

## **Minutes of the October 21, 2024 Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2194th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:08 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, Thamar Campbell, Diana Lunin and Geoffrey Borshof

Board Members Absent: Brian Clarkson, 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 September 16, 2024 Regular Meeting stood approved. Theodore Graham made the motion and Geoffrey Borshoff seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

### Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that:

The Executive Committee met on Tuesday, October 15 to review the agenda.

The Finance Committee met on Tuesday, October 15

The Personnel Committee met on Wednesday, October 16

JoAnn recommended that the Board of Trustees discuss resuming in person Board meetings resumed with the option for hybrid.

### Treasurer's Report:

JoAnn McCullough presented the Treasurer's Report:

Diana Lunin moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-42 Approving the Bills and Payables 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 Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Theodore Graham moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-43 Pre-Approving the Bills and Payables Due Between the October 21, 2024 and November 18, 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.

Thamar Campbell moved for the adoption of Resolution #24-44 Approving the September 2024 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

#### Reports from Support Organizations:

##### Report from The MPL Foundation: *Sheila Boyd*

The 2024 Annual Appeal mailing will go out to approximately 8,500 households in early November. The Foundation hopes to raise between \$200,000 and \$250,000 additional dollars before the end of the year.

The Little Read is underway, today through October 26th. Last year nearly 600 children and families participated and we hope to serve at least that many again! I hope you can join us for the culminating event, the Little Read & Treat from 2-4 pm this Saturday.

The Foundation Board recently participated in a workshop with Joan Garry, an internationally recognized champion for the nonprofit sector and founder of the Nonprofit Leadership Lab. She spoke about effective storytelling and its role in inspiring philanthropy.

There has been strong interest in the May 2025 Lit Gala, with nearly 70 responses to the "Save the Date" email to request an invitation.

##### Montclair Library Friends: *Ed Robin*

##### Funding the Bellevue Avenue Plaza:

Ed Robin reported that he met with the Library Director and Kathleen Bennett to investigate sources of funding. The Historical Preservation Commission suggested applying to the NJ Historic Trust. The deadline to submit applications is April 2025.

The Friends participated as check-in volunteers in 2 Open Book/Open Mind events in October.

##### Friends of Bellevue Avenue Library, Inc.: *Ilmar Vanderer - None*

##### Library Report:

##### Assistant Director Report: *Selwa Shamy*

##### Building & Security

- HVAC - during the fall maintenance visit, it was found one of the two heat pumps needs to be repaired. The heat pumps are not included in the anticipated HVAC

replacement. The quoted cost is \$7,500 for a rebuild and we are waiting for the cost of a complete replacement.

- Patrons Banned - Two patrons have been banned from the Library due to repeated behavior violating the Library Code of Conduct; ban letters have been included in the Board Packet.
- Staff have given feedback that patrons with multiple incidents need to be better tracked in the Patron Incident Log. Although Tim and I check the log daily, we will meet weekly to review the log together so the security staff response to repeat offenders is coordinated, accurately documented and handled efficiently.

#### NJ Council For The Humanities + Essex County Grants

- Head of Adult Services Tracy Crawford and Local History Librarian Marisa Shaari have been participating in a NJ Council for the Humanities program which teaches participants how to develop a community-engaged public history project. The program is not considered a grant.
  - \$1000 was awarded for participants to develop a project — Tracy and Marisa choose the subject “documenting the immigrant experience.”
  - The Council accepted MPL’s project proposal and was awarded \$5000 to fund its implementation which they have a year to complete.
- Essex County Local Arts Grant concerts have been scheduled through the end of the year.
- Essex County History Grant will continue to fund the scanning of local deeds.

#### Schools

- The 16th annual Little Read takes place October 21-25. This year, students were given Library Card Applications for their parents to complete so they can get their library cards when classes visit the library.
- Montclair Public Schools invited staff to be on the Montclair Early Childhood Advisory Council. Involved staff include Reading Specialist Gina Chung-Fortt, Bellevue Branch Manager Kristen Comeaux and Head of Youth & Teen Services Jodi Silverman. ○ The purpose of the Council is to ensure every child enrolled receives a high-quality learning experience.

#### Programming

- Latin American Heritage Month programs kicked off on Sept. 17. Some samples were:
  - Flamenco Para Los Niños (16 children, 4 teens, 29 adults)
  - Paloma’s Song for Puerto Rico: Children’s Author Adriana Erin Rivera (19 children, 34 adults) Assistant Director Report to the Board of Trustees October 21, 2024
  - Diego Rivera: Mexican Murals and Much More (15)
  - Josefa Cano: Peruvian Cooking Talk (23)
  - Music of Argentina: A Free Live Guitar Concert: with Carlos Pavan of the Folklife Center of NJ (40)

- Senior Fridays co-sponsored by the Montclair Institute for Lifelong Learning attendance:
  - Sept. 20 (59)
  - Sept. 27 (89)
  - Oct. 4 (77)
  - Oct. 11 (91)
- Youth & Teen Services is offering a series of college prep programs
  - RevPrep Free ACT Practice Exam - Oct. 22
  - Navigating College Admissions - Oct. 19
  - One on One College Essay Review - Nov.
  - Acing the Interview - Nov.
  - RevPrep Free ACT & SAT Practice Exam - Dec.
  - Financial Aid by HESAA (Higher Education Student Assistance Authority) - Jan.
- Open Book/Open Mind
  - Nicolas Kristaf (211)
  - Tracy O'Neill (13)
  - Open Book, Open Mind; Melissa Ludtke (45)
- Free Concert: Memento Mori with Montclair Early Music (115)

### Outreach

- Unhoused Coalition Fair at Salvation Army building - registered 15 people for library cards and the Library's new social worker, Margarette Oujj, made connections with community groups to provide service at the Library.

### Staffing

- Margarette Oujj was hired as the grant funded part-time social worker, their first day was September 30.
- Kait Astrella, part-time Adult Services Librarian, resigned as of Oct. 3.
- Facilities & Security Assistant Kenny Williams will be on medical leave for 4-8 weeks starting Oct. 14.
- Adult Services Librarian Jill DeMarco will go on maternity leave for 8 months starting after Oct. 18.
- Liana Vazquez was hired as a full-time Borrower Services library assistant, her start date is Oct. 21

### Library Director Report: Radwa Ali

#### Buildings

- Main HVAC
  - Direct Install PSEG contract was countersigned on 10/15/24.
  - Units are made to order and could take "several months to a year" according to the project manager, so we have to go with the assumption that we won't have a new system in place before summer.

- Actively getting estimates for the additional work that will be needed to fully overhaul the system (building controls, vav boxes, air handlers, and now also the heat pumps because one of them is no longer working).
- BAB Courtyard
  - The NJ Historic Preservation Office has approved our application. The courtyard is not considered historic, therefore we are free to make modifications as we see fit.
  - Meeting with Kathleen Bennett and Ed Robin on Monday 10/21 for further discussion

### Operations

- Security
  - Frequency and level of patron confrontations and their effect on staff as well as library operations is a concern. Exploring hiring a dedicated security service in which an unarmed, trained, clearly visible security guard can assist on a limited basis. The cost of such a service is built into the 2025 Operating Budget
- Cleaning
  - The lack of a dedicated cleaning service has taken its toll on the buildings and on the facilities staff who are trying to do it all. They need help, especially while one staffer is out on medical leave.. On the recommendation of several neighboring libraries who employ them, Pro-Clean has agreed to assist us with daily cleaning on a temporary basis until we decide to initiate a contract with them.
- Staffing
  - The 2025 proposed budget includes a great deal of money allocated to areas that historically have not been prioritized, namely facilities. In order to keep our discretionary request from ballooning even higher (we are already asking for more than the most recent past) we are instituting a hiring pause and will not be filling remaining open positions. Adult services will be hit very hard by this, but we are working with all departments to cross-train, cross-schedule, and pitch in so that all public service desks are staffed.

### 2025 Budget

- 2025 Proposed Budget is in the packet. In order to adequately fund the operation of the library, we are asking for a discretionary figure of \$675,000 on top of the minimum funding of \$3,888,915. We would also like to request a dedicated Capital Budget of \$1,000,000
  - Operating Funds would fund
    - Cleaning Service
    - Security
    - Capital Needs Assessment
    - Portable Chiller Rental (4 month)
    - Direct Install Payments (estimating Fall installation)
    - Increased professional development

- An enlarged general maintenance fund to cover some carpet replacements, stair/stage refinishing, and other small improvements we can make to the buildings
  - An enlarged fund for furniture replacement
  - An enlarged fund for books so we can fulfill demand with multiple copies
- Capital Funds would funds
  - Main HVAC complete project: Building controls, VAV boxes, Air Handlers, Heat Pumps
  - BAB Water Infiltration project as proposed

### Community

- OBOM: Ariel Zeitlin, alongside the OBOM committee is working on a wonderful lineup next year including Rumaan Alam on 1/25 and Anna Quindelin on 3/15. The 1st half of the year is close to being finalized.

### Continuing Education (recommended for Trustees!!)

- How to Analyze Space & Increase Circulation: <https://tinyurl.com/ypj2ksef>
  - Every book has to pay rent!
  - Take lessons from retail: merchandising right means we don't need as much space for books in the building because far more books are circulating!
  - Circulation can jump double digits in a single year if done right.
  - Slash the aisles, bring collections out on display
- Getting to Yes - Sustainable Funding with a Johnson Act Referendum: : <https://tinyurl.com/46wsx9fz>

### Old Business:

#### Resolution #24-41 Honoring Library Director Janet Torsney On The Occasion of Her Retirement

Whereas, Janet Torsney served as the Director of the Montclair Public Library from August 16, 2022 until July 31, 2024 steering the Library through a post-pandemic period of renewal, restabilization, and growth, and

Whereas, during her tenure, the Library:

- expanded its open hours to pre-pandemic levels
- saw increases in total budget, in-person visits, program attendance, circulation, community-hosted events, and outreach
- set forth a Strategic Road Map for 2023 to 2026
- worked with community partners to win a Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts
- worked with the Library Foundation to secure a generous grant from the Partners for Health Foundation, which will fund a social worker for two years, and

Whereas, Janet Torsney served as Interim Director from February 22, 2022 until August 16, 2022 and the Assistant Director of Montclair Public Library from 2017 to 2018, and

Whereas, Janet Torsney's professionalism and personal touch will be deeply missed by the Montclair Public Library employees and the community at large.

Now Be It Resolved that the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees expresses its appreciation to Janet Torsney for her devotion and commitment to the Library's mission and goals and extends its best wishes for many years of happiness during the next chapter of her life.

Theodore Graham moved to accept the Resolution #24-41 Honoring Library Director Janet Torsney on the Occasion of her Retirement and Geoffrey Borshoff seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business:

Proposed 2025 Hours of Operations, Holiday Closings & Board of Trustees Meeting Dates

Hours of Operations

	<u>Main Library</u>	<u>Bellevue Avenue Branch</u>
Monday	10 am to 8 pm	10am to 6 pm
Tuesday	10 am to 8 pm	10 am to 8 pm
Wednesday	10 am to 8 pm	10 am to 6 pm
Thursday	10 am to 8 pm	10 am to 8 pm
Friday	10 am to 6 pm	2 pm to 6 pm
Saturday	10 am to 6 pm	2 pm to 6 pm
Sunday	1 pm to 6 pm	Closed

Holiday Closures

New Year's Holiday

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

Official public Holiday. All libraries closed.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Monday, January 20, 2025

Official public holiday. All libraries closed

President's Day

Monday, February 17, 2025

Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Easter

Sunday, April 20, 2025

Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Memorial Day

Monday, May 26 2025

Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Juneteenth

Thursday, June 19, 2025 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Independence Day

Friday July 4, 2025 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Labor Day

Monday, September 1, 2025 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Thanksgiving Holiday

Wednesday, November 26, 2025 The Library will close at 2 pm.  
Thursday, November 27, 2025 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Christmas

Wednesday, December 24, 2025 All Libraries closed  
Thursday, December 25, 2025 Official public holiday. All libraries closed.

New Year's Holiday (2025/2026)

Wednesday, December 31 2025 All Libraries closed  
Thursday, January 1, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed.

The Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees 2025 Meeting Dates

The Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees will meet at 7:00 pm on the third Monday of the month except where noted:

January 13*	Schedule adjusted due to Martin Luther King Day
February 10*	Schedule adjusted due to President's Day
March 17	
April 21	
May 19	
June 16	
July 21	
August	No Meeting
September 15*	Schedule adjusted due to Rosh Hashanah begins at sunset
October 20	
November 17	
December	No Meeting

Thamar Campbell moved to adopt the 2025 Hours of Operation and Holiday Hours and Board of Trustees Schedule and Andrew Silver second. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #24-45 Authorizing The Montclair Public Library To Enter Into A Cooperative Pricing Agreement With The Educational Services Commission Of New Jersey

Whereas, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-11(5) authorizes contracting units to establish a Cooperative Pricing System and to enter into Cooperative Pricing Agreements for its administration; and

Whereas, the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey, hereinafter referred to as the "Lead Agency " has offered voluntary participation in a Cooperative Pricing System for the purchase of goods and services;

Whereas, On October 21, 2024 the governing body of the Montclair Public Library in the Township of Montclair, County of Essex, State of New Jersey duly considered participation in a Cooperative Pricing System for the provision and performance of goods and services;

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved as follows:

This RESOLUTION shall be known and may be cited as the Cooperative Pricing Resolution of the Montclair Public Library.

Pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A. 40A:11-11(5)*, the Director of the Montclair Public Library is hereby authorized to enter into a Cooperative Pricing Agreement with the Lead Agency.

The Lead Agency shall be responsible for complying with the provisions of the *Local Public Contracts Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.)* and all other provisions of the revised statutes of the State of New Jersey.

This resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage.

I hereby certify that the above resolution was adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library at a meeting of said governing body held on October 21, 2024.

Tamar Campbell moved to accept the Resolution #24-45 Authorizing the Montclair Public Library to enter into a Cooperative Pricing Agreement with the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

#### 2025 Budget

JoAnn McCullough asked the Board to review the enclosed 2025 Budget w/ \$675,000 Discretionary Funds and send any questions to the Finance Committee. The budget will be presented at the November board meeting.

#### Nominating Committee Report

Members of the Nominating Committee are Diana Lunin, Theodore Graham and Geoffrey Borshoff.

Diana Lunin reported that the proposed slate for the 2025 Executive Board will be

presented at the November 18 Board of Trustees meeting. Board members are invited to contact the Nominating Committee to nominate themselves or other board members for offices on the Executive Board.

In accordance with the By-Laws of the Board of Trustees, the Election will take place at the January meeting of the Board.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

At 8.55 p.m. Geoffrey Borshoff moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Thamar Campbell seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.