

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
JULY 28, 2021, 5:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Nicole Johnson	Trustee (from 5:30 p.m.)

STAFF:

Joslyn Bowling Dixon	Director
Anna Coats	Assistant Director, Public Services
George Williams	Assistant Director, Capital Planning, Facilities & Security
Leslie Colson	Assistant Director, Head of Human Resources
Zuhare Meri	Superintendent
Rod Jefferson	Assistant Director, Finance
Diego Quintero	Information Technology
Ingrid Betancourt	Assistant Director, Special Collections
Jacqueline Jones	Security
Kirsten Giardi	Assistant Director, Development.
Annecy Webb	Executive Administrative Assistant to the Director

ABSENT:

Domingo Morel	Vice-President
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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 5:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

On a motion made by R. Steinbaum, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve the Public Session minutes dated May 26, 2021, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

3. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

L. Wells provided the President’s Report. L. Wells thanked library staff for being steadfast and adapting to changes to keep patrons healthy when they come to the library. L. Wells thanked everyone involved in opening the Philip Roth room and the June 10, 2021 award ceremony. L. Wells thanked the Ad-hoc Bridge Plan Committee for its work on the bridge plan to be discussed. L. Wells thanked L. Kahn for her years with the library, as she is now retiring.

4. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

J. Dixon provided the Director’s Report. J. Dixon recently took a Fundraising Concepts and Practices course at NYU. The ALA Conference occurred in June 2021, and J. Dixon served as ALA Councilor at Large. J. Dixon was a featured speaker at the unveiling of The Newark Community Museum on July 12, 2021. A staff appreciation reception was undertaken in the Philip Roth room on July 12, 2021. The MOU is complete with Audible. Three outdoor mural/interactive spaces are being developed as a community meeting place. A vaccine clinic will be offered on-site on August 4, 2021 and again in November 2021.

A. Coats gave an update on public services. The primary elections were held at the North End and Vailsburg branches, and the Higher Newark Book Club had its session in the Main branch.

J. Dixon stated that there is a Black Power exhibit curated by N. Williams at the library. An invitation for the reception will be sent shortly. J. Dixon presented statistics for May 2021 and June 2021. Library programs are down, likely due to virtual fatigue. E-library checkouts are still strong and new registrations are on the rise. T. Crist requested reports about special collections within the statistics going forward, including visits and records collections.

L. Wells stated that whenever there are events for which the Board is expected to attend, specific emails should be sent to Board members.

5. TREASURER’S REPORT

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

Bill Sheet 1312, May 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	
May 14th	\$ 225,308.07
May 28th	\$ 229,283.21
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 234,841.36
Grant Account	\$ 9,896.67
Endowment Account	\$ 410.00
Capital Account	\$ 13,792.96
Total Disbursement for March 2021	\$ 708, 415.75

Bill Sheet 1313, June 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	
June 11th	\$ 227,602.99
June 25th	\$ 228,238.04
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 298,390.49
Grant Account	\$ 13,903.56
Endowment Account	\$ 8,111.81
Capital Account	\$ 21,484.23
Total Disbursement for April 2021	\$ 797,731.12

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheet 1312 for May 2021 and Bill Sheet 1313 for June 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Development Committee: R. Steinbaum presented the update. The Development Committee met on June 17, 2021. There were two important donor receptions in June 2021, one for the Roth library and one for the joint reception between the Friends of the James Brown African American Room and the Friends of the Newark Public Library. Both events brought in robust donations to the library. August 11, 2021 is the NPL Ambassador’s program launch; five restaurants/cafes are confirmed to participate and Board members are encouraged to attend. On September 9, 2021, an event will be held to welcome community leaders back to the library.

ACTION – J. Dixon will send out two separate emails to Board members about the August 11, 2021 NPL Ambassador’s program launch and the September 9, 2021 welcome back event.

ACTION – J. Dixon will send the brochure for the Ambassador’s program to Board members.

In addition to the Empty Space and mural projects with Audible, Audible will participate in 50% of the repair costs to the service building for the Essex Building.

The Gala is on December 1, 2021 at Nanina’s. There is not yet a Corporate Honoree or Community Partner. Suggestions are being accepted for performers or speakers. R. Steinbaum stated that it would be preferable for each Director to host a table of eight to 10 friends.

Facilities Committee: H. Abdus-Sabur presented the update. The Facilities Committee met on July 9, 2021. There is no news about when capital funding will be available, and the NPL is still in a holding for the State Construction Bond. The Clinton branch remains infested with termites. A wall repair was \$49,000, and Audible paid for half. An exterior lighting plan was discussed, as it is dark on the street at night. A vendor will be selected for the capital needs assessment by the second week of August 2021. A cargo van and truck can be upgraded to electric.

The internal air quality of the library is extremely important with COVID-19 and patrons returning to the library. An air quality test was undertaken and there were recommendations to improve air

intake which have been pursued. Air filters were upgraded and a ventilation system from Atlas Air was implemented, which has proven effective against COVID-19.

G. Williams stated that the Historic Grant Preservation Project is a top priority and there is an architect with the project with a background in historic preservation. There is now a project schedule, and a preservationist has been retained. The project schedule will be shared with the Board when available. The Landmark and Preservation Commission was contacted and has stated that the NPL can move forward with the project.

The City is contacted weekly about the status of the Municipal Capital Bond and its support of the State Construction Bond. The latter is on the City Council agenda for August 4, 2021.

Finance Committee: T. Crist presented the update. The Finance Committee met on July 20, 2021. The NPL has received the Payroll Protection Plan funding of \$2 million, which will help with outstanding bills. Payroll Protection dollars are restricted to COVID-19 utility expenses and payroll. Revenues are on track and costs are in line with revenue. The budgeted amounts for donations and allocations from the State library have not yet come in. Union negotiations included 2% annual increases beginning this year and going for three years. The new auditing firm is progressing on the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 audits.

Personnel and Policy Committee: J. Dixon presented the update. The Personnel and Policy Committee discussed how issues with staff are addressed. The Code of Conduct is being updated and a behavioral plan is being drafted. There have been replacements with staff and a retirement. A public service transfer was opened for all departments.

Ad-hoc Bridge Plan Committee: A. Richardson presented the update. A Board workshop was held on May 1, 2021, where the consultant presented. The Ad-hoc Bridge Plan Committee met on July 15, 2021. There were many conversations, and feedback was provided to J. Dixon to draft the Bridge Plan. Documents must be more structured and include a clear, detailed process for community engagement. Outcomes for the end of the transition period were considered.

L. Wells noted that, coming out of COVID-19 and onboarding the new Director J. Dixon, several uncertainties lent themselves better to a bridge plan than a strategic plan.

J. Dixon presented the 2021-2023 Bridge Plan. Current challenges include deferred real estate repair and maintenance, inadequate staffing, lack of continuing education for staff, and creating a safe space for patrons and staff. The Bridge Plan will focus on the library's necessary short-term needs to achieve a long-term vision. Community engagement will include town halls, roundtables, and surveys. Spaces, people and funding are the three key areas within the plan.

There is still uncertainty for staff and patrons about being in the library, as not everyone is vaccinated. The standard for cleanliness is being raised to make everyone comfortable. Spaces must be re-imagined, potentially with more spacing and outdoor programming. To retain and recruit, staff must have choices of location and professional development opportunities, as NPL is currently understaffed. A positive and productive workplace must be part of the NPL's brand.

In terms of funding, NPL should be applying for grants regardless of the opportunity presented. There are grants from a few years ago that still need to be expended. The NPL is entrusted with taxpayer funds and must be intentional with these funds. A standard grant policy must be created and the NPL must get creative with funding sources.

J. Dixon presented the measurable outcomes from the Bridge Plan, including standard operating procedures, positive branding, and clean, safe spaces. In August 2021, J. Dixon will meet with the Leadership Team to create measurable goals for the Bridge Plan to present to the Board in September 2021. The Leadership Team will report every six months.

A. Maat asked whether the NPL is taking full advantage of the staff development opportunities available, such as workshops on fundraising. J. Dixon agreed the NPL must be intentional about capturing these opportunities, and the process for finding them has begun.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Resolution on 2021-2023 Bridge Plan:

On a motion made by M. Rodriguez, seconded by A. Richardson, it was resolved to approve the 2021-2023 Bridge Plan as part of a two-step approach toward developing a full strategic plan. Motion carried unanimously.

Return to In-Person Board Meetings: The Board discussed returning to in-person Board meetings in September 2021 at Centennial Hall to allow social distancing. N. Johnson noted that the Delta variant of COVID-19 is extremely contagious and the NPL should be prepared to pivot back to remote meetings if necessary. L. Wells noted that streaming the meetings on Facebook should continue as it promotes community engagement. The Board agreed that public comments could be accepted both in person and virtually.

Resolution on Return to Standard Fall Hours September 7, 2021: L. Wells asked why the branches are only open from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. J. Dixon responded that there is not enough budget or staffing for full Saturday hours. L. Wells suggested that there could be a way to pull some hours from weekdays to allow for a long Saturday, as kids are off school, and families could attend.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to return to standard fall operating hours on September 7, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting Room/Special Events Standards and Procedures: A standard fee for people to book rooms at the main library for special events is being implemented at \$150 per hour for open/community events and \$300 per hour for closed/corporate events. J. Dixon confirmed that those holding events could not fundraise or charge fees for people to attend.

A. Richardson noted that she has never seen a per-hour fee for booking a room. This rate will be prohibitive for some. K. Giardi responded that the fee could be waived depending on the situation. L. Wells stated that the documentation should include language that considers an organization's ability to pay. K. Giardi added that there is currently no charge for spaces at the branches, which can be used for certain events. T. Crist stated that these are policy decisions, and it is not the Board's job to define the implementation of such policy.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

D. Alston asked if there will be a reprint of the My Newark Storybook, as many basic Newark facts were not included.

9. **MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On a motion made by M. Rodriguez, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved that The Newark Public Library Board of Trustees move into Executive Session at 7:15 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

10. **PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS DISCUSSED DURING EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Personnel Resolutions

Per the By-laws, Article VII, Section 1, J. Dixon recommended ratifying the following:

Jacqueline Hertz	New Hire	June 7, 2021
Kareem Lockhart	Resignation	June 3, 2021
Marcus Umenyili	New Hire	June 21, 2021
Nicole Marconi	New Hire	June 21, 2021
Gennesy Caines	Promotion	June 21, 2021
Andrea Ramos	Resignation	June 22, 2021
Amber Dodd	Resignation	July 1, 2021
Leslie Kahn	Retirement	July 1, 2021
Isabel Castro	Resignation	July 3, 2021
Ana Herrera	Extended Leave of Absence	July 5, 2021
Jonathan Crowther	Resignation	July 6, 2021
Barrington Newby	New Hire	July 6, 2021

On a motion made by T. Crist seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve the Personnel Resolutions for July 28, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion made by R. Steinbaum, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 7:52p.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