

**MEETING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HOBOKEN  
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, HELD IN THE LARGE PROGRAM ROOM OF THE  
HOBOKEN PUBLIC LIBRARY, 500 PARK AVENUE, IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY ON  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024 AT 6:30 PM.**

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

**1. Call to Order**

Board President Abernathy called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and certified that pursuant to the Open Public Meeting Act, notice of the meeting had been given in the annual meeting notice, which was adopted at the July 25, 2023 meeting of the Library Board and such notice was provided in the Jersey Journal and Star Ledger, was posted to the Library website and at the Hoboken City Hall, and filed with the Hoboken City Clerk. The meeting notice was amended at the outset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency to provide the internet and telephone conference number and access code in advance of the scheduled meetings.

**2. Roll Call**

| Attendance   | Present                             | Absent                              | Notes          |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Dr. Jerome Abernathy, President                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Ms. Susan Murcko, Secretary                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Mr. Kurt Thoens, Treasurer                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Ms. Amanda R. Blaney**                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Ms. Malani Cademartori, School Superintendent Designee * | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Left at 8:15pm |
| Mr. Damien DeBenedetto                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Mr. Jason Freeman, Mayor's Designee*                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |
| Mr. Jack Silbert   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                |

\**Ex officio* under NJ state law

\*\*Present via remote connection

Also in attendance were: Library Director Jennie Pu, Library Attorney Douglas S. Zucker Esq., Interim Assistant Library Director Jamex Cox, Recording Secretary Karla Aybar Reyes, and members of the public.

### **3. Acceptance of Minutes**

—Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the Trustees had any corrections or comments regarding the minutes of the Board meeting of November 26, 2024. There being none, approval of the minutes was added to the consent agenda.

### **4. Executive Session**

—Dr. Abernathy: Called for an executive session.

—Mr. Silbert: Seconded.

—Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 8 NAYS: 0 Recused: 0 Abstain: 0

The board entered executive session at 6:35pm and returned to the public session at 8:18pm.

—Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the session: The session was called for purposes of discussing personnel matters. No votes or board actions were taken.

### **5. Public Comments**

—Dr. Abernathy: Invited comments from the public. There were none.

### **6. Director's Report**

—Ms. Pu: Highlighted items of note: Thirty-two people attended the annual holiday party, which was held at City Bistro. Staff and guests had a great time mingling and singing karaoke. Ms Pu introduced Mr. Cox as Interim Assistant Director.

—Ms. Murcko: Commented on the drop in social work outreach statistics and noted that there is a need for a library social worker.

—Ms. Pu: Consulted with Ms. Dalton before her resignation. The Library has intentions of filling that position.

—Ms. Murcko: Thanked Mr. Cox for his work in Special Collections.

—Ms. Pu: Remarked that Mr. Cox was invited to participate in a panel discussion at Arthouse Productions in Jersey City.

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

—Dr. Abernathy: Reported on behalf of the Buildings and Grounds Committee: The Buildings and Grounds Committee met to review the budget for library renovations. The Committee recommended that renovations begin with the first floor and mezzanine for maximum customer experience.

—Ms. Pu: Remarked that Clarke Caton Hintz will present the renovation plans to the full board.

—Mr. Thoens: Asked how long the first floor would be closed to the public.

—Ms Pu: Estimates that renovations would take about a year. They will focus on permitting, bidding, and other planning in 2025 and renovations are slated to start in 2026. There will be an alternate entrance to the public and lending operations will be moved to the Grand Street branch.

—Mr. Thoens: Reported for the Finance Committee: Mr. Thoens described the financial matters before the Board for approval: 1) in Part A, to pay library operating expenses with checks no.12213-12258 totaling \$299,671.57; and in Part B, to pay library operating expenses with checks no.12259-12263 totaling \$30,791.29. Also before the Board is resolution to void check no.12027, and a draft of the full audit for their review. Mr. Thoens asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid or the resolution. There being none, approval of Part A bills and the resolution to void checks were added to the consent agenda.

—Dr. Abernathy: Moved the Board to approve payment of the Part B bills for library materials.

—Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

—Adopted by roll call vote as follow: YEAS: 6 NAYS:0 RECUSED: 1 ABSTAIN: 0

| Trustee         | Yes                                 | No                       | Recused                             | Abstain                  |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ms. Blaney      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. DeBenedetto | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Freeman     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ms. Murcko      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Silbert     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Thoens      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|               |                                     |                          |                          |                          |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Dr. Abernathy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

—Ms. Murcko: Asked if the additional state aid is reflected in the budget.

—Mr. Thoens: Replied that the check arrived today and that it will fall under the 2024 actual budget when it is cashed.

—Ms. Mucko: Asked if the staff development line includes professional development opportunities for the Director, or just for the rest of the staff.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that that line is reserved only for staff development. She noted that we underspent on that budget because we did not employ an outside consultant for staff development day and that that line will be monitored closely in 2025.

—Ms. Murcko: Reported for the Personnel and Policy Committee: The Committee discussed a personnel issue. There were no policy questions at this month’s meeting.

—Mr. Zucker: Union negotiations will take place in January. There was a delay in responding to the Union because we were waiting for their economic proposal. The Union filed a complaint with PERC because of the delay but the complaint was dismissed.

### **8. President’s Report**

—Dr. Abernathy: Shared that there have been discussions regarding the homeless situation at the Library. He and Ms. Pu met with neighbors who came to them with concerns about families feeling unsafe at the Library. Dr. Abernathy stated that we will take the initiative to meet with local organizations to come up with solutions.

—Mr. Murcko: Stated that the code of conduct policy will be reviewed by the Personnel and Policy Committee and that we should look toward other libraries’ policies and approaches for how to address the situation and support staff and neighbors.

### **9. Friends & Foundation**

—Ms. Blaney: There were no updates.

### **10. Old Business**

—Dr. Abernathy: Called for any old business. There was none.

### **11. New Business**

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

**12. Consent Agenda**

- a. Accept the minutes of the November 26, 2024 Board meeting
- b. Approve payment of Part A bills
- c. Approve resolution to void checks

—Dr. Abernathy: Moved the Board to approve the meeting consent agenda.

—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      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. DeBenedetto | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Freeman     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ms. Murcko      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Silbert     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mr. Thoens      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dr. Abernathy   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**12. 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:7 NAYS:0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.