

Middlesex Public Library  
1300 Mountain Avenue  
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting on February 15, 2022

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Middlesex Library Board of Trustees was held in the Community Room of the Library on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. 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 (attended on Zoom)
- X Emily DeScenza, Vice-President
- X Melissa Fedosh, Treasurer
- X Susen Edwards, Secretary
- X Mary Lou Johnson, Member At Large
- X Beverly Weber, Member At Large
- X Dina Healey, Member At Large
- Barbara Ferris, Representative of the Superintendent of Schools
- X Dave Oliver, Representative of the Mayor
- X Christine George, Library Director
- X Edward Johnson, Board Attorney

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting(s)

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous Board meeting held on January 10, 2022, was made by Dave Oliver and seconded by Emily DeScenza. All were in favor.

Reports of Officers

President Benson made inquiries as to the length of terms for the Mayor's Representative and Superintendent of School's Representative. Both representatives serve at the pleasure of the individual who appointed them or until that individual is no longer in office.

President Benson also made inquiries regarding the payment of utility bills. Often the bills don't get paid on time because the Board doesn't have the opportunity to approve the bill before its due date. The State informed him that utility bills are an exception to the rule, and can be paid when they come in, provided the Board votes to approve the bills at the next meeting.

Treasurer Melissa Fedosh reported that we only have eleven members in the Unity Bank's U-Care program. Fifteen members are needed to take advantage of the program.

### Financial Report/Payment of Bills

Bills that arose since the last Board meeting and current payments for this month and last were reviewed and approved.

A check in the amount of \$575.53 was paid to Director George to reimburse her for: \$378 yearly fee to Constant Contact, \$47.32 for Library supplies, \$86.33 for public programs, and \$63.88 for space heaters for the Community Room.

Both January and February maintenance fees were paid to Ace-Walco Termite and Pest Control. Two bills were also paid to Approved Fire Protection Company. One was for the yearly inspection of the range hood in the Community Room kitchen. The other was for the yearly inspection of the Library.

No other unusual expenses were noted.

A motion for a resolution to pay the bills was made by Susen Edwards and seconded by Beverly Weber. 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.”

A February 2022 Monthly Budget Report was provided to Board Members. Director George noted that the Library has purchased a large amount of toner which accounted for the expenditure in Library Supplies. She expects to save some money in Payroll as no Children's Librarian has been in place for January and February.

The Library Reserve and Fines Accounts are in good shape at this time.

### Circulation Report

Director George gave the circulation report through the end of January 2022. See the Circulation Report for details.

Circulation is down for the month, which is expected at this time of year. Overdrive has seen a significant increase, indicating more patrons are using the service for digital magazines and e-books.

Fines are up for the month, in part due to a check from LMxAC for fines paid online.

Meeting room usage continues to be down due to Covid and flooding of the Community Room. Meeting Room A and the Community Room are open for Borough and Library group meetings but closed to outside groups. No children's programs were hosted in January.

### Director's Report

Director George presented the monthly report for February on the operation of the Library. See Director's Report for details.

1. All exit lights/signs have been updated. Circulation vestibule lights are still problematic. Bulbs were replaced and the situation is being monitored. Bulbs in the Library have been replaced. We are waiting for replacement bulbs for the Children's Library.
2. At the last Department Head meeting, the issue of awnings over our two entrances was discussed. Would we want HUD money for the project? President Benson said if the awnings/overhangs are protective, we would want them. If they are simply decorative, they are not necessary.
3. Director George reported the staff development half-day on February 4 was successful. The second session will be held on Friday, February 18. She asked the Board if the Library could close early so all staff can attend. The Board supported the early closure.
4. The collection of fines has resumed.
5. Director George has received paperwork for the 2019 audit which has not been completed. The Borough's new auditing firm will complete audits for 2019, 2020, and 2021. Funds have been set aside for all three years, but she needs approval from the Board to pay approximately \$8,000 for all three audits at once. Melissa Fedosh made a motion to approve one payment for three years of audits. Dave Oliver seconded the motion. All were in favor.
6. Director George reported she has hired a new Children's Librarian, Kayla Ward. She believes Kayla is a perfect fit and looks forward to her March 7 start date.
7. The New Jersey Health Connect Program has designated our Library as a hub for a new health care program and will be supplying us with free iPads based on the number of people we serve.

The iPads come with several health-related apps. Patrons can check out the iPads to use for their personal healthcare. At the end of the year, we can keep the iPads. The program is scheduled to begin in April.

8. The Library reopened on February 7. Most state libraries still require masking for employees and patrons. We will continue to require masking but will keep a close watch on the mask mandate which is scheduled to be lifted for schools in March.
9. We are now hosting three Zoom children's programs per week (rather than the five we were hosting). Attendance is up. We are also planning to rebuild Makerspace and add more diversity to the collection.
10. Even though we are now open to the public, walkup/pickup is still popular with patrons as is emailing documents for printing.
11. Social media platforms continue to be active with daily postings. A Vision Board Workshop was held in January and a meditation series is beginning in February. Grab and Go kits continue to be popular and are bringing new faces into our Library. Tutors are returning and patrons are using our computers. Social distancing is being maintained throughout.

#### Committee Reports

Beverly Weber mentioned that a Board Member had a surgical procedure. She will follow up with the member and send a cheer basket.

#### Friends of the Library Report

Friends President Susen Edwards reported that a Zoom program on Shipwrecks off the Jersey Shore will be presented by Richard Veit, PhD (Mary Ann Veit's son) on Sunday, February 27, at 3:00 pm. Gary Saretzky will present a Zoom program on 19th Century NJ Women Photographers on Sunday, March 20, at 3:00 pm. She is hoping to get the Friends involved in some community programs during the spring and summer.

#### Unfinished Business

FEMA has examined the damage to the Community Room as a result of Hurricane Ida. They will pay 75% of what we receive in insurance compensation (\$65,000) to put toward the outdoor building problems. The Borough is responsible for the remaining 25%. At this point we don't know how much it will cost to fix the outdoor problem. FEMA recommended the Borough engineer examine the situation and make a recommendation. The Community Room damage will not be fixed until the outdoor problem has been corrected.

The Community Room can be used once the HVAC system has been repaired/replaced.

President Benson and Director George originally believed our Personnel Policy could simply be updated, but now they realize we need a new document. When President Benson returns from Florida, he and Director George will look at the Borough Personnel Policy and see if it can be adapted to our needs.

The Union Contract has been signed by all parties.

#### New Business

Director George reported that we are on the seventh fix for the Community Room/Children's Room/Meeting Rooms HVAC systems. Each time the system works for 24 hours, then stops working. The systems have a life expectancy of fifteen years. We are at eighteen-plus years. Capital funds are in place to purchase new systems. She will speak to the Borough about releasing the funds and hopes to have the situation resolved in the next few months.

At the last Borough Council meeting Director George read a letter written and signed by all Borough department chairs expressing their positive feelings on the work Marcia Karrow, Borough Administrator, has done during her tenure. One or more Council members were offended by the letter, which led to a number of negative and unprofessional comments directed at Director George.

President Benson said the Mayor is supportive of the letter and staff, and believes in the right to free speech as stated in the First Amendment of the Constitution. President Benson asked the Board if the matter should be brought to either of our attorneys, Ed Johnson or Steve Glickman. Mr. Johnson, in attendance at the meeting, said it's an unfortunate and awkward situation but things seem to have calmed down. In his opinion, there is currently nothing to pursue.

#### Public Discussion

There was no Public Discussion.

#### Executive Session

There was no Executive Session

#### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m. on a motion made by Dina Healey and seconded by Melissa Fedosh. All were in favor.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Monday, March 14, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Susen Edwards  
Secretary  
February 17, 2022

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