

Middlesex Public Library
1300 Mountain Avenue
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting on September 8, 2025

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Middlesex Library Board of Trustees was held in the Community Room of the Library on Monday, September 8, 2025. James Benson, Board President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 Courier News, 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
- X Barbara Ferris, Member At Large
- X Beverly Weber, Member At Large
- X Dina Fornataro, Member At Large
- X 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 meetings held on June 9 and July 14, 2025, was made by Beverly Weber and seconded by Melissa Fedosh. All were in favor.

Reports of Officers

President Benson thanked the Sunshine Committee for the basket prepared for his family, and to those who attended the wake and expressed their sympathy upon the death of his mother-in-law.

There were no other Reports of Officers.

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.

Fosbre Town Plumbing & Heating was paid two checks of \$190. Each was for unclogging a drain.

Director George noted that \$2,733.92 was paid to Amazon Capital Services for public program supplies. An additional \$491.07 covered the cost of storage boxes for packing up supplies in the Children's Room in preparation for repairs from flood damage.

Director George also noted two bills not on the roster: Katrina Perry was reimbursed \$122.33 for office supplies, and Kaila Ward-Merritt was reimbursed \$159.21 for office and programming supplies.

There were no unusual expenses for the month.

Dave Oliver moved to accept Resolution 2025-11 authorizing payment of all bills. Susen Edwards 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.”

Director George provided Board members with the Monthly Budget Report for September 2025. Everything is on track for the year. No money has been spent for Magazines & Newspapers. She will not be renewing newspaper subscriptions in 2026 but will keep the account category for the time being.

The digitization of the *Middlesex Chronicle* has been completed.

Circulation Report

Director George gave the circulation report for September. Numbers are down slightly from August, which follows a national trend. Hoopla and Overdrive numbers are strong. Once again, Total Circulation for the month is up significantly from the prior two years. See the Circulation Report for details.

She noted that all computers have been removed from the Children's room as they were not being used. Internet usage spiked to a yearly high in August.

Meeting room attendance for Community Programs was down for August. Despite fewer Children's programs, attendance was solid and significantly higher than the past two years.

Director's Report

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

1. The insurance adjusters recommended ripping out two feet of sheetrock from the floor up to ensure that the Children's Room is safe after the July 14 storm. Remediation began August 23. All mold has been removed.
2. It may take up to a month before everything is fixed and back to normal.
3. Remediation for the Community Room was the same. Two feet of wall from the floor up has been removed. Director George hopes the work will be completed later this week.
4. Summer Reading was a huge success for both adults and children.
5. Two high school pages, Vincent and Eliss, have graduated but hope to return on holiday breaks. Director George suggested they receive a pay increase to \$18.50 per hour, which is a higher salary than the three new pages are receiving. Since Mary Ann Veit has retired, there is money in the budget for the raises. President Benson asked Board members for a vote to approve the raises. All were in favor.
6. Kaila Ward-Merritt, Children's Librarian reported that 7 - 8 children's programs were held each week during the summer in addition to other activities. The "crown jewel" of the programs was Stage & Story, culminating in a theatrical performance on August 28.
7. Kaila also noted that the teen volunteer program was a huge success, averaging 58 volunteer shifts each week. She is currently putting together an autumn programming schedule.
8. Mary Toole, Reference Librarian, reported that the Adult Summer Reading Bingo was very popular. The most popular prizes were gift cards for Trader Joe's.
9. Theresa Bond is hosting a mental health and creativity workshop in October in addition to a number of other online and face-to-face programs. She continues to share Library events, resources, and policies on social media.

Committee Reports

Beverly Weber reported a basket was sent to a staff member after a recent illness. As noted earlier, a basket was delivered to President Benson and his family.

Beverly asked if a basket should be sent to a staff member who recently retired. The Board agreed to send a gift card.

Friends of the Library Report

Friends President, Susen Edwards, announced she has applied for a grant through Middlesex County for Fall 2026 programming. Recipients of the grant will not be announced until January 2026.

The Friends had their first program of the Fall on Sunday, September 7. Due to construction in the Community Room, the program was held in the Library. Susen thanked Holly Muller for her help in organizing the room set up.

The Friends next program will be a concert on Sunday, September 21.

Unfinished and New Business

President Benson asked that we combine Unfinished and New Business, as both concern upcoming lighting projects. He reported that we have received quotes from 3 businesses for the upgrades to the Outdoor lighting and the Children's Room lighting. Two of the businesses submitted quotes in the \$18,000 to \$20,000 range for the outdoor lighting and quotes in the \$40,000-\$45,000 range for the Children's Room lighting. A third business submitted a quote for about \$7,500 for the Outdoor lighting and about \$9,000 for the Children's Room lighting. President Benson said that a discrepancy this large is highly unusual and should be investigated further. He proposed that he and Chrissy meet with a representative from the company with the extremely low quote to ensure that it is a fair comparison of job specifications. The board agreed.

He also suggested that the Board approve a resolution tonight to award the jobs to the lowest bid to avoid delaying the project further. All were in favor.

Public Discussion

Councilman Conahan announced the Fire Department will host a Food Truck Festival in Mountainview Park on September 20. Admission is \$5. This event will replace the carnival that has been held in the past. In addition to food trucks, entertainment and activities for children will be available.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m. on a motion made by Dina Fornataro and seconded by Barbara Ferris. All were in favor.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Monday, October 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Susen Edwards
Secretary
September 9, 2025

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