

**Minutes of the March 18, 2024
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2187th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, March 18, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:05 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, Brian Clarkson, Lilian Ferguson, Geoffrey Borshof, Tamar Campbell, and Damen G. Cooper

Board Members Absent: None

Library Staff Present: Director Janet Torsney, Assistant Director Selwa Shamy, Recording Secretary Linda Welch, Head of Adult Services Tracy Crawford

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the February 12, 2024 Regular Meeting stood approved. Brian Clarkson made the motion and Diana Lunn seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that:

- The Building Committee met on March 7 to discuss the status of projects that Brian Clarkson will present during new business
- The Executive Committee met on March 11 to review the Agenda.
- The Personnel Committee met on March 18 to discuss the Library Director Search.

Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson presented the Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-17 Approving the Bills and Payables Between the February 12, 2024 and March 18, 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 #24-18 Pre-Approving the Bills and Payables Due Between the March 18, 2024 and April 15, 2024 Board of Trustees Meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-19 Approving the February 2024 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Andrew Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Report from The MPL Foundation

No Foundation staff were present. Janet reported that the trivia fundraiser at Tierney's was a great success.

Montclair Library Friends: Ed Robin

Ed Robin reported that the Library Friends volunteered at the Open Book / Open Mind events on Saturday, February 3, and Thursday, February 29. Volunteers will be checking in attendees at the March 23 Open Book/Open Mind.

The Montclair Library Friends will volunteer at the April 7 Candidates Forum.

Ed Robin is working with the library director on finding a landscaper/architect for the BAB plaza.

Friends of Bellevue Avenue Library, Inc.: Ilmar Vanderer

The Friends of the Bellevue Avenue Library are preparing for their May-in-Montclair book sale.

Ilmar Vanderer offered to assist with the director search.

Library Report:

Assistant Director Report: Selwa Shamy

Building & Safety

- Security monitoring savings will be seen once the current contract with Johnson Controls ends and United Federated Systems takes over. Existing equipment, which was leased, will be removed after April 1 at the Main Library and April 10 at the Bellevue Ave. Branch and UFS will install new equipment, which the library will own. We are working out a payment plan.
- Library staff taking over cleaning of the library has been postponed until April 1.

Community

- The reading of the winners for the Anderson Park Short Story Contest was held at the Bellevue Ave. Branch with an attendance of 30 people. The program was recorded by TV34. The contest organizers enjoyed holding the program at BAB so much that they would like to do it again next year.

- AARP is once again using the Main Library Auditorium to provide free tax assistance.

Programming

- Youth Services is working with donor Eileen Birmingham to create a weekly literacy series for early readers starting this summer.
- Summer reading this year will begin June 25 while programs will extend until August 23 and tracking reading can be updated through September 4. SCHOOLS
- Buzz Aldrin Study Skills classes will visit the Bellevue Ave. Branch to register for library cards. Kristen Comeaux, Branch Manager, will go over how to access Libby and digital resources.

Staff

- New part-time staff hires:
 - Adrian Waters - Bellevue Ave. Branch Library Assistant
 - Amnah Javed - Youth Services Page
 - Chasity Hernandez - Outreach & Substitute Library Assistant
 - Haquetta Newsome - Facilities & Security Assistant
 - Linda Lakomy - Borrower Services Library Assistant
 - Mia Boxer - Social Worker
 - Raven Ramirez (they/them) - Bellevue Ave. Branch Librarian
 - Sally Fica - Adult Services Library Assistant
 - Selene Yang - Youth Services Library Assistant
- Jodi Silverman will participate in the BCCLS Supervisor Training, taking place in April and May.
- A press release is being written to announce the addition of a Library Social Worker.

Library Director Report: Janet Torsney:

Programs and Partnerships

- Montclair Reads *The Best We Could Do* continues. More than 40 events with 14 community partners are taking place through May; 158 people have participated so far.
- Two Howe House events -- sold-out Kwame Alexander poetry reading and authors on home -- were great successes with much library love.
- Our "You Are Welcome Here" video, part of our All Our Voices initiative, was completed.
- Planning library's April 7 Candidates Forum, co-hosted with Montclair Local.
- Met with representatives from the Board of Education, NAACP and donor Eileen Birmingham to fire up our support of MPS Science of Reading initiatives and continued engagement of our Community Conversation participants. Hosted screening of "Right to Read" on March 3, working on Read All About It webpage and other programs to support MPS' Science of Reading approach to literacy.

Buildings

- Foundation submitted funding request for \$500,000 for HVAC and roof repairs for Senator Booker's Congressionally Directed Funding.
- Investigating HVAC subsidy from PSEG
- Getting estimates on BAB plumbing work.
- Coordinating BAB courtyard drawings for NJ Historic Preservation application.
- Gathering material for BAB energy audit.
- Talked to Montclair Bread Company about using café space, consulted with lawyer on legal issues and other café options, talked to St Luke's about Toni's Kitchen using space for café. Waiting for a proposal from Toni's and estimates from the architect on improving lighting.
- Township lawyer is still reviewing solar panel install and finance proposals.

Township

- Developed talking points for Foundation and Board on additional funding.
- Coordinated mandatory JIF training for staff
- Consulted with CFO on budget hearings (possibly toward the end of March)
- Reviewed Main energy audit

Tech/E-rate

- Continued efforts to get Township approval to install switches
- Working on Cyber standards with Township and Garden State JIF
- Updating Computer use policy to include multi-factor authorization
- Chose our 2024 vendors: current internet phone providers and CTS for equipment and management. We can apply for our 2023 rebate on internet/phone costs in July.

Meetings

- Orientation with Just Right Reads about decodable summer reading materials
- Planned new literacy page – Read All About It – with webmaster
- Essex County Library directors on how to get more funding from the County
- Directors of Glen Ridge and Bloomfield libraries to discuss joint interests
- Advocacy Forum at the Burlington Library
- NJLA Administration and Management meetings
- Weekly Foundation meetings
- Board Building Committee
- Board Executive Committee

Miscellaneous

- Submitted 2023 State Report. Thanks to Linda for coordinating everything.
- Transition to ADP additional services complete. Valuable resources for staff including EAP, easier onboarding and very helpful HR advisor
- Prepared report for Foundation board meeting
- Working with Foundation on annual report
- Reached out to auditors about the date for the 2023 audit.

- Parking issues due to filming at and around 60 South Fullerton. Our spaces were secured but we expressed concerns about short notice.
- Clarified policies about adults in children's area and unaccompanied children
- Drafted director job description and posting

Department Head Report: *Tracy Crawford*

Tracy presented an overview of the Adult Services Department

The mission of the Adult Services Department is to support the informational, educational, and recreational needs of adults who use MPL by providing free programs, resources, and services.

Its operations are rooted in service and guided by the philosophy of providing equitable access to resources, programs and collections in order to inform, educate, and inspire individuals as well as build community among those with shared needs and interests.

Some of the programs and services offered by the Department include:

- Reference services and reader's advisory
- Access to electronic resources
- Providing resources in an effort to narrow the digital divide including access to computers and hotspots
- Programs and services to increase and strengthen digital literacy and financial literacy
- Programs to support health literacy and awareness such as health screenings, fitness classes, and lectures by practitioners and experts
- Access to MPL's archival Local History collection and programs such as Research Your Home's History
- Classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Recreational materials such as museum passes
- Musical concerts, dance performances, and other programs that support and explore the arts
- Book-centered programs such as author events and book discussions.

Accomplishments Since Reopening During and "Post" COVID

As the Library faced the challenge of reopening its doors during and after the ravages caused by COVID, Adult Services needed to find ways to transition from what had become primarily an online environment to offering live and public programs and services with almost an entirely new staff. It has slowly, but surely done just that and continues to rebuild the audiences it once attracted as well as develop new interest in patron use of the library in traditional and more innovative ways.

Some examples of the Department's accomplishments during this time include:

- In 2023, the Adult Services department was awarded:
 - a Digital Literacy grant from the Public Library Association which afforded Adult Services the opportunity to teach onsite digital literacy classes in

English that were simultaneously translated to Spanish over the course of several months.

- a Creative Aging grant from the NJ State Council on the Arts which allowed us to offer memoir writing and art workshops for 16 consecutive weeks for seniors and culminated in an educational and fun day of writing and art workshops.
- over \$8,000 from the Essex County Local Arts & History Grant Program to continue to underwrite the costs of digitizing materials in the Local History Collection.

Some of our current programs, services, and initiatives include:

- “The MILL at MPL” Senior Fridays which is a collaboration with LifeLong Montclair and MPL’s Adult School which has been a huge success since we started it at the end of January.
- Continuation of regularly scheduled onsite health screenings and health programs offered for free, which many of our seniors attend.
- Continuation of services such as Book-A-Librarian, and classes to teach digital & information literacy
- Collaborations with local organizations, educational institutions, artists, and other Library Departments to offer free performances for the public.
- Continuation of two book discussion groups, the Everything Book Club and Teachable Moments Book Club moderated by MPL staff.
- Participation in the NEA funded Montclair Reads initiative and other inter-departmental grant funded opportunities.

As the department steadies, staff-wise, and increases its capacity, our hope in the coming years is to develop and offer more programs and resources to serve the diverse needs and interests of our patrons and to increase partnerships and collaborations with local, statewide and national organizations.

- One project that we are very excited about is the New Jersey Council for the Humanities Community History program. Last month we were chosen, along with 8 other organizations including libraries, to participate in a statewide program which will convene over the course of the next seven months. The goal of the program is to train our staff in the practice of performing public history. As part of this training, we received \$1,000 dollars to be used for related resources and are eligible to receive another \$5,000 dollars towards developing and implementing a community history program by the end of 2025.
- We hope to develop a more robust digital literacy program including more onsite classes as well as finding opportunities to present classes and outreach opportunities, especially for our senior community.
- We would also like to create a more consistent and sustainable ESOL program
 - We are currently working with the MPL Foundation to identify monetary support in order to offer consistent, effective and sustainable literacy classes for speakers of other languages.

- Another goal is to offer more author talks and programs to celebrate books and reading.
- We would like to find more ways to engage Montclair's robust business community, especially entrepreneurs and small business owners by offering free resources and information as well as spaces to foster exchange, skill-building, and collaboration.
- We hope to participate in additional opportunities to support and encourage the arts within and outside of the library by offering more concerts, poetry readings, dance and theatrical performances and collaborating with individuals and organizations who are doing this work.
- We aim to discover more creative opportunities for building community and sharing of intergenerational, individual, and community knowledge as well as love for MPL!

Old Business: None

New Business:

Building Committee Report: *Brian Clarkson*

Brian presented an overview of the library building projects including:

- HVAC - getting quotes
- BAB water infiltration - stage 3 drawings and estimates

Personnel Committee Report: *Andrew Silver*

The Personnel Committee is Andrew Silver, Diana Lunin, JoAnn McCullough and Thamar Campbell. Andrew reported that the committee is working on the Director job description so that the job advertisement can be placed as soon as possible.

Public Comment:

Ilmar Vanderer complimented the Library on hosting the Candidates Forum on April 7.

Adjournment:

At 8:15 p.m. JoAnn McCullough moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and everyone at the table seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.