

HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING OF OCTOBER 28, 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, OCTOBER 28, 2025 AT 6:30 PM.

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

1. Call to Order

Board President Jason Freeman called the meeting to order at 6:32 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"/>	Excused at 6:45pm
Ms. Raakhee Mirchandani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Leslie Norwood, School Superintendent Designee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Christine Stoll **	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Ex officio* under NJ state law

**Present via remote connection

Also in attendance were: 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 September 30, 2025.

—Ms. Norwood: Noted that her late arrival was excused at the last meeting.

—Mr. Freeman: Asked that the minutes be amended to reflect that and added the amended minutes to the consent agenda.

4. Public Comments

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

5. Director's Report

—Mr. Cox: Provided Library updates on behalf of Ms. Pu: The Library hosted a successful Let's Get Civic! series, which empowered residents to engage in local democracy through nonpartisan forums, voter registration drives, and community partnerships. The series brought together local organizations, media partners, and both major political committees to foster open dialogue and strengthen civic participation across Hoboken. The Library held its annual Staff Development Day on September 10. The day's theme was effective communication. Board President Jason Freeman made the opening remarks and took the opportunity to introduce himself to Library staff and thank them for their service to the Hoboken community. The Library received four submissions for the Pre-Qualification Bid for the 1st and 2nd floor restoration project. Our main book distributor and supplier, Baker & Taylor, will be closing down by the end of the year. We have been meeting with other vendors, such as Ingram and Follett. Follett, who has historically serviced schools for kids in K-12, is expanding into libraries. We have a promising outlook with them that we will be able to start receiving shelf-ready materials from them in a matter of weeks. In the meantime, we are beginning to order and receive materials from Barnes and Noble and a local book distributor called Bookazine.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked for clarification on the difference between bookstore vendors and library vendors.

—Mr. Cox: Clarified that bookstore vendors do not process the books.

—Ms. Murcko: Asked if we can use local bookstores like Little City Books to supply the books.

—Mr. Cox: Noted that this would add another layer of distribution and another cost, as those bookstores are likely using a supplier like Bookazine.

—Mr. Cox: Continued with library updates. Librarian Kerri Wallace helped facilitate the Repair Café held in October—a global initiative where community members bring in broken items to be fixed by volunteers, rather than throwing them away in order to reduce landfill waste and promote repair over replacement. On the day of the Repair Café, 34 items were successfully fixed. The new Grand Street furniture was delivered this month. In October, the library expanded its Sunday program rotation to include cultural and holiday celebration-themed story times like Hispanic Heritage Month, Diwali, and Halloween.

—Ms. Norwood: Noticed that there are some big swings in the stats- for example, locker use at Grand is up significantly, as is borrowing from the Library of Things. Meanwhile, things like chromebook lending and tech usage saw a downtick.

—Mr. Cox: Explained that the Grand Street Lockers and Library of Things items were not available last year, which explains the uptick. He noted that the chromebooks are not being actively marketed and that fewer people who might need access to tech lending have been coming to the Library because we do not currently have a social worker.

—Ms. Norwood: Asked why we do not have a social worker at the moment.

—Mr. Cox: Stated that our former part-time social worker resigned to focus on her full-time job, but that we recently interviewed someone for the position.

—Ms. Norwood: Pointed out that SNAP payments will be suspended on November 1 and asked whether the Library can focus on directing people to community resources.

—Mr. Cox: Stated that reference librarians are able to direct people to community resources and that we have a libguide on our website that lists local food banks.

—Ms. Murcko: Wondered if Lunchtime Ministry, the Hoboken Community Center, and other similar organizations are increasing their services. She asked if it would be possible for the Library to work with these local agencies.

—Mr. Zucker: Suggested getting a list of resources from the City social worker and printing them out.

—Mr. Cox: Assured the Board that staff will be aware of where to access these community resources and know to distribute them to those in need.

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.12924-12982 totaling \$132,540.31; to pay via PayPal and ACH \$346.80 to Chobani Parent LLC and \$129.00 to FitOn Health; 2) in Part B, to pay 2025 library operating expenses with check no.12983-12988 totaling \$17,745.36; and to pay from the Capital Improvement Construction Account at Bayonne Community Bank (BCB) check number 458 totaling \$4,596.80. Mr. Thoens asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid. There being none, approval of the Part A bills and approval of the BCB bills was added to the consent agenda.

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

—Ms. Murcko: 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. 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: Ms. Murcko and Ms. Blaney have resumed conducting Ms. Pu’s 2024 Director’s evaluations, which were paused

while awaiting the results of the Consultant's summary and appointments of new Board members. The new members will not be participating in the 2024 Director's evaluation, but will be part of the discussion on compensation, which will occur by the end of the year. According to a State law, Board of Trustees are required to have seven cumulative hours of Trustee education a year in order to qualify for state funding. In order to meet this requirement, Mr. Zucker will present on Board Governance at the next BOT meeting. School outreach librarian Val Coughlin will present on a seminar she recently attended regarding AI and digital literacy, and another staff member will discuss collection development.

8. President's Report

—Mr. Freeman: Asked the Board to use their library-specific e-mail addresses that were recently activated. He inquired about whether there is a way to filter emails from BCCLS and other libraries.

—Mr. Mendez: Confirmed that it is possible to filter those and that he will share that information with the Board.

—Mr. Freeman: Attended his first Friends & Foundation meeting and shared that the group is looking for more direction from the Board of Trustees with regard to fundraising efforts. Mr. Freeman also shared that he stopped by the Library's Staff Development Day where he introduced himself to the staff and encouraged them to attend Board meetings.

9. Friends & Foundation

—Ms. Blaney: Reported on behalf of the Friends & Foundation: Ms. Blaney thanked library staff and those who supported their Oktoberfest event the previous week. The organization is brainstorming more fundraising ideas for late fall/winter. They will be sending an annual appeal toward the end of this year.

—Mr. Freeman: Pointed out that Giving Tuesday is also coming up.

10. Old Business

—Ms. Norwood: Thanked the Library for holding the Let's Get Civic! series and noted that it was the only organization in the City to hold a BOE Forum.

—Mr. Freeman: Added that the Library was the only place in Hoboken to host forums for all local elections.

11. New Business

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

12. Consent Agenda

- a. Approve the amended minutes of the September 30, 2025 Board meeting
- b. Approve payment of part A bills
- c. Approval of the BCB bills

—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. 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.

—Mr. DeBenedetto: Moved to adjourn.

—Ms. Mirchandani: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:12pm