

**Minutes of the January 8, 2024
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2185th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:00 pm.

Open Meetings Act:

President JoAnn McCullough announced that the meeting was in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was posted on the Library website, in the Library, at the Municipal Building and advertised in the Star Ledger. Notice of the change of venue to an Hybrid meeting was posted on the library website.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: JoAnn McCullough, Presiding, Theodore Graham, Diana Lunin, Andrew Silver, Geoffrey Borshof, and Brian Clarkson

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff Present: Director Janet Torsney, Assistant Director Selwa Shamy, Recording Secretary Linda Welch

Election of Officers

The candidates for 2024 are:

- President - JoAnn McCullough
- Vice-President - Theodore Graham
- Secretary - Diana Lunin
- Treasurer - Brian Clarkson

The Board of Trustees moved to accept the Nominating Committee's recommendations for the slate of officers. The motion was carried unanimously

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the November 11, 2023 Emergency Session Considering the Reconsideration Forms for the Jewish Voices for Peace Meeting stood approved. The Board of Trustees moved to accept Minutes of the November 11, 2023 Emergency Session. The motion was carried unanimously.

The Minutes of the November 13, 2023 Regular Meeting stood approved. Theodore Graham made the motion and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that:

On December 6, Ed Robin and JoAnn McCullough submitted the Application Certificate of Appropriateness to Janice Talley, Montclair Township planner, the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission with the scope of work prior to December 7, 2023. with a copy to Kathleen Bennett.

The NJ State Library Preservation committee has offered to help with filling out the Application for the proposed project at the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library.

Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson presented the Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson moved for the Resolution #24-01 Approving the Bills and Payables between the November 13, 2023 and January 8, 2024 Board of Trustees Meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Andrew Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-02 Pre-Approving Bills And Payables Due Between the January 8, 2024 and February 12, 2024 Board of Trustees Meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Andrew Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-03 Approving the November and December 2023 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Geoffrey Borshoff seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Report from The MPL Foundation - Mary Packer Annual Appeal

The Foundation's annual appeal was a success, with just over \$203,000 in annual fund donations received between November 1 and December 31. This tracks fairly closely with what was raised during the same period in 2022 (\$192,889) and 2021 (\$200,730). While a thorough data analysis is not yet complete, early numbers indicate that we received a greater number of gifts this year with a lower average gift size.

Noteworthy Achievements of 2023

- Most money raised by the Foundation in a single year in its 20+ year history – more than \$600,000 in gross income.
- Successful Gala that exceeded fundraising goals (netted 60% higher than budgeted) and led to promising new relationships with businesses and individuals.
- Largest grant received by the Foundation to date - a 2-year commitment from Partners for Health totaling \$100,000 (\$30k more than what was requested).

What's Next

The Foundation is raising awareness about the importance of MPL to Montclair citizens in advance of the vote on the municipal budget as well as the local elections this spring. You may see "Montclair is a Library Town" lawn signs when you are out and about. Please take

one and display it proudly!

The Foundation is hosting a Trivia Night at Tierney's on February 29th with a leap-year theme. Three businesses are sponsoring the event, and tickets will be \$50 each (inclusive of drinks and snacks). Tickets will go on sale later this week.

We are also planning a wine-tasting event following the Open Book / Open Mind conversation with Ray Isle on Saturday, March 23.

Also ahead – the Foundation is partnering with the library on literacy initiatives and the upcoming community read of “The Best We Could Do” by Thi Bui.

We are also beginning to contemplate a gala in the spring of 2025. If that gets a green light, we will begin forming a committee and getting planning underway in April/May of this year.

Montclair Library Friends: *Janet Torsney*

Deb Ellis and Grace Kiernan have agreed to serve as check-in volunteers for Open Book/Open Mind on January 24, 2024.

The Climate Sustainability Meeting with the Auros contractors will be held in the Library conference room on Friday, January 26, 2024, from 4:00 to 5:00 PM. I hope that as many of the Library Trustees as possible will attend this meeting.

Regarding the plans for the Bellevue Avenue Library plaza, we are awaiting the recommendations of the Library contractor for the new fill to be placed for flood mitigation. It is hoped that these recommendations will be available by the end of January at which time a meeting will be held at the Library with Montclair Historical Society representatives.

Friends of Bellevue Avenue Library, Inc.: *None*

Library Report:

Assistant Director Report: *Selwa Shamy*

Building & Safety

- New furniture is in place at the Bellevue Ave. Kid's Place and the Main Library Teen Room.
- 40 new chairs are on order for the auditorium, also made possible by a generous donation from Ed Robin.
- Walkie talkies will be available at public service desks and staff offices to enhance communication in high security situations.

Programming

- A Creative Aging program series, funded by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Creative Aging Initiative, featured classes on bookmaking and Writing Your

Life: a mini-memoir workshop, culminating in a workshop on December 3. Total attendance for the series was 129.

- The annual Kwanzaa celebration took place on Sat., Dec. 16 from 12-4 p.m. with a total attendance of approximately 250 people.
- Adult School winter registration begins January 8 and classes start on January 22. More than 80 classes are being offered this term.
- The Adult Services and Adult School Departments are partnering with the township MILL (Montclair Institute for Lifelong Learning) will collaborate to provide programming for older adults on Fridays at the Main Library.

Staff

- Job postings are active for a full time Bookkeeper and a part time Social Worker, generously funded for two years of part time employment (28 hours weekly) by Partners for Health.
- Postings for 10 additional part time positions will soon be active, adding much needed staff to the Bellevue Ave. Branch, Adult School, Adult Services, Borrower Services, Facilities and Security, and Youth Services Departments.

Library Director Janet Torsney:

Focus On...Montclair State University

We deepened our relationship over the last year.

- Joint Concerts: The first of three concerts will be held at FCC on February 8 at 6pm. Vijay Gupta, renowned violinist and social activist, is concluding his MSU residency with this concert.
- Café proposals: In partnership with Dr Manveer Mann at the Feliciano School of Business, six groups of students developed solid proposals for the café space. All the groups agreed that the space needs to have improved lighting and a more accessible entrance; the dark windows should be removed, and the décor should be “instagramable” to gain a following.
- Library Board of Advisors: Serving on this newly created board to build support for the MSU libraries among alumni and the community.

And...Open Book/Open Mind

- Nice closeout to 2023 OBOM with Lisa Belkin and Christina Baker Kline
- Overall, OBOM was much more organized this year: FCC was established as our go-to place for larger programs, our relationship with the Montclair Literary Festival is much improved (Colson Whitehead), and we streamlined a lot of our procedures.
- We already have a very solid schedule through May 2024 and good prospects for the latter part of the year.

Programs and Services

- The Big Read – Montclair Reads *The Best We Could Do: What’s Your Story?* – funded by the National Endowment for the Arts is coming together. More than 25

events with community partners are planned between February and May. Join us for the Community Leaders Breakfast on January 19 at the Library.

- The Exit West program was a beautiful capstone to Stories of Exile – 7 events attended by 161 people -- funded by a grant from The Yiddish Center.

Buildings

- The benches in front of the Main Library donated by Josh Weston (along with the flagpole) were officially dedicated to Judy Weston on 11/16. It was a simple – and really lovely --- event.
- Initial meeting with Auros Group about sustainable building will take place on January 26 at 4 pm. Thanks to Ed Robin for funding this.
- Also thanks to Ed Robin for funding the installation of security cameras throughout the Main Library. A major step forward for the safety of our staff and patrons.
- The BAB water-remediation initial report, focusing on plumbing issues, is complete. The next step is reviewing drone footage and doing an architectural analysis. Then, the architects will develop drawings and a plan that will incorporate the rehabilitation of the plaza.
- Consulted with a local history group on the plaza renovation. We will meet with some of them at the Bellevue Avenue Branch in late January to plan next steps.
- The new window film in Youth Services (to protect from sun damage and excessive heat) was installed. We paid \$2205; the Township paid \$4515.
- Township lawyer is reviewing solar panel install and finance proposals.
- The Township is completing an energy audit of both buildings.
- Site surveys are underway so we can get estimates on generators for both buildings.

Technology

- The e-rate funded network install is stalled due to delayed Township IT response on router and mapping issues. We hope the install will be complete soon.

Other

- Worked with ADP on service upgrade scheduled to begin on February 1.
- Attended Essex County Library Directors meeting with State Librarian Jen Nelson and NJLA President Brett Bonfield to discuss Orange Library and other issues.
- Met with MKA Librarian and Head of Upper School about the Big Read.
- Attended BCCLS System Council meeting.
- Met with MPLF, Soyka Smith designers and potential donors about gallery redesign
- Met with MPLF Board member Henry Neff about library statistics.
- Attended MPLF board meeting.
- Went to the NJ Council on the Humanities dinner
- Dance on the Lawn, which closed in October, has archived their website in the local history section of the MPL website.

Manager, Bellevue Avenue Branch - Kristen Comeaux

At Bellevue, we are trying to continue to bring old and new patrons into the library. Our goals this year were to increase programming across the board and we saw an increase in all services in the last year.

We also have revitalized our Kid's Place with funds from the MPLF Gala and FBAL, and cannot thank them enough. We want to continue to update our historic branch while continuing to remain true to its roots.

Our biggest hurdles have been space and staffing. In the future, with more staff, we will continue to provide robust programming to try and meet the demand of Upper Montclair. The branch could not be what it is without the staff inside, and we're excited to be able to welcome new employees to join our team. Space is a harder obstacle to overcome, but with new furniture and creativity, we are able to mitigate this problem as much as possible.

We hope to continue to collaborate with other departments, MPLF, FBAL, the Friends of MPL and outside community groups as well. We plan to expand materials such as with our Library of Things, Seed Library (540 seed packets lent), and bring new collections to Bellevue (such gardening and craft books as well as Early Literacy Kits which Kristen created at the end of 2022 and also brought to Main. Bellevue's kits saw 47 checkouts this year).

Old Business: None

New Business:

Resolution #24-04 Designating Official Depositories

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library designates TD Bank, NA as the official depository for its monies in accordance with the Governmental Unit Deposit Protection Act (NJSA §17:9-41 *et. seq.*) and authorizes the Library Director to establish accounts at that institution.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-04 Designating Official Depositories JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-05 To Maintain Membership in The Bergen County Cooperative Library System

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library agrees to participate as a member in good standing with the Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) and abide by its policies and rules of membership.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-05 To Maintain Membership in The Bergen County Cooperative Library System JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-06 Designating Official Newspaper

Whereas, The Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library recognizes the need to designate an official newspaper for the publication of legal notices in accordance with NJSA §35 *et. seq.*

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library designate The Star Ledger as the official newspaper of record.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-06 Designating Official Newspaper JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution - #24-07 For the Petty Cash Accounts

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library authorizes the Library Director to establish a petty cash fund in the amount of \$500 (Five hundred dollars) to facilitate the purchase of small items for day to day operations of the Library;

Be It Resolved that the fund will be managed in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and safeguards to ensure its prudent use;

Be It Resolved that these funds will not be expended without prior authorization of the designated Purchasing Agent; and

Be It Further Resolved that the Board authorizes Linda Welch as the petty cash custodian. Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-07 For the Petty Cash Accounts JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-08 Designating The Library Purchasing Agent

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library authorizes Library Director, Janet Torsney as the purchasing agent for the Library in accordance with NJSA §40A 11-9.

Be It Further Resolved by the Library Board of Trustees that the Library can benefit from the expertise and increase in bid thresholds by working with AL B. Dineris, QPA, Purchasing Agent for the Township of Montclair in accordance with NJSA §40A 11-9.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-08 Designating the Library Purchasing Agent JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-09 For Authorized Signers On Checks

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library authorizes the following parties to sign transfers, withdrawal slips, and check in payment of goods and service:

- Library Director, Janet Torsney
- Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, Brian Clarkson
- President of the Board of Trustees, JoAnn McCollough
- Library Comptroller, Lisa Connell

Further Be It Resolved that transfers and disbursements will be signed according to the

following schedule of authorization:

- Transactions up to and including \$5,000 (Five thousand dollars) require a single signatory
- Transactions exceeding \$5,000 (Five thousand dollars) require two signatories

Further Be It Resolved that the following exceptions are recognized and approved with the understanding that full documentation be presented to the Board of Trustees for review at the next scheduled meeting of the Board:

- Payments to Baker and Taylor for library materials require a single signatory
- Payments of utilities (natural gas, electricity, water, sanitation, and internet services) which are under \$12,000 (Twelve thousand dollars) which must be paid on a timely basis may be paid by the Comptroller and require a single signatory
- Payments to the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Division of Pension and Benefits for benefits coverage (health insurance, dental insurance, pension fund payments and transfers) and payments to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (for unemployment insurance) may be paid by the Comptroller and/or require a single signatory
- Transfers of funds to the payroll agency for the purpose of payroll may be paid by the Comptroller and/or require a single signatory
- Quarterly payments made to BCCLs for membership, services, and fees will require only one signatory.

Theodore Graham moved to accept the Resolution #24-09 For Authorized Signers On Checks JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-10 To Appoint the Firm of the Weiner Law Group LLP as the Library Attorney

Whereas, the Board of Trustees of the Free Public Library of the Township of Montclair desires to appoint the legal firm of the Weiner Law Group LLP as the library attorney, and

Whereas, the services performed by said attorneys are professional in nature, and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the Board of Trustees of the Free Public Library of the Township of Montclair, in the County of Essex, that the appointment of the Weiner Law Group LLP as the library attorney hereby becomes effective in 2024 without the necessity of competitive bidding.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-10 To Appoint the Firm of the Weiner Law Group LLP as the Library Attorney JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-11 To Appoint Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP as the Library Auditor to Perform the FY23 Audit

Whereas NJSA Title 45 § 2B-70 requires an audit to be performed annually in accordance with New Jersey Administrative Code Title 5 §31-7.6 A, and

Whereas the FY22 audit of the Library finances performed by Lerch, Vinci, And Higgins, LLP was very satisfactory, and

Whereas the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library is authorized to award professional services without bidding in accordance with New Jersey Revised Statute Title 40A §11-3, and

Therefore Be It Resolved that the services of Lerch, Vinci, And Higgins, LLP be engaged to audit the finances of the Library for the Fiscal year 2023.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-11 To Appoint Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP as the Library Auditor to Perform the FY23 Audit. JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-12 Adoption of 2024 Staff Salaries

Whereas, the audit of the library finances performed by Vinci, Lurch, and Higgins in accordance with NJSA 40A:5-4 and accepted by this body with the passage of Resolution #22-46 found no irregularities, improprieties, or deficiencies in the financial management of the library, and

Whereas, the audit recommended the Board of Trustees adopt an individual resolution for staff salaries and wages in addition to the adoption of the budget, and

Whereas, the Board of Trustees are committed to transparent finances, and

Whereas, the Board adopted the FY24 Budget with an oral vote on November 13, 2023;

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-12 Adoption of 2024 Staff Salaries Andy Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-13 To Hire Bookkeeping Consultant

Whereas the Library requires additional bookkeeping services, particularly as it makes a transition to a new general ledger and recordkeeping software;

Whereas FinancialSense Bookkeeping has expertise in these areas and comes highly recommended by local businesses and nonprofits:

Be It Resolved that the Library has engaged FinancialSense Bookkeeping for approximately \$300/month. The agreement will continue for one year or until either party terminates the agreement.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution #24-13 To Hire Bookkeeping Consultant Andy Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

At 8:15 p.m. Geoffrey Borshof moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.