

# HOBOKEN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING OF DECEMBER 16, 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, DECEMBER 16, 2025 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Leslie Norwood, School Superintendent Designee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ms. Christine Stoll *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excused

\**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 November 25, 2025. There being none, the minutes were added to the consent agenda.

### **4. Public Comments**

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

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

—Ms. Pu: Highlighted items of note: Ms. Pu traveled to Washington DC for the quarterly Urban Libraries Council Board meeting in her capacity as this year's Chair of the Federal Advocacy Task Force. While there, she visited Rep. Rob Menendez, talked about positive updates with IMLS, and shot a reel which he posted on his socials. Ms. Pu also visited Senator Mazie Hirono from Hawaii, who expressed interest in the Library's Library of Things. They discussed ways we can support libraries at a federal level. Urban Libraries Council released its 2025 Library Insights Report. Notably, Urban Libraries Council members serve nearly 200 cities and counties, representing 30% of the U.S. population. The Library is preparing to go to bid for the first floor and mezzanine renovation in the new year. Ms. Pu informed the Board that a draft of the 2026 budget is included in the Board packet for their review. The Library applied for the Care Grant, administered by the New Jersey Department of Labor, and the Prime Time Reading Grant administered by the NJ Council of Humanities. The Penguin Pointers program with Jenkinson's Aquarium was a highlight of the Winter Wonderland celebration. In anticipation of the World Cup, the Library has partnered with the NY Red Bulls to create a limited edition library card, which will launch in January. Librarian Kerri Wallace was featured in Parade magazine discussing some of her picks for books releasing this month.

—Ms. Norwood: Thanked Ms. Pu for running the mayoral runoff forum. She stated that it was the only forum for the runoff candidates to present their ideas and that it was an important service the Library provided.

—Ms. Murcko: Shared that she attended a screening of *The Librarians* in New York City and commended Ms. Pu's advocacy of the Freedom to Read Bill.

—Ms. Pu: Stated that she is working with Martha Hickson and the producer of *The Librarians* to bring a screening of the film to Hoboken and Jersey City.

—Mr. Zucker: Informed the group that he and School Outreach Librarian Valarie Coughlin have submitted a joint proposal for the NJLA Annual Conference.

### 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.

—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.13069- 13123 totaling \$\$354,200.73; to pay via PayPal \$138.00 to FitOn Health; and to pay check no.13124 totaling \$300 for petty cash; 2) in Part B, to pay 2025 library operating expenses with check no.13111-13116 totaling \$22,890.53 Also before the Board is a resolution to void check #13029. Mr. Thoens asked if there were any questions concerning the bills to be paid or the resolution.

—Mr. Zucker: Asked why there is an entry for Clarke Caton Hintz in Part A when there were no BCB payments this month.

—Ms. Pu: Clarified that the entry is for payment for an update to our capital master plan, which was last updated in 2019.

There being no further questions, approval of the Part A bills and the resolution to void checks were added to the consent agenda.

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

—Ms. Murcko: Seconded.

—Adopted by roll call vote as follows: 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. 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. Thoens	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—Mr. Thoens: Highlighted items of note in the draft budget: There is a 3% increase in municipal library tax. There is an 8% increase in salaries and wages because of new hires and contractual negotiations. Library health insurance has increased by 20%. There is a 67% decrease in consultants, partly due to ending our engagement with Rosica. There is a 66% decrease in capital reserves.

—Ms. Murcko: Asked about the takeaways under capital reserve funds and construction expenditures.

—Ms. Pu: Explained that we budgeted just over \$3 million for the first floor and mezzanine and that the second floor will be done at a later date. The first line of the expenditures shows an increase in what we have put into reserves, nearly all of which will be spent on the first floor and mezzanine project.

—Mr. Freeman: Informed the group that Clarke Caton Hintz presented the renovation renderings at the last Friends & Foundation meeting. He and Ms. Pu spoke to the group about the need for a capital campaign to raise money for the second phase of renovations.

**7. Personnel & Policy Committee**

—There were no Personnel & Policy Committee updates.

**8. President’s Report**

—There was no President’s report.

**9. Friends & Foundation**

—Ms. Blaney: Expressed appreciation for the meeting with Clarke Caton Hintz and noted that this could be a great opportunity for the Board and the Friends & Foundation to work together.

**10. Old Business**

—Called for any old business. There was none.

**11. Executive Session**

—Ms. Mirchandani: Motioned to move to executive session for purposes related to personnel matters.

—Ms. Blaney: Seconded.

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

The Board voted to enter executive session at 6:53pm and returned to the public session at 9:03pm.

—Mr. Freeman: Summarized the session: The session was called for purposes related to personnel matters. 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. Stoll.
- b. Approve the minutes of the November 25, 2025 Board meeting
- c. Approve payment of part A bills
- d. Approve the resolution to void checks

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

—Mr. DeBenedetto: 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. 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"/>

Mr. Norwood	<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. Mirchandani Moved to adjourn.

—Ms. Murcko: Seconded.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:06pm