

HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING OF TUESDAY, MARCH 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, MARCH 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"/>	
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Leslie Norwood, School Superintendent Designee **	<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 February 25, 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: The Library van was wrapped and now features the Library logo and brand colors. In her role as Saddle Brook Library Board President, HR Manager Faith Fitzsimmons was honored by the Saddle Brook mayor and the City of Saddle Brook in celebration of Women's History Month for her dedication to the community and her inspiring role in education. Through Rosica communications, our contracted PR firm, the Makerspace was featured on ONNJ with anchorman Ken Rosato. IT Manager Phil Mendez and Senior Library Assistant Mads Sanden spoke about the MakerSpace, how it contributes to the community and the tools, tech, and available classes. The Friends & Foundation hosted a successful Mardi Gras Masquerade fundraiser with about 100 people in attendance. The Library hosted an event celebrating the completion of the CCDI grant and the launch of the project's website, The Puerto Rican Experience in Hoboken. Library staff members attended the Community Lifestyles Gala on February 27. For the past couple of years, the Library has hosted the Community Lifestyles summer camp and continues to strengthen its partnership with this community nonprofit. Ms. Pu met with Clarke Caton Hintz for an initial review of possible furniture and finishes for the first floor. This will be the first of several meetings about interior finishes for this next phase of renovations. On March 14, 2025, an Executive Order was passed eliminating the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS). While the Library does not receive federal funding directly, this will impact federal funding given to the State Library. Ms. Pu is working with the State Library, ULC, ALA, and all library partners to advocate for its reauthorization.

— Ms. Norwood: Asked if we have an idea of how many of our library patrons check out braille or large print books, as that will be affected.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that databases and digital resources will be affected, as we purchase those other items ourselves, not through state funding.

—Ms. Pu: The Library held a de-escalation training session on Wednesday, February 26, 2025. The majority of the staff were able to attend the training. We will hold another training session in the future for the remainder of the staff who were unable to attend. The City's Social Workers hosted a Know Your Rights on Immigration Law on Thursday, March 20. On March 12, Hoboken Resident Carlo Lipizzi held a successful introductory program on AI. Ms. Pu attended the Mom's Night Out fundraiser hosted by and to benefit the Hoboken Public Education Fund. The Library launched a Prom Drive in partnership with Community Lifestyle, aiming to collect gently used dresses, tuxes, and accessories to donate to teens for this year's prom. The Library hosted well-attended Holi and Ramadan programs. Application tests and evaluations for both Android and Apple Platforms of the Communico app continue this month.

—Mr. Thoens: Commented that the app has a good user experience and that it is clear and easy to use.

—Ms. Pu: New People Counters were installed in both the front lobby of the Main building and at the entrance of the Grand Street Branch. The art on the self-lending device kiosk is being redesigned to reflect the library branding, similar to the new wrap on the Library van. The Library's Special Collections and the Hoboken Historical Museum are applying for a grant from the New Jersey State Library geared towards commemorating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution and its aftermath.

—Ms. Murko: Asked if the eBook stats in the report are for Hoboken only or for all of BCCLS.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that the stats are provided by BCCLS, but are specific to Hoboken Public Library cardholders.

—Ms. Murko: Asked if library staff keeps track of demographics for different group meetings.

—Mr. Cox: Stated that we only keep track of attendance.

—Ms. Murcko: Asked who pays for the Grand Street repairs.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that the repairs are all cosmetics and not structural, so they come from the library's budget.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked if the repairs have been cleared with the City and whether the City should cover the cost of repairs if they exceed a certain amount.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that the Library is working with Mike Chapka from the City.

—Mr. Zucker: Explained that the law doesn't specify specifically whether the Library or the City should pay for repairs.

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

—Ms. Pu: Reported for the Buildings & Grounds Committee: The Committee will follow up with Clarke Caton Hintz about the updated project timeline for renovations.

—Mr. Thoens: Reported for the Finance Committee: Mr. Thoens described the financial matters before the Board for approval: 1) in Part A, to pay 2025 library operating expenses with checks no.12414-12473 totaling \$95,748.77; to pay via PayPal \$50 to Canva, \$123 to FitOn Health, and \$61.81 to Vistaprint; and in Part B, to pay library operating expenses with checks no.12474-12477 totaling \$21,891.52. Also before the Trustees is a resolution to void checks. 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 void checks was added to the consent agenda.

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

—Mr. Silbert: Seconded.

—Adopted by roll call vote as follow: YEAS: 7 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"/>
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. Murcko: Reported on behalf of the Personnel and Policy Committee: The MakerSpace Policy has been vetted by Library Council Douglas S. Zucker. The new Bulletin Board Policy

aims to establish guidelines for who can post on the bulletin board and what kind of things can be posted. The Director and Assistant Director have final say in what is posted.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked if the language in the MakerSpace policy makes it clear that there are charges for damages to MakerSpace equipment.

—Mr. Zucker: Stated that the policy does make that clear.

7. President's Report

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

8. Friends & Foundation

—Ms. Blaney: Reported on behalf of the Hoboken Public Library Friends & Foundation: She thanked library staff for helping make the Mardi Gras Masquerade fundraiser as success.

9. Old Business

—Dr. Abernathy: Called for any old business.

—Mr. Silbert: Asked for an update on the public comment that was made regarding the representation of the Jewish-American experience in the library's collection.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that the library has been adding many more Jewish-American titles to its collection, specifically those from the Jewish Book Council, which was recommended in the public comment. We are prepping for Jewish-American History month by hosting programs and developing a robust collection.

10. Executive Session

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

—Dr. Abernathy: Seconded.

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

The board voted to enter executive session at 7:10pm and returned to the public session at 9:02pm.

—Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the session: The session was called for purposes of discussing union negotiations and personnel matters.

11. New Business

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

12. Consent Agenda

- a. Accept the minutes of the February 25, 2025 Board meeting
- b. Approve payment of part A bills
- c. Approve the resolution to void checks
- d. Approve the MakerSpace Policy
- e. Approve the Bulletin Board Policy

—Mr. Freeman: Moved the Board to approve the consent agenda.

—Dr. Abernathy: Seconded.

—Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 8 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"/>
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. There were none.

—Mr. Freeman: Moved to adjourn.

—Dr. Abernathy: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:04pm.