

# HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 30, 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, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 6:30 PM.**

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

**1. Call to Order**

Board President Jason Freeman called the meeting to order at 6:31 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 22, 2025 meeting of the Library Board and such notice was provided in the Star Ledger and Bergen Record, was posted to the Library website, and filed with the Hoboken City Clerk.

**2. Roll Call**

Attendance	Present	Absent	Notes
Mr. Jason Freeman, 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"/>	
Mr. Damian De Benedetto	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Amanda R. Blaney**	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Jordan Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excused
Ms. Leslie Norwood, School Superintendent Designee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrived at 6:43
Ms. Christine Stoll **	<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, Interim Assistant Library Director James Cox, Recording Secretary Karla Aybar Reyes, Library Council Douglas S. Zucker, Esq., and members of the Library staff.

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

—Mr. Freeman: Asked if the Trustees had any corrections or comments regarding the minutes of the Board meeting of August 26, 2025. There being none, approval of the minutes was added to the consent agenda.

### **4. Public Comments**

—Mr. Freeman: Invited comments from the public. There were none.

### **5. Director's Report**

—Ms. Pu: Provided Library updates: The Library of Things was featured on Good Morning America on September 25, with Chief Meteorologist Ginger Zee highlighting our role in sustainability and community sharing. Ms. Zee shot the weather update from the Friends' garden. Ms. Pu invited the Board to share any suggestions they may have for the Library of Things collection. Felt Hat and AZ Tech Signs were on site the weekend of September 5; they installed new Grand Street signage and a new tern kinetic on the third floor of the Main Library. The kinetic display depicts an image of Hoboken's official bird, the tern. On September 16, the Library kicked off its "Let's Get Civic" Engagement Series for Voter Registration Day. The Mayoral Candidate Forum included all six declared candidates and the event drew a crowd of 70+, not including the streaming audience. Upcoming forums include two At-large Council forums- Session 1 on 9/29 and Session 2 on 10/7- a 6th Ward Council Candidate forum on 10/8, and a Board of Education Candidate Forum on 10/15. This year's Library Festival was scaled down because of the construction in Church Square Park. The event was held indoors, but the Library looks forward to holding the festival outdoors again next year. Ms. Pu made the NJBIZ Education Power List for the second year in a row. Hoboken Public Library is the only library listed among the institutions honored across the state. The Library has advertised the prequalification bid. A completed Bidder's Qualifications Statement must be submitted to the Hoboken Public Library Board of Trustees by 11:00 am on Thursday, October 9th, 2025. Sabrina Quinones has been hired as the Library's new Events Coordinator. The Library will be closed to the public on Friday, October 10, 2025, for a Staff Development Day; Board President Jason Freeman will be in attendance to introduce himself to the staff. The Library will host two additional blood drives next month. The Library was invited to participate as a client for business students at Stevens Institute of Technology. The students will look at the Library's demographic and determine how it can reach Hobokenites in their 20's and 30's. Due to popular demand, a second Tai Chi class in the Gymnasium at the Multi-Service Center has been scheduled. School Outreach season has restarted. Librarian Valerie Coughlin was selected for a scholarship program

at the University of Washington, where she will attend workshops on misinformation literacy. She was one of two public librarians in the country to be selected. A new tool is being brought to the BCCLS's Executive Board this month. This tool will be able to report the digital only usage for each library. The Library learned that 40% of its users are digital only. The new Library App was released to the public at the Library Festival; the App can be downloaded in the Apple and Android stores. Assistant Director James Cox attended a lecture by filmmaker Ken Burns on his upcoming documentary, The American Revolution. Notable attendees included journalist Brian Williams and Governor Phil Murphy.

—Ms. Murcko: Asked for clarification about the difference between the prequalification bid and the final project bid.

—Ms. Pu: Explained that we have not gone out to full bid yet. This is a short list of who will be able to bid. The final decision will be made by the Library and Clarke Caton Hintz.

—Ms. Murcko: As there is no longer an architect on the Board, Ms. Murcko suggested that the group think about having an architect come on as an ad hoc member of the Buildings & Grounds Committee to help evaluate the bids and weigh in on costs.

—Ms. Murcko: Asked if Ms. Coughlin could attend the next Board meeting to talk about her scholarship.

—Ms. Pu: Said Ms. Coughlin can attend the meeting.

—Ms. Murcko: Pointed out that, as 40% of Hoboken Public Library users are digital only, that has an impact on the high e-licensing costs. She asked how the Board can advocate for libraries in legislature and beyond.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that e-Book pricing is a national conversation and that we will know more after the November election.

—Ms. Mucko: Shared that she downloaded the Communico app and complimented its efficiency.

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

—Ms. Norwood: Reported on behalf of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. There were no updates this month and that a committee meeting will be scheduled.

—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.12838-12916 totaling \$404,272.98; to pay via PayPal and ACH \$190.15 to Amazon, \$132.00 to FitOn Health, \$86.70 to La Colombe Torrefaction, and \$2,500 to Quipu Group LLC ; 2) in Part B, to pay 2025 library operating expenses with check no.12918-12921 totaling \$23,821.73; and to pay from the Capital Improvement Construction Account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB) check number 457 totaling \$3,471.23. Also before the Trustees is a resolution to void checks number 12771, 12673, 12818, 12763, and 12831. 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, approval of the BCB bills, and the resolution to void checks was added to the consent agenda.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked about the charge for TAPinto Hoboken of \$445.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that that is for our ongoing monthly advertisement.

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

—Ms. Norwood: 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. Hernandez	<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"/>
Ms. Stoll	<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"/>

## 7. Personnel & Policy Committee

—Ms. Murcko: Reported on behalf of the Personnel & Policy Committee: There were no Personnel & Policy Committee updates this month, as there was no meeting. The Committee will meet next month.

### **8. President's Report**

—Mr. Freeman: Had a productive meeting with Ms. Blaney and the Friends & Foundation co-presidents. He will attend next month's Friends & Foundation meeting in order to elevate that relationship. The Board of Trustees have received their committee assignments; some committees will have standing meetings and others will meet on an as-needed basis. Mr. Freeman met with Library Council Douglas Zucker, who suggested that the Board begin using library-specific e-mail addresses.

—Mr. Mendez: Stated that the new email addresses will be created and shared by the next Board meeting.

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

—Ms. Blaney: Reported on behalf of the Friends & Foundation: Ms. Blaney thanked library staff for their assistance at the Arts & Music Festival. The organization will hold an Oktoberfest fundraiser at the Library on October 24.

### **10. Old Business**

—Mr. Freeman: Called for any old business. There was none.

### **11. Executive session**

—Ms. Murcko: Motioned to move to executive session for purposes of discussing prospective contract negotiations.

—Ms. Norwood: Seconded.

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

The Board voted to enter executive session at 7:01pm and returned to the public session at 7:52pm.

—Mr. Freeman: Summarized the session: The session was called for purposes of discussing prospective contract negotiations. No votes or Board actions were taken.

### **12. New Business**

—Mr. Freeman: Called for any new business. There was none.

**13. Consent Agenda**

- a. Excuse the absence of Ms. Mirchandani
- b. Approve the minutes of the August 26, 2025 Board meeting
- c. Approve payment of part A bills
- d. Approval of the BCB bills
- e. Approve the Resolution to Void Checks

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

—Ms. Murcko: 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. Hernandez	<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. Norwood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ms. Stoll	<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"/>

**12. Trustee Comments**

—Mr. Freeman: Invited any comments by the Trustees. There were none.

—Ms. Norwood: Moved to adjourn.

—Mr. Freeman: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:54pm

