

**MEETING OF TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023**

**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, JANUARY 24, 2023 AT 6:30 P.M.**

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

**1. Call to Order**

Board President Abernathy called the meeting to order at 6:31 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 26, 2022 meeting of the Library Board and such 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 internet and telephone conference number and access code in advance of the scheduled meetings.

**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. Malani Cademartori, School Superintendent's Designee*	X		
Mr. Jason Freeman, Mayor's Designee*	X		
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani		X	Excused absence.
Mr. Jack Silbert	X		
Mr. Kurt Thoens	X		

\**Ex officio* under NJ state law.

\*\*Present via remote connection.

Also in attendance were: Library Director Jennie Pu, Library Attorney Dennis J. Zucker Esq., Library Consultant Martin J. Gómez, Recording Secretary Clark Matthews and members of the library staff and public.

---Dr. Abernathy: Ms. Mirchandani advised that she was ill and asked to be excused. This was added to the meeting consent agenda.

**3. Acceptance of Minutes**

---Dr. Abernathy: Asked if trustees had any corrections or comments to the December 27, 2022 meeting minutes. There were none; acceptance of the minutes were added to the meeting consent agenda.

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

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

#### **5. Presentation of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan by MJ Gómez Associates**

---Ms. Pu: Introduced Library Strategic Planning Consultant Martin J. Gómez of Santa Cruz, California, to present the 2023-2026 Library Strategic Plan prepared by his firm.

---Mr. Gómez: Thanked the director and trustees and introduced two colleagues who worked on the planning, study, Ms. Barbara Genco and Mr. Jason LeDuc, both formerly of the Brooklyn Public Library. He described the strategic plan process: Work started in September 2022 with a steering committee and its goal was to develop a practical plan to align library and community aspirations; it involved a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and environmental study, 7 focus groups, 24 stakeholder interviews, creating a survey and analyzing over 800 survey responses, and workshops on visioning and goal setting. The strategic plan covers 5 goals for the library: 1) Partnerships and Community Relationships; 2) Library Service to the Hoboken Community; 3) Capital Improvements, including creation of a Master Facilities Plan; 4) Organizational Capacity; and 5) Local Government Relations, while noting that the library is an independent entity under state law.

He expanded on the strategic plan for each of the 5 goals: 1) Partnerships/Community Relationships targets schools, the Hoboken Housing Authority (HHA), the Library Friends & Foundation, the business community and local non-profits; 2) Service to the Community aims to increase efficiencies, including in programs, collections, etc.; 3) Capital Improvements analyzes building use and a capital improvements study, leading to a master facilities plan that includes a mobile services unit; 4) Organizational Capacity plans to build an effective, mission-driven organization culture that will transform the library into a user-centered library as proposed by the Urban Libraries Council; and 5) Local Government Relations aims to strengthen connections to strategic priorities of the City of Hoboken and give the library “a seat at the policy table.” There was discussion about the five areas of focus.

---Dr. Abernathy: Thanked Mr. Gómez and his colleagues for their work and the plan presented. Discussion about Gov. Murphy signing the media literacy bill. Further discussion about initiatives between libraries and their municipalities.

---Mr. Gómez: Gave examples of joint initiatives with the municipality: 1) a book-reading program sponsored by city hall with a local author, or 2) discussion with the city about space available in city buildings.

---Dr. Abernathy: Was pleased with the results of the strategic planning process and looked forward to working with M.J. Gómez Associates to move forward. The trustees thanked Mr. Gomez, Mr. Le Duc and Ms. Genco. Adoption of the 2023-26 Strategic Plan was added to the meeting consent agenda.

#### **6. Director’s Report**

---Ms. Pu: Highlighted several items from the Director’s Report: The library has been featured in an article in TAPinto titled “A Look into the Future: What’s to Come for Hoboken’s Public Library.” Several presentations

by staffers on subjects like genealogy, book bike operations, social work initiatives, and cooking have been accepted by the 2023 New Jersey Library Association conference, as has a proposal on advocating for public libraries by the director, who co-chairs the NJLA policy committee. Staffers will also have positions on many BCCLS committees. The library HR Manager Faith Fitzsimmons has been appointed as a trustee of the Saddle Brook Public Library. Statistics show mixed results from November but big improvements over the years: circulation and door count was down somewhat but the number of programs has increased 500%; construction work might account for this. Print circulation for children’s books is much higher; digital circulation is down. A board action item (BAI) approving \$33,993.50 for additional 3<sup>rd</sup> floor furniture is before the board because facilities there need to be expanded as Story Time moves back to that floor. Also up for board approval will be the FY2023 library operating budget.

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

---Mr. Chapka: Reported for the Buildings and Grounds Committee: The renovations have passed all inspections and the punch list is scheduled to complete the work; the punch list is still being finalized as items are added to it. The problems with the new HVAC system are fixed and it is running properly. Regarding recent change orders approved by the trustees, work on Change Order No. 14 is in progress and work is complete for Change Order No. 10.; he is now pricing service contracts for HVAC maintenance. The board action item approving additional 3<sup>rd</sup> floor furniture, not to exceed \$33,993.50, was added to the consent agenda.

---Mrs. Serrano: Reported for the Budget and Finance Committee: The library FY 2023 Operating Budget is before the board for approval. Also requiring approval is the authorization to hire Wielkottz & Company LLC to audit the library FY2022 financial statements.

---Mrs. Serrano: Continued the 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. 402 totaling \$16,600.00; 2.) in Part A, to pay FY2022 library operating expenses with checks no. 10616-10641 totaling \$77,198.94; 3) in Part A, to pay FY2023 library operating expenses with checks no. 10649-10691 totaling \$79,289.14, and to pay via Paypal \$5372.08 to Adobe and \$526.98 to Library Journal; and 4) in Part B, to pay FY2023 expenses for library materials with checks no. 10642-10648 totaling \$47,129.15. She asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked about the State Aid figure in income and expenses in the 2022 budget vs. actual financial summary; it shows \$6,000 extra. There were extra state library funds available, so the state disbursed those funds. There being no other questions, approval of the BCB and Part A bills was added to the meeting consent agenda.

---Mr. Freeman: Moved the board approve payment of the Part B bills for library materials.

---Ms. Cadematori: 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. Cadematori	X			
Mr. Freeman	X			
Ms. Murcko			X	
Mrs. Serrano	X			

Mr. Silbert	X		
Mr. Thoens	X		
Dr. Abernathy	X		

--Ms. Pu: Reviewed the FY2023 Library Budget and described major changes from 2022: i) the budget reflects a major health insurance increase which impacted spending for the security firm among other things; ii) the budget increases funds for salaries and wages; and iii) the anticipated capital reserve funds are less as a result of these increases.

---Mr. Thoens: Asked if the budget should be increased when collective bargaining is still going on. Counsel advised that this is standard practice in the public sector. Discussion about whether the library will be able to afford to staff an uptown facility if we succeed in getting space there. Further discussion about the major cost increases this year.

---Dr. Abernathy: New Jersey’s statutory 1/3 mil funding for libraries means that revenue is based on real estate values, so the budget’s top line is driven by property prices but expenses are driven by payroll costs and healthcare, which are subject to inflation and collective bargaining; revenue is fixed but inflation in the CPI is running very high. He thought the board needs to strategically plan how to work with the funding it gets.

---Dr. Abernathy: Also before the board is an action item approving retaining Wielkocz & Company LLC to perform the FY 2022 library audit. Discussion about available auditors; the director reached out to prior auditors but they no longer audit libraries. Library counsel will forward a list of other auditors. The FY2023 library budget and the resolution retaining Wielkocz & Company LLC to perform the audit, not to exceed \$7,250.00, were added to the consent agenda.

---Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: The committee will set annual 2023 goals for the director during February; it will also set up meetings with each trustee to get feedback, as well as getting feedback from some library staff and some outside stakeholders. The board retreat will be on February 8<sup>th</sup>; she encouraged trustees to attend; the NJ state librarian will be there. The retreat must be advertised under the Open Public Meetings Act.

---Dr. Abernathy: Thanked the Personnel and Policy Committee for all the work connected to collecting feedback.

**8. President’s Report**

---Dr. Abernathy: Expected 2023 to have big changes for the library budget with issues of development, fundraising, expanding services, and more; it will not be possible to “save our way” to capital projects; the cost structure is changing and the board will need to strategically plan for changes in the revenue base.

**9. Hoboken Public Library Friends & Foundation Report (HPLFF)**

---Ms. Blaney: Reported for the Library Friends & Foundation: Invited the trustees to the joint launch of new combined group on Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Fundraising has become more important than ever and the first in-person meeting of the new board just took place.

## 10. Old Business

---Mr. Thoens: Asked where the prospective uptown annex space is located. It is at the present Academy Bus site and would be larger than originally planned.

---Ms. Murcko: Thought there should be discussion about planning for this expansion.

---Mr. Freeman: Described how the city plans to acquire the property in three stages; another bond will be needed to build out the new facilities; the original cost was budgeted at \$40 million to acquire the property and build out; the expected bond is now \$80 million.

---Ms. Murcko: Asked how much North Bergen bonded for its library. It bonded for \$20 million.

## 11. New Business

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

## 12. Consent Agenda

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

- a. Excuse the absence of Ms. Mirchandani.
- b. Accept the minutes of the December 27, 2022 meeting.
- c. Approve payment of Part A bills for FY2022 and FY2023 library operations.
- d. Approve payment of BCB Capital Improvement bills.
- e. Approve resolution retaining Wielkotz & Company LLC as FY 2022 library auditors, not to exceed \$7,250.
- f. Approve BAI to purchase additional 3<sup>rd</sup> floor furniture, not to exceed \$33,993.50.
- e. Approve Library Strategic Plan for 2023-2026.

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

## 13. Trustee Comments

---Dr. Abernathy: Invited any comments by the trustees. There were none.

---Dr. Abernathy: Moved to adjourn.

---Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.