

Middlesex Public Library
1300 Mountain Avenue
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting on September 13, 2021

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Middlesex Library Board of Trustees was held in the Library Community Room on Monday, September 13, 2021. James Benson, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Announcement of Compliance with Open Public Meeting Law

The President read the announcement of the meeting in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law. (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6) stating that notice of the meeting has been published in the Home News and the Star Ledger and has been posted on the Library public bulletin board.

Roll Call of Members

X – Represents member present at meeting

X James Benson, President
X Emily DeScenza, Vice President
X Melissa Fedosh, Treasurer
X Susen Edwards, Secretary
X Mary Lou Johnson, Member at Large
 Cathy Ferris, Member at Large
X Beverly Weber, Member at Large
 Barbara Ferris, Representative of the Superintendent of Schools
X Dina Healey, Representative of the Mayor
X Christine George, Library Director

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting(s)

A motion to approve the minutes of the Board meeting held on July 26, 2021 was made by Beverly Weber and seconded Mary Lou Johnson. All were in favor.

Reports of Officers

President Benson commended Director George on the outstanding job she and her “helpers” did following the flooding of the library Community Room by Hurricane Ida. The Director did a great cleanup job and was aided by two other Borough employees, Caroline Benson and Darcy Delvecchio, who were both off from work due to Borough Hall being closed. It is a credit to the Director on the great working relationship she has developed with the other department heads.

Financial Report/Payment of Bills

Bills that arose since the last board meeting were reviewed. Director George reported that she has confirmed that this is the final bill from Optimum. A motion for a resolution to pay the bills was made by Melissa Fedosh and seconded by Emily DeScenza. All were in favor.

The following resolution was passed: **“WHEREAS, the attached bills and claims against the Free Public Library of the Borough of Middlesex have been examined and audited by the Treasurer of the Library, NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Free Public Library of the Borough of Middlesex and the Trustees thereof that the attached bills and claims are hereby approved for payment.”**

The monthly Financial Report was reviewed and all seemed in order. The Director reported that the balances in some line items were getting very low, but that overall we should have enough funds to meet our obligations.

The Director also reported that the work on the Meditation Garden is basically done. All that is left is a plaque and an appropriate quote for the plaque. The funds in the Meditation Garden account have been expended except for \$819.57. It had been previously agreed that the remaining money would be transferred to the Borough to help cover the costs of materials that they bought. A motion was made by Melissa Fedosh and seconded by Mary Lou Johnson to transfer this amount to the borough and to close the account for the Meditation Garden. All were in favor.

Circulation Report

Director George provided the Circulation Report for the latest period. Overall numbers are up significantly. Of special note is the increase total circulation for July and August compared to the same period in 2019 (pre-Covid). ILL numbers are up and even new users are showing a steady increase. Overall everything is looking very positive.

Director's Report

Director George presented her monthly report the operation of the Library. See the Director's Report for details. A few of the highlights are listed below:

1. There was significant flooding and water damage in the Community Room. Details will follow.
2. There is no longer an issue with staffing of the W/P on Saturdays now that the W/P has been moved to the Circulation Desk area due to the flooding of the Community Room.
3. The new State Librarian visited our library as part of her statewide tour of NJ libraries. This was the first time we have ever had the State Librarian visit our library. She had many complimentary things to say about our facility and the outside grounds.
4. The Director updated us on the mask policy and the Board decided to keep the current mask protocols in place.
5. The Director reported that she is still not comfortable with opening more computers for public use at this time. The Board agreed since she is in the best position to know.
6. The Board reviewed the Children's Report, the Adult Reference Report and the Marketing/Community Outreach Report. All 3 reports were very informative and it appears the Adult Summer Reading Raffle was very popular and very successful.

COMMUNITY ROOM DAMAGE REPORT

The water that damaged the Community Room did not come up from the river behind the library. It was due to the heavy rainfall and the water came down from the higher elevation of the library south parking lot, down the front sidewalk, under the front entrance doors into the lobby. The entire lobby floor was covered and the water went under the two doors to the Community Room to the carpeting. The carpeting was saturated and then the water was wicked up through the wallboard, damaging the lower portions of the wallboard, baseboard and wallpaper. The tiles at the front of the room were also damaged.

The Director advised the Borough Administrator and the insurance carrier was notified. The insurance carrier advised us to contact SERVPRO for a damage assessment. A rep from SERVPRO came and inspected the damage and reported that all of the carpeting and tile in the Community Room will have to be removed along with substantial portions of the lower walls in the foyer and Community Room. Demolition will begin tomorrow, 9/14/21. SERVPRO estimated the cost for their work will be \$8,600 with half due up front. The Director made arrangements with the Borough to have this paid as well as the balance.

The insurance adjuster came today and agreed with SERVPRO's assessment.

Once the demolition is complete then we will have to get estimates from some contractors for the actual repair work.

In addition, it was noted and discussed that the main cause of the problem is the water that comes down the hill from the parking lot. We have had minor flooding in the past and we have brought this to the attention of the Borough for many, many years. Chrissy met with the Borough Administrator and it was agreed that the Borough will get their engineering firm to come and examine the problem and come up with a long-term solution. Because of the potential costs and the need for funding, this may take many, many months to resolve.

At this time it is impossible to determine how long and to what degree the Community Room will be out of service.

Committee Reports

Sunshine Committee. The Director reported that the library employee who is out on maternity leave had a baby girl on August 23rd. Mother and baby are both doing fine. Beverly Weber will follow up.

Finance Committee. President Benson reported that if the new Financial Management Policy is adopted tonight, the Finance Committee will play a bigger role in the management of our finances. He appointed Melissa Fedosh, as Treasurer, to the committee and asked for two more volunteers. If necessary, he will make appointments to the committee to ensure we have a functioning committee.

Friends of the Library Report

Friends President, Susen Edwards, attended the meeting via Zoom her report was given by Beverly Weber.

The Friends had a business meeting on August 13. Eleven people attended. All are looking forward to getting back in the volunteer mode.

They decided to sponsor a chair yoga program in the Fall, but now that may not be possible depending on the use of the Community Room.

They discussed the possibility of having a table at the Food Truck Festival on Oct. 9th. Susen is checking with the Rec Department about reserving a table.

The Friends are also in favor of sponsoring a children's program. Susen and Beverly met with the Director to discuss the program. That too, may be affected by the damage to the Community Room.

The Friends will be hosting Vinnie Bruno for a Zoom program, "The Beatle Solo Years", on Sunday, November 7th at 3:00PM. It is a 90-minute program.

Unfinished Business

There was no Unfinished Business to be discussed.

New Business

The Community Room flooding was already reported on and discussed.

The President reported that he, Chrissy and Dina have been working on a Financial Management Policy, which is sorely needed and recommended by auditors in the past. A policy has been developed and was emailed to the Board earlier in the week for their review. A motion to adopt the proposed policy was made by Beverly Weber and seconded by Emily DeScenza. All were in favor.

President Benson reported that he and Chrissy have been working on updating the Personnel Policy and were making really good progress until Ida hit. He hopes to have a revised policy ready for Board approval by the November meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public discussion.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Mary Lou Johnson and seconded by Dina Healey for the Board to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing some personnel matters. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm on a motion made by Emily DeScenza and seconded by Melissa Fedosh. All were in favor.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 7:00 pm. There may be a change in location depending on the condition of the Community Room.

Respectfully submitted,

James L. Benson

James L. Benson, for Susen Edwards Secretary
September 13, 2021

NOTE: These minutes will be available to the public for inspection and/or copying once they are approved at a subsequent Board meeting.