff, the committee is recommending an extension of the library mask requirement. She explained the proposed policy: the governor has waived mask requirements as of today, but statistics show that close to 300 patrons per day visit the library, so the risk of contagion to staff and others is still present. Because we can't ask patrons if they have been vaccinated, the extended mask policy is intended to apply for 30 days until the interim director can reexamine the statistics for June for library staff, which consists of 44 people, 9 of whom are not

vaccinated, although two say they are planning to be vaccinated. During this period, the library has expanded services like laptop lending for computer users and curbside pickups or grab-and-go to give patrons alternatives to spending time in the building itself.

---Mr. Freeman: Asked if library security has been advised of this proposed policy because there could be pushback from patrons who do not want to wear masks due to the governor's waiver starting on May 28. Discussion about patron complaints about mask requirement already and the new mask policy being temporary; further discussion about signage being posted to advise patrons of the policy.

## **8. President's Report**

---Ms. Murcko: Dr. Abernathy was not able to attend due to a schedule conflict, but he asked the chair to extend his heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the outgoing director, Mrs. Podles, for the major changes and expansion of the library into the community. She has left her mark on Hoboken for the next many years. The trustees concurred.

## **9. Library Foundation Report and Friends of the Library (FOTL)**

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

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Library Foundation: The foundation board met for discussions about a merger with the Friends of the Library; logistical decisions were discussed. In July, both the Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library will come to the board of trustees meeting with proposals. Also, in this year's "Hudson Gives" campaign in May, the foundation raised \$1,700.00 in donations.

## **10. Old Business**

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

## **11. New Business**

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

## **12. Consent Agenda**

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved the board approve the meeting consent agenda as follows:

- a. Excuse the absence of Dr. Abernathy.
- b. Accept the minutes of the April 27, 2021 board meeting and May 6, 2021 special board meeting.
- c. Approve payment of \$35,000 to Clarke Caton Hintz for construction administration.
- d. Accept the 2020 library audit by Wielkotz & Company.
- e. Approve payment of Part A bills, including BCB bills for capital improvements.
- f. Approve resolution to void BCB check no. 346.
- g. Approve board certification of capital funds for the 2021 New Jersey Library Construction Bond grant.
- h. Adopt policy to mandate COVID-19 mask wearing by patrons for an additional 30 days.

---Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

---Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Ms. Blaney	X			
Ms. Evans	X			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Mirchandani	X			
Mrs. Serrano	X			
Mr. Silbert	X			
Mr. Thoens	X			
Ms. Murcko (presiding)	X			

---Mrs. Serrano: Moved to adjourn.

---Ms. Evans: Seconded.

---Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The board of trustees adjourned at 7:20 p.m.