

**Minutes of the July 21, 2025
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2204th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, July 21, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Theodore Graham at 7:00 p.m.

Open Meetings Act:

Vice-President Theodore Graham 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 a Hybrid meeting was posted on the Library website.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Theodore Graham, Presiding, Andrew Silver, Brian Clarkson, Lilian Ferguson, Geoffrey Borshof and Tamar Campbell

Board Members Absent: Diana Lunin, JoAnn McCullough and Erika Pierce

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

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the June 19, 2025 Regular Meeting stood approved. Theodore Graham made the motion and Brian Clarkson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report: None

Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson presented the Treasurer's Report:

Brian Clarkson moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-39 Approving the Bills and Payables between the June 19, 2025 and July 21, 2025 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 #25-40 Pre-Approving Bills and Payables due between the July 21, 2025 and September 15, 2025 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 #25-41 Approving the June 2025 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Montclair Public Library Foundation - Mary Packer

Library Distribution

In the third quarter, the Foundation disbursed \$53,250 to the Montclair Public Library, bringing the total distributed year-to-date to \$184,650. These funds directly support a wide range of library services and initiatives, including:

- Adult School of Montclair
- Summer Reading programs for all ages
- Technology upgrades and digital resources such as Hoopla and Kanopy
- *Open Book / Open Mind* author series
- Free museum passes for patrons
- Library of Things
- Enhancements to both digital and physical collections
- New audio/visual equipment for programs and events
- And many other vital programs and services

These distributions reflect the Foundation's commitment to enriching community access to lifelong learning and cultural engagement.

Open Book / Open Mind Underwriters

The inaugural year of the *Open Book / Open Mind Underwriters* program concluded successfully in June. We are now reaching out to our founding Underwriters to encourage renewed support, while also inviting new donors to join this growing circle of literary champions.

Underwriters contribute \$1,000 annually to sustain Montclair's signature author series and, in return, receive benefits such as complimentary registration to events, reserved seating, copies of featured books, and invitations to occasional private author receptions. Most importantly, they play a crucial role in ensuring the future of this dynamic and beloved program.

Looking Ahead

Foundation staff is actively planning for the 2025–26 program year, with key priorities including:

- Messaging and design for the Annual Appeal
- Securing sponsorships for *The Little Read*
- Laying early groundwork for a potential capital campaign in support of the CAFE project

Montclair Library Friends: Ed Robin - None

Friends of the Bellevue Avenue Library: Cordelia Siporin

Music Mondays at the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library are a huge success.

Cordelia complimented Branch Manager Gina Scalise on the programming at the Bellevue Avenue Branch Library.

Library Report:

Assistant Director Report: *Selwa Shamy*

Building

- The fan array air handler was installed on the roof of the main library on July 10. Wiring work should be completed sometime on July 12, bringing air conditioning to the 3rd floor once again.
 - The Children's department has been relocated to the first floor for the most part of June and early July. Although only a fraction of the full collection could be available, staff retrieved books for patron requests. Programs were also held on the first floor. Many patrons appreciated the staff's resilience and willingness to go the extra mile to ensure everyone got the items they sought or didn't know they needed.
 - A welcome back soft launch is being planned for the public the week of July 14.
- The Children's Room revamp continues with an adhesive magnetic white board attached to a side of the wall to allow for STEAM oriented things for older children - such as a magnetic marble run toy fixtures.

Adult School

- The summer session started out strong with registration during the first three weeks surpassing last summer's entire session by over 3%. Revenue is already up by almost 29%.

Adult Services Programs

- Making History Together: Sharing the Immigrant Experience in Montclair, funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities' Community History program with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, was launched in June. Montclair residents whose families immigrated to the United States in the last 60 years are invited to contribute their stories to the project.
 - Hosting Making Montclair Home: Story Sharing and Writing Workshop, Sunday, July 13.
- In collaboration with the MILL (Montclair Institute for Lifelong Learning) Friday June programming for older adults continues to be strong with up to 177 attendees.
- ESL for Beginners continued through June.
- Adult Services hosted Don't Tell Comedy, a pop-up comedy show, with 120 attendees.

Youth Services

- The Summer Reading Kickoff took place on July 1 with 82 participants. In addition to signing children and teens up for the reading program, audiences enjoyed the Bubble, Comedy and Music Show, magician Islandmagic. Tweens and teens had fun playing in a gaming truck.
- Four wonderful teen volunteers from Montclair High School's Career Internship Programs helped the Library with several tasks ranging from weeding the children's

collection, creating flyers, making promotional videos and social media book talk videos, and decorating the Children's floor with vibrant and imaginative art.

- Reading Specialist Gina Chung Fortt reported a marked increase in Book a Reading Specialist reservations and greater overall interest from parents (and even one child who booked themselves for a consultation!). The word is getting out!

Montclair Walk & Read

Library Literacy Specialist Gina Chung Fortt, Elly Meeks from the Judy Weston Garden at Watchung Park, and I invested several months to plan for an expanded summer storywalk experience. Four storywalks have been installed in each of the four wards.

The kickoff, on the rain date of June 11, took place in Watchung Park and featured author Sylvia Chen and Montclair dignitaries, including Library Board President JoAnn McCullough, Mayor Baskerville, and Township Councilors Birmingham and D' Amato.

Community & Outreach

- Montclair Pride: The library table featured button making, book lists, resources, and giveaways. 419 people visited us!
- Community-Wide Juneteenth Celebration: located in Nishuane Park, 128 people visiting the library table.
- 4th of July Parade: Tim Flowers drove the van while staff walked in the parade and gave out patriotic necklaces.
- The etuk is temporarily out of commission due to unknown reasons. Tim Flowers is working on finding local repair service.
- MFEE (Montclair Federation of Educational Excellence) has offered to train Library Social Worker Margarette Ouji on how to help families apply for free lunch. MFEE has a grant to work one-on-one with families; Margarette will facilitate signups at the library.

Schools

- The etuk visited Renaissance Middle School on July 17 for their afterschool Pride Picnic, 71 students stopped by to make buttons.
- Youth Services staff completed six visits to schools promoting summer reading and reached almost 2000 children.

Staff

- The BCCLS Scholarship Committee awarded the Robert W. White Memorial Scholarship to Cindy Walker, part-time Library Assistant in Borrower Services. Cindy is almost done earning her MLIS degree.
- The Library is hiring a full-time Marketing and Communications lead that will report to Radwa.
- Second interviews will take place soon for the part-time Library Assistant at the Bellevue Ave. Branch.

Library Director Report: Radwa Ali

Building & Security

- HVAC:
 - The 3rd floor is officially cool as of 7/18!
 - Sandor is attempting a hail mary repair to the Liebert unit in the server room.
 - HVAC maintenance proposal from Sandor received and needs assessing.
- BAB:
 - Electrical issues. A light fixture blew on 7/16 and started a small fire. Fire dept responded and gave the all clear after the fixture was removed. No other damage, however they experienced a power outage late 7/19. Emergency electrical services were scheduled to be here morning of 7/21 to assess.
- Cleaning Bid:
 - Publicized and to be opened on Aug 6th.
- Energy Auction:
 - Our energy supply contract is up at the end of the month
 - Buildings & Grounds committee met on 6/25 with representatives from National Energy Network to discuss options and we came to the conclusion that a Hybrid approach (a contract in which 8 of the 11 components of fixed contract remain fixed, but the remaining three are passed through and billed true cost, thereby eliminating paying the premium for unknown component costs while still providing budget certainty and rate protection). The auction will take place likely this week and based on the committee's assessment, we'll select the lowest long term rate available to us.

Operations

- Finance:
 - 2024 Audit: Draft completed and awaiting Finance Committees's check.
 - Quickbooks Online migration to occur in August, the month we don't have a board meeting
 - Quickbooks Made Easy will provide migration services, tech support, and ongoing training for finance staff
 - Signed on to Precoro, a cloud-based software that connects to Quickbooks Online and streamline purchase approvals, expense tracking for all departments, automates some of the PO processing and vendor management.
- Policies:
 - Code of Conduct legal review complete
- Tech/Operations:
 - Phone System: researching
 - HR CRM: researching

Misc

- Visited Maplewood Library with Mayor Baskerville, Foundation staff, and Adult School staff
- Upcoming: August 7th PSEG "giant check" presentation!

Cafe

- No official communication from NJEDA, however Danny Davidow indicates positive outlook

BCCLS Guest Report - Darlene Swistock

Darlene Swistock presented an overview of BCCLS resources for the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees, Foundation and Friends groups.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Resolution #25-42 To Authorize Energy Auction Participation And Execution Of Supply Agreement For Electricity With National Energy Network

Brian Clarkson moved to approve Resolution #25-42 to Authorize Energy Auction Participation and Execution of Supply Agreement for Electricity with National Energy Network and Lilian Ferguson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously

Approval of Code of Conduct & Appeals Policy

After a lengthy discussion about the Code of Conduct & Appeals Policy the board decided to refer it back to the library's attorney for clarification on key points. Currently there is a policy in place. The policy will be presented at the September meeting.

Public Comment:

Cordelia shared lighting information for Bellevue Avenue Branch Library.
Music Mondays are going well at BAB despite an issue with two problem patrons.

Adjournment:

At 9:00 p.m. Brian Clarkson moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Geoffrey Borshof seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.