

HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 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, APRIL 22, 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excused
Mr. Kurt Thoens, Treasurer**	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Amanda R. Blaney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excused
Mr. Damien DeBenedetto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excused
Mr. Jason Freeman, Mayor's Designee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani**	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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., 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 March 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: New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin joined a coalition of 20 attorneys general in filing a lawsuit against the Trump Administration to stop the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Library staff enjoyed a bowling night at Bowl Rite Lanes on March 28. The Library partnered with the City of Hoboken, The Hoboken Advisory Pride Committee, and Hudson Pride to celebrate Trans Day of Visibility on March 31. Mayor Ravi Bhall, Councilwoman Emily Jabbour, and BOT member Raakhee Mirchandani were among those in attendance. Ms. Pu welcomed consultant Bill Thomas at the library's monthly all staff meeting and set him up with space to meet with staff as needed in the admin office. Ms. Pu and librarian Kerri Wallace attended Hoboken's Little City Literary Weekend on April 5, which featured a variety of book readings, signings, Q&As and more from various authors. During National Library Week, two new libraries declared themselves book sanctuary libraries- Live Oaks Public Library in Georgia, and Mt. Lebanon Public Library, which became the first book sanctuary library in the state of Pennsylvania. The library celebrated Library Workers Day on April 8 with a special lunch and staff gifts, and highlighted the incredible work of our team by sharing kind notes from happy customers on social media. The post "10 Free Things You Can Get with Your HPL Library Card" was one of the most shared on the library's Instagram. In celebration of National Library Week, Jersey City Free Public Library welcomed Lisa Varga, Library Journal's 2024 Librarian of the Year, for a conversation about her ongoing advocacy for intellectual freedom. The library is participating in Our Tern's citywide scavenger hunt. Staff have been helping with the effort by decorating tern decoys, designing the scavenger hunt passport and custom logo, and serving as one of the official stops where participants can pick up passports, check their answers, and collect tickets for the completion prize. As part of the Congressman's constituent services outreach to all the public libraries in the district, the library welcomed back Miriam and the team to the library for constituent services open hours on April 17. They assisted customers with making Real ID appointments. A tentative agreement with the collective bargaining union has been reached; both parties are reviewing the final draft. The library applied for another year of the DOL CARE Grant in April, requesting

approximately \$50,000 to continue administering outreach and assistance for unemployment insurance and domestic workers. The library received a note of gratitude for the expansion of its Jewish-American literature collection. The library's Prom Popup Shop, in collaboration with Community Lifestyle, took place at The Center on 4/12 - another session is scheduled for 4/26. Testing of the Communico app continues and the library continues to expand use of the MakerSpace. An Employee Political Speech and Activity policy is included in the board packet.

—Ms. Mirchandani: Commented that the Trans Day of Visibility event was an incredible success and that the library should look into expanding the event next year.

—Ms. Norwood: Noted that the policy doesn't include anything regarding hosting educational political events that are politically neutral or inclusive of all political beliefs, such as events by the League of Women Voters.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that our Room Use Policy has a clause stating that we can hold political events that are educational. The Employee Political Speech and Activity Policy is specifically for employees.

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

—Ms. Pu: Reported for the Buildings & Grounds Committee: The condition of the first floor windows is being assessed. Once the assessment is complete, we can work on going out to bid.

—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. 12480-12536 totaling \$156,058.55; to pay via PayPal \$100.00 to Advance Local Media LLC, \$139.99 to Audio-Visual Direct, \$135.00 to FitOn Health, and \$175.00 PayPro Global Inc.; in Part B/2, to pay 2024 library operating expenses with check no. 12545 totaling \$6,195.64; and in Part B, to pay for 2025 library operating expenses with checks no. 12539-12544 totaling \$27,516.74. Also before the Trustees is a resolution to void checks and a resolution authorizing a non-fair and open contract for public relations services. Mr. Thoens asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid or the resolution.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked what happens with the checks that do not get cashed.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that lost checks are re-issued.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked if the library has an on-staff resource for outreach and communications.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that we are in the process of hiring a full-time marketing manager, but that they will not oversee public relations. She encouraged the board to review the public relations firm's impact report, which is included in the board packet.

Approval of bills and the resolutions were added to the consent agenda.

—Mr. Silbert: Reported on behalf of the Personnel and Policy Committee: The Committee discussed the revised 2025 director's goals and the Employee Political Speech and Activity Policy, both of which are included in this month's board packet.

—Mr. Douglas: Reported that the union negotiations have ended. A contract has been prepared and forwarded to the union; we are waiting to hear back from them.

7. President's Report

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

8. Friends & Foundation

—Ms. Pu: Reported on behalf of the Hoboken Public Library Friends & Foundation: Ms. Pu shared that the library is hosting a stand up comedy show fundraiser on Thursday, May 15 at 8pm.

9. Old Business

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

10. Executive Session

—Dr. Abernathy: Motioned to move to executive session for purposes of discussing a matter requiring consultation subject to attorney-client privilege.

—Ms. Norwood: Seconded.

—Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 6 NAYS: 0 Recused: 0 Abstain: 0

The board voted to enter executive session at 6:59 pm and returned to the public session at 7:12pm.

—Dr. Abernathy: Summarized the session: The session was called for purposes of discussing a matter requiring consultation subject to attorney-client privilege.

11. New Business

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

12. Consent Agenda

- a. Excuse the absence of Ms. Blaney, Mr. DeBenedetto, and Ms. Murcko
- b. Accept the minutes of the March 25, 2025 Board meeting
- c. Approve payment of part A bills
- d. Approve the resolution to void checks
- e. Approve the resolution authorizing the award of a non-fair and open contract for public relations services
- f. Approve the 2025 director's goals
- g. Approve the Employee Political Speech and Activity Policy

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

—Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

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

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
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. 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"/>

—Dr. Abernathy: Moved the board to approve payment of Part B bills .

—Mr. Freeman: Seconded

—Adopted by roll call vote as follows: YEAS: 5 NAYS: 0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 1

Trustee	Yes	No	Recused	Abstain
Mr. Freeman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ms. Mirchandani	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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: Shared that Hudson County has a League of Women Voters.

—Mr. Freeman: Moved to adjourn.

—Dr. Abernathy: Seconded.

—Adopted by voice vote as follows: YEAS: 6 NAYS:0 RECUSED: 0 ABSTAIN: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.