

**THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
5 WASHINGTON STREET
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
MAY 26, 2021, 5:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Domingo Morel	Vice-President (from 5:08 p.m.)
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
Nicole Johnson	Trustee

STAFF:

Joslyn Bowling Dixon	Director
Anna Coats	Assistant Director, Public Services
George Williams	Assistant Director, Capital Planning, Facilities & Security
Leslie Colson	Head of Human Resources
Zuhare Meri	Superintendent

ABSENT:

Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee
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Minutes prepared by Cassidy Civiero from Minutes Solutions Inc. from an audio recording.

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and the Trustees having been given adequate and proper notice of the meeting, L. Wells called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to approve the Public Session minutes dated March 24, 2021, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

L. Wells provided the President's Report. She recognized staff members for all their work as the Library reopens and thanked those who sit on Committee meetings. The health and safety of everyone remains a priority.

4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

J. Dixon provided the Director’s Report. J. Dixon is participating in the Prudential Cares Pro Bono Non-Profit Consulting Program, which is a 12-week program. Several stakeholders within the community are involved, who provide a corporate lift for the program to have marketing and technology.

Public Libraries Magazine’s article about Black public library directors featured J. Dixon. Only 5.3% of African Americans are in the profession. J. Dixon was invited to participate in Mayor Baraka’s special virtual meeting, at which America First funds were discussed. Newark received approximately \$85 million-plus, and various stakeholders in the city discussed plans for using the money and working together as the city re-opens.

A. Coats provided an update on public services. Funding for Beanstack, the summer virtual reading platform, was obtained. The website has summer reading information, and there are paper copies of these documents for those without access to computers. A. Coats has been working with the Development Department to get a cohesive Newark Public Library story out to people on social media. Coordinated events, such as “take and makes,” are planned for Summer 2021, with advertising undertaken for these events.

J. Dixon previously distributed the percentages for March 2021 for Board review.

5. TREASURER’S REPORT

T. Crist stated that there were two cash activity reports to review and approve:

Bill Sheet 1310, March 2021

The below invoices for books, binding, incidentals, and payroll, were certified as correct by the Library Director and presented for examination and approval:

Gross Payroll Activity	
March 5 th	\$ 224,720.60
March 19 th	\$ 229,283.21
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 605,012.60
Grant Account	\$ 36,621.23
Endowment Account	\$ 7.50
Capital Account	\$ 95,308.06
Total Disbursement for March 2021	\$ 1,190,953.20

Bill Sheet 1309, April 2021

The following invoices for books, binding, incidentals, and payroll, were certified as correct by the Library Director and presented for examination and approval:

Gross Payroll Activity	
April 2 nd	\$ 224,438.19
April 16 th	\$ 223,658.25

April 30 th	\$ 223,569.77
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 421,465.87
Grant Account	\$ 26,554.45
Endowment Account	\$ 26,332.33
Capital Account	\$ 108,298.50
Total Disbursement for April 2021	\$ 1,254,317.36

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheet 1310 for March 2021 and Bill Sheet 1311 for April 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

6. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Development Committee: R. Steinbaum presented the update. The Development Committee met on May 13, 2021. The Development Office is working on completing the second application to the State Library Construction Bond. There are two events on June 7, 2021, related to the Philip Roth Room.

On June 10, 2021, the James Brown African American Room Friends and the Friends of NPL are holding a donor appreciation reception at 5:00 p.m. Donors have been generous. A baby grand piano, a sculpture, and pieces from private book collections, along with other items, have been donated.

The Ambassador's Program is a new initiative intended to mint ambassadors for the NPL to raise unrestricted funds and make donating accessible. There are tiers of giving ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 to become an ambassador with corresponding tiers of benefits. R. Steinbaum asked Directors to become NPL ambassadors and consider recruiting three ambassadors.

L. Wells requested that ambassadors be removed from the first clause of "History of NPL" where it reads "led by a Director, Board of Trustees, and ambassadors." The Board must consider how the donation amounts differentiate from giving to the Foundation and how recognition of large donations occurs.

Facilities Committee: H. Abdus-Sabur presented the update. The Facilities Committee met on May 14, 2021, and discussed the State Construction Bond, the fresh air study and elimination of contagions, and the termites at the Clinton Branch.

J. Dixon noted that termite remediation is underway. Clearing the visible termites will take three to six months; however, this will not address the termites expected in the walls and foundation. The Clinton Branch is closed, as the termites make it unsafe for occupants. Potential swing space locations are being discussed as the Branch's presence is essential. L. Wells asked about the structural damage. G. Williams reached out to a structural engineer from CEC who will perform a site visit on an unknown date. Z. Meri will meet with Terminix on May 28, 2021.

H. Abdus-Sabur stated that the staff at the Branches are accommodating, and the community engagement is refreshing. There are few significant repairs for the smaller branches.

Finance Committee: D. Morel presented the update. The Finance Committee met on April 20, 2021, and May 18, 2021. The NPL will be receiving the second round of PPEP, which will be around \$2 million, which will be restricted to payroll, utilities, and COVID-19 related expenses. A resolution will be proposed for the NPL to hire a new team to perform the audit. The purchase cards will be presented at the next Board meeting.

In March 2021, the percent of the budget used was around 23%, and April 2021 was roughly the same. The NPL is at one-third of the budget spent, which is on target. Going forward, a page on General, Grants, Endowment will be added to the monthly financials. L. Wells noted that Line 5079, "DONATIONS" was recently added to the monthly financials.

Personnel and Policy Committee: N. Johnson presented the update. The Personnel and Policy Committee met on May 13, 2021, and discussed promotion procedures for internal and external candidates. For internal candidates, positions are posted for two weeks, and all applicants are interviewed. External positions are posted for 30 days.

The NPL does not report on positive COVID-19 cases in the Library, but the city reports all numbers across all agencies. The Library expects to resume complete in-person services on June 7, 2021. J. Dixon will research executive orders for other New Jersey libraries to adjust the reopening plan.

The Committee put the policy review on hold and discussed alternatives to the bag policy. Currently, bookbags are allowed into the Library on a trial period.

L. Colson added that contract negotiations are ongoing with Local 2218.

A. Richardson stated that she is uncomfortable with some of the policies' statements on body odor, personal belongings, and those who fall asleep in the Library. She asked whether Mayor Baraka has a task force for residents without addresses and suggested that others review the policy before it is approved. J. Dixon replied that review by outside individuals is being sought.

Ad-hoc Hahne Committee: H. Abdus-Sabur stated that the Hahne's Building is on pause until further notice.

Ad-hoc Roth Committee: T. Crist provided an update. The third anniversary of Phillip Roth's passing was May 22, 2021. That was the deadline to have the Philip Roth Personal Library constructed. Philip Roth's executor visited Newark to view the room.

There are still more items to put in place before the opening ceremony on June 7, 2021. It has been an eight-year process, and T. Crist thanked N. Sergejeff and G. Williams for their work on the project. R. Steinbaum added that a reporter from the New York Times visited the room to write a story that will run online and in print on June 6, 2021, and June 7, 2021, respectively.

A. Richardson asked whether anyone has reached out to the Weequahic Alumni Association. Many of their older members have history in the area and have been generous donors to the Weequahic Scholarship Fund. T. Crist responded that there has been continuing contact with the Association throughout the process. R. Steinbaum requested emails for the co-chairs to get in touch, and A. Richardson responded that she would provide them.

7. STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

J. Dixon presented the strategic plan update and requested any proposed edits in writing within the next two weeks. The goal is to have the strategic plan completed by July 2021, with actions to be drafted with staff following that.

T. Crist stated that partnerships tend to be outward, and the strategic plan is inward-looking. J. Dixon responded that there is an overarching message that is purposefully modest and will be a broader document in the future.

A. Richardson stated that the strategic plan could use more specifics as it is quite high-level. J. Dixon responded that the goal is to meet with the Board and Leadership Team after July 2021 to put the actions in to support the high-level goals.

L. Wells stated that she believes it was discussed that this was a “transition document” rather than a “strategic plan.” J. Dixon responded that she would update the document to this effect.

8. NEW BUSINESS

State Construction Bond: J. Dixon presented the update. The NPL is on the second round of applications after not receiving funding in the first round. There is \$37.5 million available throughout the State. The grant is due on June 4, 2021. The city confirmed that on the budget line for the municipal bond, there will be \$4.5 million for the Library.

The first resolution for the revised LBCA application is for \$1,402,677.50, focusing on the ADA compliance for the first-floor bathrooms, the HRIC switchover to VTC, and the freight and passenger elevators. The second resolution for the revised LBCA application is for \$1,827,822 to restore the vacant library asset on 34 Commerce Street to be habitable and have a practical use. The total for the projects is \$3,230,499. With the \$4.5 million commitment from the city, there is a confirmed match for these funds.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to apply for the Project grant entitled the “New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act: Creating Critical Infrastructure to Meet Community Needs” for the purposes described in the application of \$1,402,677.50. Motion carried unanimously.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to apply for the Project grant entitled the “New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act: Foundational Repairs to Create the New Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center” for the purposes described in the application of \$1,827,822. Motion carried unanimously.

New Auditing Firm: On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved under recommendation by the Finance Committee to enter a contract with Weinstein & Weinstein, P.C., on May 26, 2021, to complete three annual audits for the Newark Public Library at the cost of \$20,000 per audit year. Motion carried unanimously.

Library Reopening 3.0: The new reopening plan begins on June 7, 2021. The stacks at Main will be open. The Governor recently removed occupancy restrictions if mask wearing and social distancing are maintained. According to the State, those who are fully vaccinated do not have to wear a mask inside. However, it is up to each institution’s discretion whether to have a mask

policy in place for everyone. This will be the Library's course of action as it is impossible to determine who is vaccinated. Mask-wearing in the Library will continue until Labor Day.

Hours for the Library will remain the same, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on all days except Wednesday, which is open until 8:00 p.m. Temperature checks will still be performed on visitor arrival. There will have to be messaging to residents that the Library is open, and the Library can pivot as needed if occupancy seems too high.

A. Maat asked if the Library will cease virtual programs as it reopens. J. Dixon responded that they would continue; however, in-person programming can commence in the summer of 2021. COVID-19 related teleworking has stopped, with a few compelling exceptions.

A. Richardson asked if the Library would return to later hours in Fall 2021 when students return to school. J. Dixon responded affirmatively and noted all restrictions should be lifted at that time.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Lou is glad to hear that the BTC will be getting some much-needed love and attention. He asked whether there will be a decrease in the total number of seats. L. Wells responded that the Library would keep in mind the capacity and usage of the room, as it is widely used for all kinds of computer and technology needs.

10. MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved that The Newark Public Library Board of Trustees move into Executive Session at 6:28 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

11. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS DISCUSSED DURING EXECUTIVE SESSION

Personnel Resolutions

Per the By-laws, Article VII, Section 1, J. Dixon recommended ratification of the following appointments and personnel actions:

Anne Schatz	New Hire	April 5, 2021
Clay Gregory	Title Change/Salary Increase	May 10, 2021
Austin Williams	Transfer to Full-Time	May 10, 2021
Frank Crespo	New Hire	May 24, 2021
Eddy Mendez-Dominquez	New Hire	May 24, 2021

On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve the Personnel Resolutions for May 26, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Local 68

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to ratify the Memorandum of Agreement between The Newark Public Library and Local 68 AFL-CIO beginning January 2, 2021, and continuing for three years. Motion carried unanimously.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve a 2% staff salary increase paid retroactively from January 1, 2021, for Local 68 AFL-CIO. Motion carried unanimously.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve 2% staff salary increases for Local 68 effective January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

12. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by R. Steinbaum, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting of the Board of Trustees. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Lauren Wells, President

Joslyn Bowling Dixon, Director

Date

Date