

**Minutes of the October 20, 2025
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2206th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, October 20, 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 a Hybrid meeting was posted on the Library website.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: JoAnn McCullough, Presiding, Theodore Graham, Andrew Silver, Brian Clarkson, Geoffrey Borshof, Tamar Campbell and Diana Lunin

Board Members Absent: Lilian Ferguson and Erika Pierce

Library Staff Present: Director Radwa Ali, Recording Secretary Linda Welch, Marketing Kaitlyn Flannagan

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the September 15, 2025 regular meeting stood approved. Brian Clarkson made the motion and Theodore Graham 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 #25-47 Pre-Approving Bills and Payables due between the October 20, 2025 and November 17, 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.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Montclair Public Library Foundation - *Jared Miller*

Little Read

The Foundation provided support to library staff in pivoting to a school-visit model for much of the Little Read activities this year, to meet the needs of the Montclair Public Schools.

By the Numbers

- 70 Guest Readers read more than 100 books
- Visits to 31 classes at 8 schools, reaching 512 children

- 8 Little Read sessions at the Library, reaching 270 children
- Little Read Big Jamboree at the Library on Friday Night with 206 attendees
- \$6,850 in sponsorship raised for Children & Youth programs and collections

Annual Appeal

The Foundation's Annual Appeal will launch on November 1 and continue through the end of the calendar year. Both the local and national landscape pose challenges, with increased taxes almost a certainty given the school deficit crisis in Montclair. Many families have already been feeling the pinch of higher prices for groceries, energy costs, and other necessities. We've seen sponsorship by local businesses decrease as they've been impacted by tariffs and lower sales, and institutional (grant) support has become incredibly competitive in the wake of vast Federal dis-investment in communities.

The Foundation hopes to raise more than \$200,000 during the 9 week appeal, and there is a strong argument to be made that the resources and services the library provides are more important than ever as more and more families face limited resources. We will need the participation of every stakeholder in getting the word out about the value of the library and its role in our community.

Board Retreat

On Saturday, the Foundation Board participated in a strategic planning retreat facilitated by Library Strategies. Radwa laid out an inspiring vision for the future of the Montclair Public Library, and Foundation Board members were energized and engaged as they began to articulate goals and priorities for the coming years. It is an exciting time to be a support organization for MPL! We know that great things lie ahead.

Montclair Library Friends: *None*

Friends of the Bellevue Avenue Library: *None*

Library Director Report: *Radwa Ali*

Building & Security

- HVAC:
 - BMS controls in place. Training for facilities staff on 10/17
 - HVAC maintenance proposals from Sander and Elliot Lewis. Recommend Sander despite the higher price.
- Cleaning Bid:
 - Recommendation is to reject all the bids. Resolution in packet. We've had a good experience so far with our own internal hire.

Operations

- Tech/Operations
 - In the switchover to the BCCLS network, 3 computers lost some data including the comptroller's. We've made one attempt to recover the data through an outside service that was unsuccessful. We're in discussion with another professional to evaluate as every indication is that the data is not gone, just hidden.
 - The new phone system is in place. The monthly bills don't start till the middle of next year.
- Finance:
 - Quickbooks Online migration and Precoro onboarding are in process. Slowed down because of the data loss. Lisa and Patty are commendable in their dedication and hard work on this.
- Policies:
 - Filming and Photography policy is next. The policy committee has reviewed a draft and will meet after the attorney's recommendations.
- Collections
 - Baker & Taylor has ceased operations. We're onboarding with Ingram and dusting off our Brodart account. Even in normal times, onboarding with all the processing requirements can take weeks, so we're gonna be seeing a LOT more amazon orders for a while.
 - Amazon has their own requisition controls system that I've initiated with staff authorized to purchase books and supplies. Purchases must be approved before orders go through, but this is a much more efficient way for staff to purchase books in a timely manner.
- Health Benefits: the township is passing a resolution on 10/21 to exit all employees, including the library, from the state health benefits plan (SHBP). Costs were about to jump 36% in a single year. The new plan will be self-insured and is projected to increase costs by 18-20%. This will take effect on January 1st.
- 2026 Budget: preliminary draft in board packet. No official discussions with township or foundation yet so the income streams may and will likely change.

CAFE

- No communication from NJEDA since 9/12 submission of bylaws and 2024 annual report.
- Our consultant has been in contact with NJEDA staff. Based on that conversation:
 - NJEDA is moving slowly. They have added a January board meeting so they can review CAFE applications between November and January.
 - They may not begin evaluating ours until December.
 - No action is required from us at this time.

- NJEDA expects to have further back-and-forth with us on clarifications, including township involvement and operations.

Community / Programming / Initiatives Highlights

- Library Card Design Contest – We're having fun with a design contest this year to engage the community. 3 "limited edition" cards will be created after submissions and community voting is complete.
- The Jazz Library (Oct 12)
- Banned Books Week (Oct 5-11)
- Little Read (Oct 14–17)
- Filming at the library (Oct 18)
- Halloween (Oct 31) - Full day of activities (11 a.m.–5:30 p.m.) featuring crafts, a haunted space, plaza treats, and a costume contest.

Adult School

- Class revenue from the start of the ASM Fall 2025 session to its eighth week (Oct. 13) has already exceeded totals for the entire Fall 2024 term. (\$49,453.51 vs. \$38,815)
- Individual registrations from the start of the ASM Fall 2025 session to its eighth week (Oct. 13) has already exceeded totals for the entire Fall 2024 term. (949 vs. 904)
- More than 40 registered students joined an Adult School bus trip to the Hudson Valley on Wednesday, Oct. 15. We strolled through Beacon for a browsing tour of its boutiques, craft stores and restaurants and then boarded a boat at Newburgh to cruise up the Hudson River.
- Registrations are high for our Dec. 4 trip to the New York Botanical Gardens for its Holiday Train Show. We are nearing our planned class limit of 35 students.
- We successfully offered a second edition of our "La Placita" poetry, music and storytelling showcase of Latino voices in recognition of Latin American Heritage Month. There are approximately 25 people in attendance.
- We added an additional Mah Jongg class to our Fall schedule and overwhelming demand is spurring plans for a regular open play game at the library and at least one or two additional classes in our Winter session.
- New classes that performed well include Professional Life Design and Mission Crafting, Make and Take Your Own Pasta and Wine Confidence: Understand the Basics.

Borrower Services

- For most of 2025 our circ totals have been slightly less than 2024 numbers, but as of August and September they are up. This is both in terms of items in our collection that have circulated, and items that were checked out at MPL.

- BCCLS policy and procedure committee revamped their library to library billing rules (paying for items lost by patrons from other towns) - too complicated to spell out here but it will make things much easier in the future!
- As you know, we will be making a lot of Library of Things purchases soon, partially to replenish consumable parts and repair broken items, but I think mostly to get some new toys in!
- Pokémon club run by yours truly has started up again. It's once a month during the school year on the second Wednesday. There is actually a new Pokémon game coming out tonight at midnight (!!!) so I expect the next few sessions to be pretty packed from all the renewed interest.
- Gio has started his Dungeons and Dragons program, which is once a month on Saturdays

Adult Services

Programming:

- Monthly Highlights:
 - MILL/MPL Senior Fridays attendees
 - 9/12=149; 9/19=126 ;9/26=57
 - Tax Prep with United Way on 9/17; 4 attendees
 - Warming Wednesdays: 9/10= 12, 9/17=12, 9/24=8 attendees
 - Kool off with Koko: 9/3=12 attendees
 - Book Clubs
 - Silent Book Club (Kiera)=3 attendees
 - Teachable Moments Book Club (Adrienne)=8 attendees
 - Queer Lit Book Club (non-staff presenter)=6 attendees
 - Charu Suri: A Raga Jazz Evening presented on 9/18 as part of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities project; 80 attendees

Information Literacy:

- Book-A-Librarian appointments= 4
 - Formatting a document for Kindle, adding images
 - Help with Phone apps

Local History:

- Continuation of New Jersey Community History (New Jersey Council for the Humanities) project
 - Tracy was asked to participate on New Jersey Council for the Humanities Community Advisory Board for 2026 cohort

Youth Services

- We received a donation of 22 manga One Piece books by Eiichiro Oda. This series is extremely popular with a value of about \$375.
- Medical professionals from [Stop the Bleed](#) presented a first aid workshop to 21 teens. They taught how to apply pressure to and pack a wound, and how to apply a tourniquet. Teens received volunteer credit as part of attending.
- Raising Readers weekly Thursday Storytime has had weekly attendance of at least 40+ patrons.
- YS Staff visited 11 Montclair Public schools Back To School Nights. 547 interactions total + requests for library cards which were then delivered by the Reading Specialist.
- Gina has held 5 Book a Reading Specialist consultations since Sept., meeting with 9 people total. She has helped patrons know which materials to check out from the library, as well as demonstrated various literacy activities to try at home.
- Little Read: Montclair Public Library & Montclair Public Library Foundation organized: 22 offsite Montclair Public School visits, 9 onsite visits to MPL & BAB and read collectively to 512 children. The Little Read Big Jamboree had a successful turnout of 205 attendees (about 140 children). Our offsite visits were initiated by Montclair Public Schools news that they could not send children to MPL this year. We pivoted and organized our hybrid onsite/offsite approach in coordination with Montclair Public School administrators. Little Read was successful due to the hard work of Gina Chung Fortt, Deivis Garcia, Mary Packer, Kelly Ziek, Gina Scalise, Radwa Ali, Kaitlyn Flanagan, Enola Romano, Tilly Williams, Tim Flowers, Daisy Lorenzo, Jeff Harrison, Manily Jenkins and many others.

Bellevue Branch

- We have all been chipping away at small projects – be it going through all our various toys, supplies, craft supplies and so on to make BAB less cluttered and functioning better. The classroom is really coming together!!!
- With B&T having closed, we have begun reviewing holds reports, NYT best seller lists and Kirkus reviews and putting together lists of new materials to acquire for the collection!
- In addition to reviewing what we'd like to add to the collection we have been utilizing reports and CollectionHQ reports to weed and remove materials that have poor circulation.
- Children's program attendance has dipped a bit since school has started up again but we are thinking up some new/soon-to-be ongoing weekly programming. We will be linking up with Ruby for a teen craft in December and Gina CF for a tandem program for parents to meet with a craft for kiddos at the same time to discuss literacy.

- The staff made a personalized staff pic name plate that evokes or lists the type of books each reads and thus would be recommended for our staff pic display in Canva. Professional development!! Picture below. Come see!

Kaitlyn Flannagan, Marketing and Communications Lead

Kaitlyn presented an overview of the Marketing and Communications Department including:

- Library Card Design Contest
- Jazz Library Opening
- Banned Books Week Oct 5-11
- Importance of community partnerships and outreach
- Future Hopes
 - we hope it will continue pushing us towards our goals in coming months and years
 - Plan to bring some design and branding expertise to staff by helping to streamline their processes with templates, skill share tutorial meetings, etc.

Old Business:

HVAC Service Agreement

The Library received HVAC maintenance proposals from Sander and Elliot Lewis. Theodore Graham moved to accept the HVAC Maintenance Proposal from Sander and Brian Clarkson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #2025-48 Rejecting All Bids Received for Bid 25-01: Cleaning and Janitorial Services

Theodore Graham moved to Approve Resolution #2025-48 Rejecting All Bids Received for Bid 25-01: Cleaning and Janitorial Services and Brian Clarkson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously

New Business:

2026 Hours of Operations, Holiday Closings & Board of Trustees Meeting Dates

	<u>Hours of Operations</u>	
	<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
Thursday, January 1, 2026 Official public Holiday. All libraries closed.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, January 19, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

President's Day
Monday, February 16, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Easter
Sunday, April 5, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Memorial Day
Monday, May 25 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Juneteenth
Friday, June 19, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Independence Day
day Friday, July 3, 2026 In Observance of Independence
Saturday July 4, 2026 All libraries closed
Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Labor Day
Monday, September 7, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Thanksgiving Holiday
Wednesday, November 25, 2026 The Library will close at 2 pm.
Thursday, November 26, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed

Christmas
Thursday, December 24, 2026 All Libraries closed
Friday, December 25, 2026 Official public holiday. All libraries closed.

New Year's Holiday (2026/2027)
Thursday, December 31 2026 All Libraries closed
Friday, January 1, 2027 Official public holiday. All libraries closed.

The Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees 2026 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 12*	Schedule adjusted due to Martin Luther King Day
February 9*	Schedule adjusted due to President's Day
March 16	April 20 May 18 June 15 July 20
August	No Meeting
September 21	October 19 November 16

December No Meeting

Theodore Graham moved to adopt the 2026 Hours of Operation, Holiday Hours and Board of Trustees Schedule and Andrew Silver second. The motion was carried unanimously.

2026 Budget Introduction [NO ACTION]

Iovino Architectural Services Proposal - October 2025 [NO ACTION]

Nominating Committee Report:

Members of the Nominating Committee are Tamar Campbell, Chair, Diana Lunin and Lilian Ferguson.

The proposed slate for the 2026 Executive Board will be presented at the November 17 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:

Youth Services Librarian Ruby Williamson stated that the Board Meeting minutes are not posted on the website.

Library Director Radwa Ali reminded attendees that the Imani Gala honoring JoAnn McCullough is scheduled for November 13.

Adjournment:

At 8:50 p.m. Theodore Graham moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Brian Clarkson seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.