

**Minutes of the November 17, 2025
Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting**

The 2207th meeting of the Montclair Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Monday, November 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with New Jersey Law.

The meeting was called to order by President JoAnn McCullough at 7:09 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 A 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, Lilian Ferguson, Tamar Campbel and Diana Lunin

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

Library Staff Present: Director Radwa Ali, Recording Secretary Linda Welch, Bellevue Avenue Branch Manager Gina Scalise and Marketing & Public Relations Kaitlyn Flannagan

Library Card Design Contest Winners Award Presentation

The winners of Montclair Public Library's 2025 card design contest were honored at Monday's Board of Trustees meeting. Each winner received an official proclamation, a certificate recognizing their achievement signed by Radwa Ali and JoAnn McCullough, as well as a framed version of their card design. Each winning design will be featured on a limited-edition library card which will be available beginning in December.

Presentation of Resolutions for Edward Robin and Ilmar Vanderer

The Board of Trustees celebrated Edward Robin's 90th Birthday with cake and cookies. Edward Robin and Ilmar Vanderer are retiring from their positions in the Library support organizations. The Board of Trustees took this occasion to express its deepest gratitude and respect to Edward Robin and Ilmar Vanderer for their years of dedicated service.

Resolution #25-52 Honoring Edward Robin

Theodore Graham moved to accept the Resolution #25-52 Honoring Edward Robin and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution #25-53 Honoring Ilmar Vanderer

Theodore Graham moved to accept the Resolution #25-53 Honoring Ilmar Vanderer and Tamar Campbell seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the October 20, 2025 regular meeting stood approved. Andrew Silver made the motion and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Presidents' Report:

JoAnn McCullough reported that:

- The Policy Committee was held on October 31.
- The Finance Committee was held on November 5.
- The Executive Committee was held on November 10.
- The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2026.

Treasurer's Report:

Lisa Connell presented the Treasurer's Report:

Andrew Silver moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-49 approving the Bills and Payables between the September 15, 2025 and November 17, 2025 Board of Trustees meetings be approved and the itemized summary be made part of the minutes and Tamar Campbell seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Andrew Silver moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-50 pre-approving Bills and Payables due between the November 17, 2025 and January 12, 2026 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.

Andrew Silver moved for the adoption of Resolution #25-51 Approving the September and October 2025 Bank Reconciliation Statements and Diana Lunin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports from Support Organizations:

Montclair Public Library Foundation - Emily Hagen

Annual Appeal

The Montclair Public Library Foundation's Annual Appeal is underway. Our Annual Fund currently stands at \$85,098 toward our \$275,000 goal, including over \$14,000 received since the Appeal launched on November 1.

This year, the Foundation is trying something new. From December 4 (National Cookie Day) through December 31, 25% of cookie box sales made through our dedicated Chip City link will support the Montclair Public Library Foundation.

Grants

Partners for Health Foundation awarded a \$15,000 grant to support *Keys to Housing: A Tenant Education* project. These funds match an earlier grant from the NJ State Bar Foundation and will be used to create a multilingual, multimedia toolkit on New Jersey housing laws and tenants' rights.

The Foundation is awaiting decisions on 10+ submitted grant applications and remains hopeful for updates on several more before year-end.

Montclair Library Friends: None

Friends of the Bellevue Avenue Library: None

Library Director Report: *Radwa Ali*

Building & Security

- HVAC: Sandor Contract executed. Elliot Lewis contract cancelled.
- Front Doors: a potentially large expense coming up once we get quotes to fix the front doors of the main library.
- Bodycams: Security/facilities has requested bodycams to assist with documentation of behavioral incidents in which they intervene. Ordered.

Operations

- Tech and Operations:
 - Missing files recovered by outside consultant, Eric Lozauskas
 - Purchasing a google workspace backup service to comply with JIF Cybersecurity requirements
 - In talks with Eric Lozauskas to consult on a regular basis while our Technology Specialist is away
 - Volunteer Program: will be revamped as library takes over management of key Friends Steering Committee areas (OBOM ushers, welcomed desk, etc)
 - Selected for Digital Navigation Corps initiative – we'll be getting a FT equivalent Americorps technology assistant in 2026, funded by the NJ State Library and Literacy Minnesota
- Policies:
 - Filming and Photography policy in board packet.
 - Code of Conduct amendment request to Section D: Inappropriate Use of Space & Facilities
 - “Wearing ski masks, balaclavas, or other facial coverings that conceal one’s identity, except when worn for religious observance or medical necessity. Staff may ask patrons to briefly lower a face covering for identification or safety purposes.”
- Collections: Ingram account set up and full implementation expected in January
- Health Benefits: 34% increase. Info session by iMAC insurance agency on 11/11/25 for library staff.
- 2026 Budget: Expecting \$350k rather than \$515k in discretionary funding next year

CAFE

- 10/23 Communication: “The Authority will be retaining a third-party consultant to supplement the review and evaluation of the application.” No communication since. Danny’s estimate is this could cost \$30k.
- 2 applicants were awarded in November: Liberty Science Center (Jersey City...\$39.8 million) and Mayo Performing Arts Center (Morristown...\$65 million). Total of \$104.8 million.
- Meeting on 11/21 with Township CFO & Finance Committee, Board & Foundation treasurer

Personnel

- Youth Services: Thressa Irvington hired PT
- Adult Services: making an offer this week for PT
- Adult School: made an offer
- Maurice Boyer, Gina Scalise, Deivis Garcia completed BCCLS LAMP supervisory training

Outreach/Community

- Weekly storytimes at Lackawanna Plaza (Lattes and Littles)
- “Sign up and Skate” Library card sign up initiative & partnership with Clary Anderson Arena
- \$15,000 grant to support *Keys to Housing: A Tenant Education project*. \$30k total!

Adult School

- Adult School is on track to finish Winter 2026 course planning this week.
- We have settled on a candidate to fill the vacant Programming Assistant position that was formerly held by Kaitlyn Flannagan.
- Adult School has fully spent grant funds for 2025 that were awarded under the Essex County Local Arts Grant. Maurice Boyer and Kelly Ziek will be collaborating on the final report required under the grant's terms.
- Adult School will be collaborating with Adult Services and Youth Services to create programming with funds from the recently awarded 2026 Essex County Local Arts Program Grant. The classes and programs will be presented under the banner of "100 Years of Black History: Honoring the African Diaspora."
- Adult School tuition and class fee revenue for 2025 is on track to surpass the 2024 total by more than 50 percent. (approximately \$178,421 vs. approximately \$117,466).

Borrower Services

- October 2025 circ was higher than October 2024
- New passport agents bring the total to 15 agents at Main.
- MSU is part of ReBL meaning students get more access to all public libraries in Essex County.

- New library cards with patron-made designs are being ordered, should come in soon

Adult Services

Programming Highlights:

- MILL/MPL Senior Fridays attendance: Total= 721
- Book Clubs= Silent Book Club=5 attendees, Everything Book Club= 17 attendees- “1984” for Banned Books Week programming; Queer Lit Club (non-staff presenter)=3 attendees
- Ellie Lee Jazz Quartet: Live performance, as part of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities Community History project; 36 attendees

Information Literacy:

- Book-A-Librarian appointments= 4
 - Help with Phone apps, email

Local History:

- Continuation and formal of New Jersey Community History Project (New Jersey Council for the Humanities) project.

Social Worker:

- Appointments= 12 patrons served
- Continuation of Warming Wednesdays
 - Attendance: Total=65
 - 2025 NJ State Bar Foundation Grant Award
 - MPL Foundation applied for additional \$15K to assist with implementation

Youth Services

- The Haunted Woods: Halloween at the Library was a successful inaugural Halloween daylong celebration collectively run by the Youth & Teen Services Department and volunteers.
- All Our Voices Instructional Videos: Justin Kontonicolau, Teen Librarian from Ridgewood Public Library (formerly of MPL) reached out to Deivis for advice and resources for ordering children’s books in world languages. As a result of this conversation, she offered to create an additional set of 4 short videos describing MPL’s resources (with topics like “What Can A Library Do For Me and My Family?”, “How Do I Get a Library Card?”) in the Filipino Tagalog language.

Bellevue Branch Update - *Gina Scalise*

- BAB staff is attending a BCCLS led cataloging training on Tuesday 11/18.
- Gina completed LAMP committee's supervisory training
- Had staff meeting on 11/6
 - assigned weeding teams
 - updated opening and closing procedures (with demonstrations)

- updates on purchasing books via amazon (for 2025) and ingram for (2026)
- In December and January, Ally and Gina will begin cross training at the main branch - the rest of BAB staff will have main/cross training in the coming months.

Executive Session

At 8:45 p.m. the Board of Trustees entered Executive Session.

At 9:30 p.m. the Board of Trustees returned to Regular Session.

Old Business:

Resolution #25-54 Approving the 2026 Budget

Theodore Graham moved to accept the Resolution #25-54 Approving the 2026 Budget and Andrew Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Nominating Committee Report

Thamar Campbell presented the proposed slate of officers for 2026 that will be presented at the January 12 meeting.

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

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

In accordance with the By-Laws Theodore Graham moved to appoint Linda Welch as Recording Secretary to the Board of Trustees and Thamar Campbell second. The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business:

Resolution #25-55 Photography & Filming Policy

Diana Lunin moved to accept the Resolution #25-55 Photography & Filming Policy and Andrew Silver seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

Code of Conduct

Theodore Graham made a motion to amend the Code of Conduct to include the banning of ski masks, balaclavas, or other facial coverings that conceal one's identity, except when worn for religious observance or medical necessity and Diana Lunin second. The motion was carried unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

At 9:50 p.m. JoAnn McCullough moved to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting and Theodore Graham seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.