

Middlesex Public Library
1300 Mountain Avenue
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting on May 13, 2024

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Middlesex Library Board of Trustees was held in the Community Room of the Library on Monday, May 13, 2024. James Benson, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:04 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's 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
- Barbara Ferris, Member At Large
- X Beverly Weber, Member At Large
- Dina Healey, Member At Large
- Erin Gomez, Representative of the Superintendent of Schools
- X Dave Oliver, Representative of the Mayor
- X Christine George, Library Director

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting(s)

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous Board meeting and the Executive Session, both held on April 8, 2024, was made by Dave Oliver and seconded by Beverly Weber. All were in favor.

Reports of Officers

President Benson acknowledged Board member, Beverly Weber, who has served on the Board since March 18, 1984. In her forty years in office, she has held several offices, and has been invaluable to the Library.

He also announced that the Collective Bargaining Agreement has been approved and the contract settled. Library employees have received their retroactive pay in separate checks.

President Benson referred members back to the September 18, 2023 Executive Session when a problem was discussed concerning Director George and Councilman Jeremiah Carnes. Not much progress has been made since that time. Mr. Carnes continues to call our Director “corrupt” and has expanded his accusations to Leonard Vidal, head of DPW, and Caroline Benson, CFO. His harassment continues, and now includes posts on a town Facebook page. Mr. Carnes’ actions have affected the work and personal lives of these valued Borough employees and is costing the taxpayers money. The three employees have hired an outside attorney to investigate the matter.

Councilman Michael Conahan, who was present at the meeting, commented that the entire situation is very upsetting and embarrassing. The Mayor and Council are working with the Borough Attorney to resolve the problem.

Secretary Susen Edwards announced that the Peapack/Gladstone library would like thirty of our old Community Room chairs. The matter will be taken up in New Business.

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.

Director George noted that a \$1,194.37 check to Assa Abloy was for repairs to the front entrance. A \$3,661.75 check to LMxAC was for software upgrades, and a \$1,200 check was written to cover additional Hoopla expenses. TK1 Solutions was paid \$12,400 for their yearly contract. NJLA was paid \$340 for conference registrations and Director George was reimbursed \$193.54 for NJLA hotel expenses. Total expenses for the month are \$36,267.15.

Susen Edwards moved to accept Resolution 2024-07 authorizing payment of all claims. Dave Oliver seconded the motion. 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 Budget Report for May was provided to Board Members. Director George noted the the actual amount expended for HVAC System under Capital Funds is \$138,750. Print subscriptions is \$1,933.22 in the red. Director George is considering canceling newspaper subscription for 2025. Everything else is on target for the year.

Circulation Report

Director George gave the circulation report for the month. See the Circulation Reports for details.

The Circulation Report shows total circulation for April at 6,439, which is a significant increase from 2023. Numbers are strong in all circulation areas.

Meeting room attendance for Community-led programs is up from the prior month. Only four Children's programs were held, but many children participated in the Grab and Go program, accounting for 235 attendees for the month. Adult/Friends programs continue to show good attendance.

Director's Report

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

1. Earthquake cracks were examined by the Borough engineer. No significant damage has occurred. DPW will patch and monitor.
2. The replacement of the vestibule door is out for bid.
3. Staff Appreciation Day for the Borough will take place on May 15. The Scream Truck will be here between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. Tiny horses will be here from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
4. The Board unanimously agreed to hire a temporary summer Library assistant at \$17 - \$20 hour.
5. Attendance was excellent at the Borough's Volunteer Fair on April 20.
6. We are waiting for display cases for the History Room. Painting will begin once items currently in the room are packed. Director George asked for suggestions on window coverings.
7. Four librarians are planning on attending the NJLA Conference at the end of May. Scheduled programs appear to focus on small libraries.
8. LMxAC is requiring a new operating system to be used. There are many benefits, including cloud-based and greater security. It presents a huge learning curve for staff.
9. Kaila Ward, Children's Librarian, hosted first graders from Watchung School. They decorated the sidewalks with beautiful chalk art. Volunteer Day was a huge success. Sixteen volunteer applications have already been received for summer reading programs.
10. Mary Toole, Reference Librarian, reported that the Rolling Reads program for housebound patrons has attracted some regular patrons who are very appreciative of the service.

11. Theresa Bond continues to keep active with social media and community programs. Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month featured books by AAPI authors. For Autism Awareness Month she displayed books with neurodiverse characters.

Committee Reports

An employee had a death in the family. Beverly Weber sent a sympathy card from the Board.

There were no other committee reports.

Friends of the Library Report

Friends President, Susen Edwards reported that the Friends will have a tent at Community Day on June 8. Their final spring program was held on May 5. Forty-one people attended the event.

The Friends received a number of volunteer applications from Volunteer Day. She has sent two emails to the individuals and one volunteer has already done some work for the Friends.

The Friends have received a grant for six Fall programs and are required to do some paid advertisements. Susen asked if the Board felt patrons should pre-register for the events. In the past, registration hasn't worked well: People sign up and don't show; others who haven't signed up attend anyway; and the action has kept others from attending. The Board provided mixed opinions. Susen will consider everyone's comments and make a decision. Director George will provide a simple online registration link if necessary.

Unfinished Business

The outdoor lighting is still on hold.

New Business

The Board was provided with a Capital Projects Projection form citing projects/equipment requests from 2024 through 2029. Refer to the form for details.

Dave Oliver moved to approve the donation of thirty chairs to the Peapack/Gladstone Library. Emily DeScenza seconded the motion. All were in favor. The resolution is as follows:

MIDDLESEX PUBLIC LIBRARY

RESOLUTION 2024-08

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DONATION OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

WHEREAS, the Library Board of Trustees have determined that the library has a surplus of used chairs because of the refurbishing of the Community Room, and

WHEREAS, the Library Director has determined that the library has no need for these chairs and no place to adequately store them, and

WHEREAS, these chairs have been offered to other borough departments, commissions, and committees for their use, and

WHEREAS, none of the borough departments, commissions or committees expressed any interest in taking possession of these chairs, and

WHEREAS, Peapack-Gladstone Public Library has indicated that their library has a need for 30 chairs and would be willing to take them,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Library Board of Trustees unanimously approves the donation of 30 chairs and a chair cart to the Peapack-Gladstone Public Library.

Approved: May 13, 2024

James L. Benson
President
Middlesex Public Library Board of Trustees

Public Discussion

Council liaison, Michael Conahan, thanked Director George for her work in organizing the April 20 Volunteer Fair. Representation from every board and committee helped make the event a success. Four people volunteered for OEM and eleven for the Rescue Squad. The public response was excellent.

The Borough's Memorial Day parade will take place on May 27. At the Council meeting on May 28, Edward Johnson will be honored as a pillar of the community.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. on a motion made by Dave Oliver and seconded by Melissa Fedosh. All were in favor.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Monday, June 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Susen Edwards
Secretary
May 14, 2024

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