

**Minutes of the January 13, 2025
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2196th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, January 13, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:05 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, Diana Lunin and Lilian Ferguson

Board Members Absent: Thamar Campbell, Brian Clarkson, Geoffrey Borshof and Erika Pierce

Library Staff Present: Director Radwa Ali, Assistant Director Selwa Shamy, Recording Secretary Linda Welch, BAB Manager Kristen Comeaux and Adult School Manager Maurice Boyer

Election of Officers

Diana Lunin presented the current slate of officers:

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

Diana Lunin moved to accept the Nominating Committee's recommendations for the slate of officers and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the November 18, 2024 Regular Meeting stood approved Theodore Graham made the motion and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that the Library's Kwanzaa Celebration on December 14 was a huge success.

On December 26 the Library held a brick laying celebration for former Library Director Cheryl McCoy and Support Services Manager Ronald Murphy. Bricks were installed on the plaza for each of these former staff members. The celebration moved into the auditorium where attendees shared fond memories and refreshments.

Treasurer's Report:

Lisa Connell presented the Treasurer's Report:

Theodore Graham moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-01 Approving the Bills and Payables between the November 18, 2024 and January 13, 2025 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.

Diana Lunin moved for the adoption of Resolution Resolution #25-02 Pre-Approving Bills and Payables Due Between the January 13, 2025 and February 10, 2025 Board of Trustees Meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Theodore Graham moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-03 Approving the November and December 2024 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

MPL Foundation –Mary Packer

Annual Appeal

The Foundation raised \$277,131 during the Annual Appeal period of Nov 1 through Dec 31 and raised a total of \$372,222 for the annual fund overall in 2024. This figure exceeded our budgeted goal by nearly \$50,000.

Our total number of donors for the year increased slightly over 2023 to 844 donors; the number of first-time donors also increased to 183 (vs 176 in 2023).

Support of the Library

In total, the Foundation distributed \$221,470 to MPL and directly invested \$33,367 in MPL projects. *That's a total of \$254,837 in support – the highest level of support the Foundation has ever contributed to the library in a single year!*

Here are the areas where the Foundation made a difference:

Support for Departments and Services		
Adult School	Classes	\$7,000
Adult Services	Local history	\$1,500
Materials (digital and physical)	Reference materials	\$1,000
	Databases	\$25,500
	Electronic resources	\$32,520

	Hotspots	\$9,000
	Library of Things	\$3,500
	Museum passes	\$6,500
Youth Services	Buy A Book – Materials for Youth Svcs	\$12,620
	Children's materials (includes Literacy Kits, some Library of Things Items, and kid-specific e-resources)	\$17,980
	Fish Tank	\$5,500
	Teen program	\$350
General	Community Outreach	\$6,500
	Discretionary Funding	\$20,000
Matching Commitments for Grants		
Essex County Arts Grant	Music program	\$2,500
Essex County History Grant	Document digitization	\$2,500
Grants/Sponsorships and Restricted Donations		
Partners for Health Grant	Social Worker	\$50,000
Whitehill Foundation Grant	Science Kits	\$5,000
Investors Foundation	Equipment/Supplies for Social Worker	\$500
OB/OM Sponsorship	Open Book / Open Mind	\$9,500
Montclair Foundation	Spanish Lapsit	\$2,000
	Total disbursed in 2024	\$221,470
Direct MPLF Investment in MPL 2024		
	Literacy Initiatives, Decodable books, and Storywalk Festival	\$7,169
	Sustainability planning consultant	\$7,150
	Security camera upgrade at Main	\$11,048
	BAB topographic survey	\$8,000
	Total invested in 2024	\$33,367
	TOTAL SUPPORT IN 2024	\$254,837

Montclair Library Friends: Ed Robin

Mary Packer reported for Ed Robins that the Montclair Library Friends are working with the Foundation on a Letter of Support for the Library.

Friends of the Bellevue Avenue Library: Ilmar Vanderer - None

Library Report:

Assistant Director Report: Selwa Shamy

Building & Security

Main Library

- Heat Pump - The wires to the heat pump that is being rebuilt have been repaired. We are still awaiting an estimate for when the heat pump will be re-installed.
- Emergency Lighting - there have been complaints about many lights being on when the library is closed. The problem was identified with the electrical panel and that issue has been fixed. For emergency lighting after hours, four sets of lights on the first floor have been programmed to stay on.
- Elevator - after the motor that was installed only a few months ago shorted out, the elevator was out of service from December 15 through January 7. When told the motor did not have a warranty, Radwa contacted other elevator vendors and successfully secured the services of Essex County Elevator. They installed a new motor with a warranty plus an electrical starter to prevent the motor shorting out.
- Furniture - Kershner Office Furniture in King of Prussia, PA offered the library free furniture for the taking. Radwa and I made a trip to the warehouse to select furniture to mostly replace the older chairs in the main library. We also acquired book cases, benches with tables, couches, file cabinets and a brand new desk unit for Linda Welch. The value of the furniture far exceeds the cost of moving it to the library without the assistance of an elevator.

Schools Visits

In November and December, several schools visited the branch and main library

- Buzz Study Skills elective (2 classes) - Branch
- Goddard Preschool - Main
- Bulluck School 5th graders (2 classes) - Main

Literacy Specialist Outreach

- Literacy Specialist Gina Chung Fortt attended the Community Partners Collaborative Meeting that included the public school district, Imani, Succeed2gether, NAACP, PTA Council, The Montclair Special Education Parent Advisory Council, Sister to Sister, YMCA and Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation.
- Gina did a literacy program for four classrooms through the Mini Mounties program at Montclair Community PreK
- Gina met with Erika Pierce, School District Director of English Language Arts (ELA) and Health/PE. It was discussed that Tier 3 students need more literacy support, particularly at the middle school level. They will continue to meet regularly.
- Visited L'Alliance Preschool to observe and determine how to support the children's learning in English

- Meeting with Theresa Walsh Biarrusso of Lacordaire Academy. They would like all students and staff to get library cards. Theresa also requested a monthly visit with the eTuk (the MPL mobile library).

Montclair State University

- An MSU class visited with Guitry Banks, Library Associate with the Adult Services Dept., to learn about the Foundation Directory Online, a resource to find funding sources for nonprofits and other organizations.

Programming

- Kwanzaa Community Celebration took place on December 14. Attendance was the highest at the start of the program with 84 people and fluctuated throughout the day. The marketplace vendors seemed pleased with the turnout and it was a joyous event. Those who shared remarks include JoAnn, Radwa, Mayor Baskerville, Brendan Gill, Alixon Collazos-Gill, Councilor Susan Chin Anderson and Bob Russo.

Community

- The library along with the Montclair Art Museum hosted an art exhibit called Seeing From the Heart, a collaborative art-making project. Teams started collaborating in October to create original pieces on the themes of community-building, mutual compassion, empathy, respect, and friendship across boundaries and differences. The project was initiated and organized by Montclair Mutual Aid.
- Radwa, Tim, and I met with Joe Granger, Director of MESH (Montclair Emergency Services for Hope) to discuss how best to assist library patrons who are unhoused.

Staffing

- Branch Manager Kristen Comeaux has accepted the position of Director at the Glen Rock Library, also a member of BCCLS. Kristen has transformed the branch into a vibrant destination with her enthusiasm, creativity, can do attitude, and perseverance. Her last day will be January 24. The position will be posted and MPL staff will be encouraged to apply.
- Staff continue to be cross-trained so they are proficient to provide customer service at any public service desk. Staff have already been working shifts at the reference desk while circulation and youth services will be included beginning this month and moving forward.

Library Director Report: *Radwa Ali*

Building & Security

- Capital Needs Assessment: starting to work on compiling information for firm
- Elevator:
 - Morris County Elevator replaced the failed motor and added a soft starter that should take the brunt of any future power fluctuation.
 - Attorney advised not to pursue legal action with EMCO
 - Attorney drafter 60 Day service cancellation to EMCO
 - Morris County Elevator is on state contract, so adopting a maintenance agreement with them will be less cumbersome, however we're still pursuing

agreements from more companies to be on the safe side. You can expect a new contract on the agenda in February.

- Major Kudos to Tim, Ken and Manily especially, and all the staff who had to schlep up and down the stairs with baskets of books, boxes, etc. Children's programs continued downstairs. The library never closed nor reduced services to the public during the elevator outage.
- PSEG executives met with us in coordination with Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill's office and the Library Foundation back in December. They are taking over management of our crisis and will coordinate to find additional incentive programs to get us the most bang for our buck. We're meeting with them again next week.

Passports

- Both facilities have passed final approval. The Main Library is going live on January 13th. BAB is going live on January 27th. Twelve people across both facilities are trained and have received their official agent documentation. You can see what the public will see at <https://montclairlibrary.org/passports>. We already have some appointments made despite not making it prominent on the site or even linking to it from anywhere. We are fortunate to have another full-time employee, Liana Vasquez, who has extensive experience and who has been assisting the others prepare. When the BAB facility activates on the 27th, I plan to spend considerable time there personally supporting staff while Liana provides support at the main library.

Open Book / Open Mind

- An excellent lineup: Rumaan Alam on 1/25, Jennifer Jones on 2/18, Curtis Sittenfed on 2/25, Anna Quindlen on 3/15, Chris Bohjalian on 4/3, Edwin Frank and Benjamin Wallace on 5/3 (contributions to the Literary Festival), a marriage panel featuring Ada Calhoun, Molly Roden Winter, and Jaclyn Geller on 6/3.
- 10 Year Anniversary party planned for March 10th, to be generously hosted by Brian Clarkson! All trustees are invited (and will receive a save the date). Ariel Zeitlin and the OBOM committee are working hard on the logistics.
- Community Read / OBOM planned with Partners for Health for "Just Action," How to Challenge Segregation Enacted Under the Color of Law."

Community

- Dumpling Diplomacy's Lunar New Year celebration on 2/1 will serve as a fundraiser for the library.
- Youth Services staff working with MFEE on parent workshops led by the Trevor Projects. The first of these workshops will be held at MPL on 2/20
- Talking with Judy Weston Garden on another set of Storywalks this summer as well as a possible collaboration for Arbor Day
- Staff is working on programming and resources for Arab American Heritage Month in April
- Inducted into Montclair Rotary Club

Ongoing / Working on

- Improving the financial AP workflow to ease the pressures on the finance team. Trying to bring in an accountant who can work with us to identify feasibility of migrating to Quickbooks Online (or another robust financial product) with built-in automation features to decrease the workload.
- Staff is starting to plan for a move from Communico to LibCal for our events calendar and community room booking. Communico costs \$11,000 a year. LibCal's cost is rolled into our BCCLS bill so it's a huge annual savings. Libcal is not as robust as Communico but the savings are too large to ignore 😞
- New website for end of Q2
- Working with BCCLS to move our public PCs to the BCCLS network, thereby eliminating the need for working with an outside technology agency like CTS which is costing us \$21,000 a year.
- Procurement card (credit card) NJ state contract awarded to US Bank. Received the paperwork and will proceed with next steps.

Bellevue Avenue Branch Manager, Kristen Comeaux presented information on the Library of Things Initiative:

The staff has collected information about various NJ libraries' Library of Things to understand the common rules, regulations, and materials as well as format for the website and how the patron side was compiled. With that in mind, we started to create a lending policy which was then sent to our lawyer who revised it and answered any questions we might have.

We take suggestions from staff and have a suggestion form on the website. We also routinely look at other libraries to see what things they are circulating and even contact them to see if they do well or have any issues. Just because it was a suggestion doesn't mean we'd necessarily purchase it.

We've found that items that are most likely to go out are what we classify as "tools". Cleaning tools that are bulky and generally not used week to week are a big draw.

Most circulated items in 2024:

Tonie Boxes (4 total) - 45 times	Pressure Washer (3 total) - 39 times
Knife Sharpener (x2) - 33 times	Giant Jenga - 25 times
Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner - 23 times	Code & Go Mouse (x2) - 17 times
Ukulele - 15 times	Cordless Drill - 13 times

The Library also accepts donations through the Foundation, which generally are board games, which aren't always highly circulating items and do take a lot of time to process because they have so many pieces.

Adult School Manager, Maurice Boyer presented an overview of the Adult School Classes that are being offered.

New Business:

Resolution #25-04 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 #25-04 Designating Official Depositories and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-05 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.

Andrew Silver moved to accept Resolution #25-05 To Maintain Membership in the Bergen County Cooperative Library System and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-06 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.

Andrew Silver moved to accept Resolution #25-06 Designating Official Newspaper and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-07 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 #25-07 for the Petty Cash Accounts and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-08 Designating The Library Purchasing Agent

Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Montclair Public Library authorizes Library Director, Radwa Ali 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. Dineros, QPA, Purchasing Agent for the Township of Montclair in accordance with NJSA §40A 11-9.

Theodore Graham moved to accept Resolution Resolution #25-08 Designating the Library Purchasing Agent and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-09 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, Radwa Ali
- 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 Resolution #25-09 for Authorized Signers on Checks and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-10 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 2025 without the necessity of competitive bidding.

Andrew Silver moved to accept Resolution #25-10 to Appoint the Firm of the Weiner Law Group LLP as the Library Attorney and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-11 Appointing Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP As Library Auditor To Perform The FY24 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 FY23 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 2024.

Andrew Silver moved to accept Resolution #25-11 Appointing Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP as Library Auditor to Perform the FY24 Audit and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Discussion and Approval of the Adult School Winter and Spring Sessions Tuition Range Fee Schedule

Theodore Graham moved to approve the Adult School Winter and Spring Session Tuition Range Fee Schedule and Diana Luniin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

At 8:00 p.m. JoAnn McCullough moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.