

Minutes of the September 16, 2024 Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting

The 2193rd meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, September 16, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:06 p.m.

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, Andrew Silver, Brian Clarkson, Lilian Ferguson, Tamar Campbell, Diana Lunin and Geoffrey Borshof

Board Members Absent: Lilian Ferguson and Damen G. Cooper

Library Staff Present: Director Radwa Ali, Assistant Director Selwa Shamy, Recording Secretary Linda Welch.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the July 15, 2024 Regular Meeting stood approved. Diana Lunin made the motion and Brian Clarkson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that:

The Executive Committee met on Monday, September 9 to review the agenda.

The Policy Committee met on Friday, September 13 to discuss Photo and Filming Policy.

Direct Install - HVAC Agreement - Discussion

Patrick Lynch, Sr. Project Developer, Tri-State Light & Energy, Inc. presented an overview of the:

PSE&G Energy Saver Program, Proposal

Clean Energy Future - Energy Efficiency Program Installation and Repayment Agreement

Mr. Lynch strongly recommended that the Library submit the PSE&G Clean Energy Future - Energy Efficiency Program Installation and Repayment Agreement as quickly as possible.

Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson presented the Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-36 Approving the Bills and Payables Between the July 15, 2024 and September 16, 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 #24-37 Pre-Approving the Bills and Payables Due Between the September 16, 2024 and October 21, 2024 Board of Trustees Meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-38 Approving the July and August 2024 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-39 Resolution To Accept The FY23 Audit

Whereas, NJAC §15:21-12.7(d) states "A certified audit of the Library Board of Trustees shall be performed annually as required by N.J.S.A. 40A:5-4 et seq. and described in N.J.A.C. 5:30-6.1"; and

Whereas, the Board of Trustees passed Resolution #23-11 on January 9, 2023 to engage the firm of Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP P.A to perform the annual audit of the library's finances for FY23 which ended on December 31, 2023; and

Whereas, the audit has been completed and has been presented to the Library Director, Comptroller and Finance Committee; and

Whereas, the Finance Committee recommends acceptance of the FY23 audit and taking the recommended corrective action.

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees accepts the audit dated July 22, 2024 and instructs the Library Director to submit a copy to the Chief Financial Officer of the municipality as directed by NJSA §40:54-15(a).

Diana Lunin moved to accept Resolution #24-39 Resolution to Accept the FY23 Audit and Tamar Campbell seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-40 Canceling Outstanding Checks and Accounts Payable

Whereas, in the course of reviewing the Library's 2023 audit, Lerch, Vinci & Higgins LLP identified \$3,016 of outstanding checks from 2012-2018 and \$1872.86 of prior accounts payable from December 31, 2010 through December 30, 2022, and

Whereas, they recommend that those items should be canceled and applied toward Operations.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the Library Board of Trustees, Township of Montclair, County of Essex, State of New Jersey that the Library Comptroller is authorized to cancel these items, for a total of \$4,888.86, and apply that amount toward Operations.

Brian Clarkson moved to accept Resolution #24-40 Canceling Outstanding Checks and Accounts Payable Geoffrey Borshof seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Report from The MPL Foundation - Mary Packer

New Board Members

I'm proud to introduce and welcome four new Foundation Board members – Jennifer Amore, James Cotter, Veronica Harris, and George Oliphant!

Karaoke Night

A successful Karaoke Night in late July was held by the Foundation at Tierney's Tavern. The proceeds, totaling \$6,500, have been distributed to the library in support of Community Outreach efforts, as per Janet's request.

Open Book / Open Mind Underwriters

Over the summer, the Foundation reached out to a number of donors who are regularly in attendance at Open Book / Open Mind events. We invited these donors to become "Underwriters," making a \$1,000 donation to support a year's worth of Open Book / Open Mind programming. A total of 11 households joined our inaugural class of Underwriters – a number we hope to expand in future years. This is in addition to sponsors and institutional funders, like the NJ Council for the Humanities, which also support Open Book / Open Mind.

The Little Read

The Foundation has raised more than \$10,000 in sponsorships for the Little Read, in support of children's programming and materials in 2025. The Little Read will take place the week of October 21st.

Digital Equity Grant

The Foundation is serving as the lead applicant for a federal grant on behalf of a partnership of organizations – Montclair Public Library, Montclair Gateway for Aging in Place, Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence, AAPI NJ, and Connections at Home NJ.

The grant is being offered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and awards are in the millions of dollars. Recipients will be announced before the end of 2024.

Save the Date

The next Lit Gala will take place on Thursday, May 8, 2025 at The Grove. The Foundation is proud to be honoring Mountainside Medical Center and Margot Sage-EL of Watchung Booksellers at the event. A save-the-date will come out soon.

Montclair Library Friends: *Mary Packer for Ed Robin*

On behalf of the Montclair Library Friends, Ed Robin welcomed Radwa Ali, our new Library Director, to her first official meeting with the Library Board of Trustees.

The Montclair Library Friends provided four volunteers to check in attendees and three volunteers to serve as ushers at the Matthew Desmond Open Book/Open Mind this past Thursday.

The State Historic Preservation Commission requested the submission of an application form to accompany the drawings previously submitted in support of the revised Bellevue Avenue Library plaza.

Friends of Bellevue Avenue Library, Inc.: *Ilmar Vanderer No report*

Library Report:

Assistant Director Report: *Selwa Shamy*

Building & Security

- Radwa has been keeping you up to date on the failed chiller, which caused the Main Library to close to the public from August 15-19. Hours were expanded at the Bellevue Ave. Branch to reflect normal Main Library hours; the services offered on the plaza at the Main Library during normal operating hours included holds pickups, carts of books for browsing, retrieving titles for patrons, printing, reference services, and seating. Wifi service to the plaza was expanded in 2022.
- The temporary fix to the chiller allowed it to run for another two weeks, getting us through the rest of August. The library is heating up again due to higher temperatures after a cool spell and children's services were moved outside the afternoon of September 12. Services may remain on the plaza through the weekend.

Partnerships

Walk + Read Montclair, a Storywalk Festival was launched in early August through partnerships with the Library Foundation and the Judy Weston Garden at Watchung Park. Storywalks were installed in Watchung, Glenfield, and Nishuane Parks in cooperation with the township and Essex County. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held in Glenfield Park on August 3 with library foundation directors, library board members, school officials, the mayor, township councilors, residents, and library staff in attendance. The author of the

book Fab Cab, which was featured at Glenfield Park, was present and provided a craft activity for campers.

Programming

- A special issue of Off the Shelf, the library's weekly e-newsletter, was sent on Sept. 11 highlighting the significant increase in summer reading participation this year. July and August Programming % Change from '23 to '24 Programs Held Attendance Children & Teen 39% 48% Adult Services 70% 115% Adult School* 5% 28% *The Adult School offers an abbreviated summer schedule.
- The Adult School's fall session begins on September 14.
- The very popular Senior Fridays, a collaboration with the Montclair Institute for Lifelong Learning resumes on September 20.

Outreach

- Youth Services and Bellevue Ave. Branch staff did numerous storytimes at camps this summer
- The library participated in the Sentinels Backpack Back to School program again this year.
- Youth Services Librarian Daisy Lorenzo and MSU alumnus organized a six day outreach event at Montclair State University to inform students about library services and to register them for library cards. In total, staff engaged with 509 people and registered 117 library cards.
- The library was present at the Montclair Jazz Festival's Downtown Jamboree on September 14.

Staffing

Selwa's July report included that the library had an active job posting for a Youth Services Reading Specialist. Gina Chung Fortt, former Library Foundation Board President, was the most qualified candidate and was hired to start on September 3. Gina will be infusing new energy into the library's partnership with the schools to improve literacy in town.

- The grant funded social worker position has been vacant since mid-May. Margarett Oujj (they/them), begins on September 30 and will work a 28 hour schedule. Margarett is the pastor at First Lutheran Church of Montclair and has extensive experience as a social worker.
- Full time Borrower Services Library Assistant Pearl Kustanovich resigned in August, leaving the library for a full time teaching position. Interviews for the position will be conducted in September.
- Part time Borrower Services Library Assistant Ronald Leiva was hired in August.
- Candace Jones, part time weekend Adult School program assistant, resigned leaving the department with Department Head Maurice Boyer, Programming Librarian Ariel Zeitlin who devotes half her time to Open Book / Open Mind, and Marketing and Technology Assistant Elaine Morello. There are two open positions, a full time programming assistant and one full time office manager, two pre-pandemic positions that are finally being funded again.

- Nancy Ort, part time Bellevue Ave. Branch library assistant, is resigning effective September 24; her position has been posted.
- Part time Facilities and Security Assistant Haquetta Newsome went on maternity leave earlier than expected on August 28. Her position will be filled in addition to another new part time position which is needed for more security coverage and cleaning responsibilities. The library's Facilities and Security Department staff took over cleaning responsibilities in mid-March of this year, saving the library a significant amount of money.

Library Director Report: Radwa Ali

Buildings

- Main HVAC: HVAC broke down numerous times over the summer. When it occurred during intense heat waves, the building often in the 90s with the 3rd floor experiencing the worst conditions. Humidity levels were also high. The children's room moved locations on several occasions, but when the entire building was too hot we shut down for 5 days from Aug 15 - Aug 19. Services remained on the plaza and at BAB during this time.
 - Booker Congressional Grant was not funded
 - PSEG proposal finally arrived on Aug 30. Please note the following:
 - Project cost: \$1,076,250.00.
 - Current discount: 53.33%
 - Our Total Cost: \$502,277.04
 - Monthly Payment (60 months @ 0% Interest): \$8,371.28
 - Monthly Utility Savings (estimated...not guaranteed) due to higher efficiency: \$2,030.39
 - Technically budgeting for: \$6,340.89 per month new costs or
 - \$76,090.68 per year of brand new obligation, assuming savings efficiency estimate is completely accurate.
 - State funding for the Direct Install program is currently out of money. The program should be reauthorized in January 2025, at which time the application will need to be filed all over again and we may see an increase OR a decrease in our projected discount.
 - Direct Install program replaces like for like, and only items that directly impact emissions. This is why the chiller and boilers are included, and why other essential items like the air handlers, VAV boxes & building control systems are not.
 - The new Direct Install program could be expanded in January to include those items, in which case we'd try to expand the scope of our project if it qualifies, and wrap those items into the discount.
 - If it can't be part of Direct Install, we're now trying to get quotes for what those items will cost separately so we can include the \$ in a capital request to the township. An existing quote indicates this will cost a minimum of an additional \$200k.

- BAB Water Infiltration
 - Received the Architectural & Engineering services proposal from LAN Associates for the Roof, Facade, & Drainage Upgrades at BAB. The Township Capital Acct for the library has \$97,785.70. I am in communication with our QPA, Town Manager, and Council Buildings Committee on how best to proceed, considering that the total project cost will greatly exceed the remaining funds in that account. LAN Associates provided a rough ballpark estimate of \$389,235.00 (plus the \$59,360 in engineering/architectural services) would mean we need an additional \$350,809.3 in capital funds.
 - Interior repairs to the damaged plaster in the walls & ceiling is not included. Manny will try to get us another rough estimate for this, but bear in mind that asbestos remediation is highly likely.
- BAB Courtyard
 - The NJ Historic Preservation Office asked us to submit a missing application which I did (with Linda Welch and Ed Robin's wonderful assistance!) on Aug 30. We await their response.

Technology

- Analyzing technology in the library with Adrienne Burke in anticipation of scheduled equipment upgrades next year. We are in the process of identifying areas of improvement and current inefficiencies, mostly due to the overly complicated structure we have with 3 separate networks managed by 3 separate entities: BCCLS, Township, Us/CTS. We may have an opportunity to reduce complexity and increase reliability by condensing these networks (ideally down to 1)

Policies

- We are lacking a Photography in the Library policy. Working on this with the staff and Policy Committee. Things needed to address:
 - Requests for filming locations for major motion pictures
 - Staff's ability to document and publicize programming, including pictures of program attendees

Operations

- Procurement Card: The State renewed its contract with Bank of America for only 6 months (expiring January 2025), leaving them uncertain if they'll be able to continue the procurement card program. Therefore they are not taking new customers. BoA is the only vendor approved by the state so we are at an impasse until something changes. I will follow up in January.
 - In the meantime, to reduce the burden on other utilizing personal credit cards, I will (with the board's blessing) create a new personal card in my name which will be used exclusively for library matters. I will move over services we use (such as Wall Street Journal subscription, Meta advertising,

and so on) to my name & new card until this situation is resolved, hopefully positively.

- Passport Services: Both the Main Library and Bellevue Branch were pre-approved by the State Department to commence certification to become passport facilities. We are undergoing that process now, with a goal of going live by the end of the year.

Township / Advocacy

- Attended most council meeting town hall meetings
- Met with Township CFO & Comptroller to discuss procedures, library capital account, etc
- Extensive communication w/ Council Building Committee regarding the HVAC and now regarding the broader essential facility needs at both Main and BAB.
- Council Building Committee & Library Building Committee met on 9/12. Very successful and positive meeting in which we were able to communicate our facility needs, history up to this point, and how we can move forward together.
- Attended an event for Mikie Sherrill at Rosemary Iverson's home, during which I spoke with many members of the community as well as Congresswoman Sherrill herself about the library and our HVAC emergency.
- Met with Chris Williams, Director of Community Engagement & Grants in Congressman Mikie Sherrill's office, along with Mary Packer to communicate our needs.

Opportunities

- Digital Navigator Grant
- Digital Equity Grant: collaboration between us, Foundation, mGAP, MFEE, AAPI, & Connections at Home.
 - Very long odds but the opportunity is too good to pass up. \$5-12million grant.
 - Foundation is the Authorized Representative applying on behalf of all of the above groups. Library portion of the grant will include salaries/programming to vastly increase our capacity for workforce development, as well as physical upgrades to the 2nd floor to provide more classroom space, small study rooms, telehealth/interview pods, computer lab, makerlab, and more.

Community

- OBOM: Matt Desmond on 9/12. Culmination of months and months of work & coordination from Janet Torsney, Ariel Zeitlin, Partners for Health, Watchung Booksellers and Man.
 - Next OBOM is 9/25: Nickolas Kristoff
- Walk + Read Montclair Storywalk Festival
- Met with Main Friends, BAB Friends, Foundation, Rotary Club, Succeed2Gether, MFEE, mGAP, AAPI, Montclair History Center, District ELA staff, Montclair Film.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Resolution #24-41 Honoring Library Director Janet Torsney on the Occasion of Her Retirement will be presented at the October 21 Board meeting.

Policy Committee: *Diana Lunin*

Photography Policy

The Policy Committee is working on this policy with the staff. Things needed to address:

- Requests for filming locations for major motion pictures
- Staff's ability to document and publicize programming, including pictures of program attendees

Building Committee Report

HVAC:

Theodore Graham presented an overview of the status of the HVAC system. The air conditioning system can not be repaired. He strongly recommended that the library apply for the PSE&G Energy Saver Clean Energy Future - Energy Efficiency Program Installation and Repayment Agreement

The entire Board moved to authorize the Library Director to execute the Energy Efficiency Program Installation and Repayment Agreement. The motion was passed unanimously.

Digital Equity Grant

Radwa Ali presented an overview of the Digital Equity Grant. The MPL Foundation is serving as the lead applicant for a federal grant on behalf of a partnership of organizations – Montclair Public Library, Montclair Gateway for Aging in Place, Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence, AAPI NJ, and Connections at Home NJ. The grant is being offered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and awards are in the millions of dollars. Recipients will be announced before the end of 2024.

The entire Board moved to authorize the MPL Foundation to receive the Digital Equity Grant funds and distribute them to the library. The motion was passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

At 8:55 p.m. Theodore Graham moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and JoAnn McCullough seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.