

MEETING OF TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025

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, FEBRUARY 25, 2025 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 23, 2024 meeting of the Library Board and such notice was provided in the Star Ledger, was posted to the Library website and at the Hoboken City Hall, and filed with the Hoboken City Clerk.

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. Leslie Norwood, School Superintendent Designee *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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 James Cox, and Recording Secretary Karla Aybar Reyes.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

—Dr. Abernathy: Asked if the Trustees had any corrections or comments regarding the minutes of the Board meeting of January 28, 2025. There being none, approval of the minutes was added to the consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

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

5. Director's Report

—Ms. Pu: Highlighted items of note: Ms. Pu attended the ULC Board Retreat in person in La Jolla, CA. The group discussed shared vision and strategies for impact, growing its resources, and strengthening its fundraising strategy. A copy of Ms. Pu's 2025 directors goals is included in this month's board packet for Board review. Ms. Pu was invited by the Library of Congress to participate in the selection committee for the National Ambassador of Young People's Literature. The committee selected author Mac Barnett, who was inaugurated at the Library of Congress on February 6. Forty-five people attended the Onyx Storm Release Party on January 24. Proceeds from the event benefited the HPL Friends & Foundation. Board of Trustee member Raakhee Mirchandani held a successful book launch and panel discussion for her latest book. In attendance were Assemblywoman Jessica Ramirez, Councilwoman Emily Jabbour, Mayor Ravi Bhalla, Senator Raj Mukherji, Jennie Pu, and a panel of teen volunteers. The Library will be participating in a Tern Parade celebrating Hoboken's official bird, the Tern. The HPL Friends & Foundation are hosting a Mardi Gras Masquerade fundraiser on Friday, February 28. We will be hosting a de-escalation training for staff on Wednesday, February 26, 2025. Panic Buttons were installed on service desks on all floors of the library. Training will be scheduled to inform staff how to operate the panic buttons. The Library hired a new social worker, Alexis Austin. Ms. Austin will work part-time and has many new ideas of how we can serve our patrons. The Library began offering Statista, a global data and business intelligence platform. Grand Street Manager Ally Blumenfeld facilitated a volunteer service project with Stevens Institute students in honor of Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service. The Library organized a free tax preparation program with AARP Tax-Aide to take place at the Grand Street Branch in March. Changing stations have been added to the restrooms in the Multiservice Center. Attendance has been strong at the ongoing adult programs offered at the Library. The Communico app beta is ready to test. The final invoice was submitted to the Library of Congress for the Connecting Communities Digital Initiative. A special party is being planned to celebrate the completion of the award. The Library received a note of appreciation from a student who used the MakerSpace to complete a project. Local businesses have also expressed gratitude for the space.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked about whether it’s appropriate for local businesses to use the MakerSpace for items they will sell for profit.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that this is addressed in the new policy.

—Ms. Mirchandani: Asked why the new social worker is part-time instead of full-time.

—Ms. Pu: Explained that we took our previous social worker’s recommendation and that we also have four social work interns.

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

—Ms. Pu: Reported for the Buildings & Grounds Committee: There were no updates.

—Mr. Thoens: Reported for the Finance Committee: Mr. Thoens described the financial matters before the Board for approval: 1) in Part A, to pay 2024 library operating expenses with checks no.12338-12344 totaling \$3,970.65; in Part A, to pay 2025 library operating expenses with checks no.12345-12407 totaling \$94,595.51;to pay via PayPal \$123.00 to FitOn Health and \$799.50 to Zoom; in Part B, to pay library operating expenses with checks no.12408-12411 totaling \$26,843.81; and to pay \$296.27 from the Capital Reserve budget. Also before the Trustees is a resolution to reserve funds for capital improvements. Mr. Thoens asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid or the resolution. There being none, approval of the Part A bills and the resolution to reserve funds was 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: 8 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. Mirchandani	<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"/>

Ms. Norwood	<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"/>

—Mr. Freeman: Asked if the reserved funds can be used to start the second floor renovation.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that the Library is unable to do that.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked whether the Board approves payroll at the meetings.

—Mr. Douglas: Explained that that practice is uncommon for libraries.

—Ms. Murcko: Reported on behalf of the Personnel and Policy Committee: The Committee received a draft of the new MakerSpace policy. The policy will be reviewed by Council and will be shared with the full board at the next meeting. Ms. Pu’s 2025 Director’s goals are included in this month’s board packet. Highlights include strengthening the Library’s relationship with the schools, increasing youth programs at the HHA, updating the Library website, and starting phase 2 of renovations. The Committee recommends approval of the goals.

7. Executive Session

—Ms. Mirchandani: Motion to move to executive session for purposes of discussing union negotiations and personnel matters.

—Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

—Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 9 NAYS: 0 Recused: 0 Abstain: 0

The board voted to enter executive session at 7:00pm and returned to the public session at 8:02pm.

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

8. President’s Report

—Dr. Abernathy: There was no president's report this month.

9. Friends & Foundation

—Ms. Blaney: Reported on behalf of the Hoboken Public Library Friends & Foundation: She invited the Board to attend the Mardi Gras Masquerade fundraiser on Friday, February 28.

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 January 28, 2025 Board meeting
- b. Approve payment of part A bills
- c. Approve the resolution to reserve funds for capital improvements

—Mr.Freeman: Moved the Board to approve payment of BCB bills.

—Ms. Murcko: Seconded

—Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 9 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. Mirchandani	<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"/>
Ms. Norwood	<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"/>

—Ms. Norwood: Moved the Board to approve the consent agenda.

—Ms. Mirchandani: Seconded.

—Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 9 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. Mirchandani	<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"/>
Ms. Norwood	<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.

—Mr. Silbert: Expressed gratitude for the Library’s commitment to fight against book bans.

—Mr. Freeman: Moved to adjourn.

—Ms. Mirchandani: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.