

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
JANUARY 26, 2022, 5:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Domingo Morel	Vice-President
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Nicole Johnson	Trustee
Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee (from 5:03 p.m.)
Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee (from 5:20 p.m.)

STAFF:

Joslyn Bowling Dixon	Leadership Team
Nadine Sergejeff	Supervising Librarian, Philip Roth Library and Special Collections
Anna Coats	Assistant Director, Public Services
George Williams	Assistant Director, Capital Planning, Facilities & Security
Leslie Colson	Head of Human Resources
Zuhare Meri	Superintendent

ABSENT:

Minutes prepared by Katrina Janeiro 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 T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to approve the Public Session minutes dated November 17, 2021, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

3. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

A. Maat noted that all current officers were desirable to maintain their positions for the following year. There were no new nominations.

The Board positions remain as follows:

Lauren Wells	President
Domingo Morel	Vice-President
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary

The Board thanked L. Wells for her hard work and dedication as President, and she thanked the Board for their support, experience, and wisdom.

On a motion made by R. Steinbaum, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to accept and elect the slate presented by the Nominating Committee for the 2022 calendar year. Motion carried unanimously.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

This item was not discussed.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

L. Wells provided the President's Report. She thanked staff for their work on all the events that took place since the last meeting including the Gala, where fundraising goals were exceeded. Upcoming events were discussed, including an event with chef, Michael Twitty.

Community building efforts will continue in 2022 through different levels of the community and ecosystem with a focus on equity for all members of the community. Internal community building across branches and staff will continue.

L. Wells commended the Board for their hard work and progress over the past two years and expressed her confidence for the future

In terms of financial matters, audits are to be completed in 2022 so that efforts can be made to obtain needed funds to augment the city budget and ideally increase the funding from the city.

6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

J. Dixon provided the Director's Report. The State Construction Bond was discussed, noting the second round was applied for. There were \$37,000,000 left in that round for the entire state, with 105 other libraries having applied and ultimately 36 projects awarded. The Newark Public Library received \$1.7 million matching funds for the Commerce Street location relocating of the New Jersey room along with having storage and proper facilities for special collections.

J. Dixon discussed the heating issues due to deferred maintenance. The boiler has been repaired but is of an age that parts are not available and must be custom fabricated. These issues required the branch to close early on a number of occasions, but this is avoided as much as possible. J. Dixon presented a written plan to the Board to avoid situations where the library may need to be closed such as closing blinds, ensuring the air conditioner is not running, all doors are closed, and other measures.

J. Dixon discussed challenges related to the Omicron variant of COVID-19. In conversations

with the city, it was decided that until February 10, 2022, patrons over five years of age may only enter the library with proof of vaccination. Overall, this has proceeded without mishap. There have been limited opening hours due to staffing shortages resulting from high case counts and testing lags.

J. Dixon recently attended a meeting to ensure the library has the attention of community leaders in Clinton and to inform those leaders of the library's plan for community outreach and inclusivity. Collaboration efforts were also discussed. In another meeting, mixed-use scenarios were discussed including a recommendation to offer projects in a package instead of one location, such as Clinton, which could lead to greater success.

Director's open houses took place in November, but due to the holidays, they were not held in December. Approximately ten staff members participated in a library night with free tickets to a Seton Hall game. A lunch and learn with PNC Bank took place.

J. Dixon attended Rutgers's Ruth Bader Ginsburg Hall dedication ceremony, networking with attendees including members of the Rutgers family.

J. Dixon often attends the Newark Anchor Collaborative Meeting, with discussion regularly focusing on anti-racism practice at the workplace. Urban Library Council has an Edge 360 Pilot that libraries are invited to participate in. This pilot was outlined, noting Edge 360 is a benchmarking tool to assess anti-racism in the system from marketing to HR to all areas of business. This program will provide a score to use as a benchmark for internal practices and against other libraries. This tool is meant not to shame participants or compare them to others but encourage growth and improvement. L. Wells requested that J. Dixon share the Executive Leadership for Public Libraries Policy Brief that the ULC has with the Board to reiterate how this work affects the library specifically.

The gala was a success, and J. Dixon commended all who participated for their support and hard work.

The Capacity Building Grant was received from the Victoria Foundation totaling \$175,000. Those funds are to be used to create continued education/conference attendance stipends for staff and hire an equity and diversity inclusion staff member is ideally a permanent position, but at a minimum in a consultancy position, and to work with Rutgers to provide scholarships for completion of the MILS degree or any library-related undergrad degrees.

Statistics were reviewed in relation to the prior year, with numbers reflecting the impact of the pandemic. The digital footprint, including views on social media or using digital products, has increased and stabilized despite the waves of the pandemic. Concern was expressed over the use of programs, but it was discussed that it could be due to reporting and due to in-person programs touching fewer people than virtual programs do. The Board discussed the balance of ensuring people continue to physically visit the branches for programs without losing the innovative virtual space that has been created and nurtured over the past two years. A 2021 versus 2020 stat comparison was requested instead of month-to-month comparisons, ideally also including a 2019 comparison.

In relation to public services, it was reported that staff completed 57 hours of professional development, and it was requested to break down how much time was spent by individuals instead of an aggregate number and the time-period covered. This was a platform all staff are

mandated to take and is available on the New Jersey State site and approximately 15 one-hour courses are available.

ACTION – J. Dixon is to further break down staff professional development statistics.

The Board expressed that the special collections breakdown in the provided report was very helpful, and requested this format be followed in other reports.

7. TREASURER’S REPORT

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

Bill Sheet 1318, November 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	
November 12	\$ 253,264.07
November 26	\$ 254,061.04
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 198,632.84
Grant Account	\$ 42,119.14
Endowment Account	\$ 17,948.08
Capital Account	\$ 70,101.02
Total Disbursement for November 2021	\$ 836,126.19

Bill Sheet 1319, December 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	
December 10	\$ 248,522.80
December 23	\$ 236,043.32
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 288,134.70
Grant Account	\$ 18,097.56
Endowment Account	\$ 722.64
Capital Account	\$ 0.00
Total Disbursement for December 2021	\$ 791,571.02

As requested by the Finance Committee, the account balance was included in Bill Sheet 1319 for December 2021. T. Crist noted the positive position the accounts are in.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheets 1318 and 1319 for November and December 2021, respectively. Motion carried unanimously.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Development Committee: R. Steinbaum reiterated the success of the 2021 Gala, noting over \$200,000 was received, which is the annual goal. The net profit of the gala was \$162,865. R. Steinbaum praised the development staff for their work on this gala and the Board for their attendance.

The Committee discussed areas of improvement in relation to the gala, including beginning planning in the spring with tasks such as choosing the Committee and honorees to reduce pressure on the staff. Breaking up the program was suggested, including having music presented at the gala, and R. Steinbaum requested assistance with any connections the Board may have in this respect. The next gala will take place on December 7, 2022.

ACTION – R. Steinbaum is to e-mail the Board requesting feedback and suggestions for future galas.

The Victoria Foundation grants were discussed and noted the Foundation's 2021 gifts were meant to conclude the grant-giving that is their tradition in favor of a new outlook on grant-giving. Their outlook was discussed, including highlighting racial equity and grassroots work, and how the library can communicate these shared ideals to the Victoria Foundation.

The commitment to expanding and diversifying the library's donor base was discussed. Ways to do this were discussed by the Committee, and suggestions for this were welcomed by R. Steinbaum.

Facilities Committee: H. Abdus-Sabur presented the facilities update. The last facilities meeting took place on January 12, 2022. The need for new libraries was expressed, and the work being done to accomplish this was discussed.

The previously discussed heating issues at the Main Library are being handled by staff, and H. Abdus-Sabur outlined short-term solutions that are being undertaken until they can participate in the State's Energy Efficiency program. Z. Meri was praised for his work with the Audible mural and excitement was expressed for the upcoming mural.

The Facilities Committee's visit to Boston was reviewed and H. Abdus-Sabur reiterated the need for improvement and a new, 21st-century library.

The State Construction Bond was awarded to the Newark Public Library for \$1.7 million and is earmarked for the 34 Commerce Street rehabilitation project. G. Williams reminded the Board that a local architect was hired to do a building assessment and plan for 34 Commerce Street to use to sell, which fell through, but those plans were used in the Facilities Committee's proposal for the State Construction Bond. The Newark Public Library was in the top ten awards given out this year. That money is being matched by the city's capital bond and will kick off phase one of the 34 Commerce Street rehabilitation project. This phase will bring that building up to code compliance, and phase two will be to retrofit it for the Jersey room and collections. R. Steinbaum outlined the reasoning why the Commerce Street and Jersey room project was chosen to apply for this bond.

The Hispanic Research Information Centre with its corollary components was not approved by State Construction Bond, but because of the strategic thinking of the Committee, there may be enough out of the city's \$4.5M capital bond allocation to complete this project in 2022. Advocacy for a more robust budget for library needs resulting in receiving this large city bond, and R. Steinbaum was praised in his efforts on this. Other capital fund streams include the remainder of the Prudential Foundation money and M&T.

The next steps of the Facilities Committee include signing and executing the grant agreement with the State, which is slated to be completed by the end of February. The Facilities Committee, working with other committees, will work to satisfy the State Historic Preservation Office requirements. Project schedules and budgets for the above-noted projects will be undertaken, with a focus on saving as much time and money as possible. For 34 Commerce Street, the current project team includes a local architecture firm, Woodridge Chen, who will assist in preparing the bid package for contractors, and a mechanical engineer, CEC. For the HRIC project, another local, minority architect, OCA, will create a bid package for contractors. HVAC concerns will be addressed through both of these projects.

It was suggested that fundraising efforts continue for the HRIC project as the budget is very tight and construction costs continue to increase, and the Facilities Committee is aware of and will continue to pursue this. It was also suggested to implement a strategy between the Foundation, HRIC, and the Development Committee to create a template for a holistic approach to raising necessary funds to support capital projects. It was stressed the importance of leveraging the capacity and roles of these various entities to build and expand on the work of the foundation.

In light of these two projects, the Board was reminded that Clinton projects are also a top priority.

ACTION – G. Williams is to share the preliminary capital needs assessment for Main.

G. Williams reiterated the outcomes of the trip to Boston. He encouraged the Board to think about existing real estate assets and service coverage in the context of vision and financial constraints. A charette was suggested, facilitated by ABA. The goal is to provide completion of projects, such as a brand-new Clinton branch, perhaps using the mixed-use concept to fund that development.

ABA and others have been gathering data for the past two months and have begun an analysis on it in conjunction with statistics provided by A. Coats. This analysis will inform the assumptions and questions that the charette will address. The plan is that ABA will then design how the charette will flow, including visiting representative sample buildings, breakout sessions, how reporting will be carried out, and more. This is expected to be completed by mid-February 2022. G. Williams suggested a focus group meeting then take place, which will result in the charette design. The group will then be broadened to include selected stakeholders including Board members, leadership, selected staff, selected members of city hall, and selected funders who may benefit from being a part of these early discussions and will be facilitated by ABA. This group will provide a general report and an informed approach to meeting with the public to get their feedback on the process. After public input, a final report will be drafted for Board use in conversations with City Hall, State, and Federal-elected officials, and funders to express the methodical approach to how facilities are used and managed and instill confidence in these various potential funding sources.

While ABA is facilitating certain phases of the charette, entire charette process oversight has not been decided on. The initial thought it for ABA to facilitate this, but the Committee is open to suggestions from the Board on this. G. Williams explained that the process would begin in early March, and the final charette report should be completed by April 2022. One outcome of the

charette would be to have increased public input and engagement, and the importance of library users' input was expressed.

G. Williams outlined that the charette is broad and would be created to assess not only assets but also service gaps and overlaps and what is needed to address them, and ultimately what is the vision for the entire library system in Newark.

The Board questioned whether a charette is needed to conclude a new facility is required in Clinton or whether it can be supplementary to a replacement of the Clinton branch. G. Williams noted that while Clinton is a concern when requesting funds for a new branch, potential funders question whether the library system as a whole has been considered. The charette will provide a defensible answer to these sorts of questions.

The Board expressed concern around social equity in not focusing solely on the Clinton branch needs, and G. Williams explained that the intention of the charette is to arrive at the same place that the Board would like to arrive at, but that Board decisions would be data-backed and defensible to the public and potential funders. The charette will also provide a process for future decision-making beyond the Clinton branch.

It was expressed that a community-centered approach should be considered at an equal weight as funding and developer requirements, and G. Williams assured the Board that the charette would focus on community needs. He assured the Board that developer and funder inputs would be in a collaborative nature but would not be steering the charette. R. Steinbaum explained that the goal of the charette is in line with already established Board goals but may result in the process to achieve those goals being carried out in a different matter.

The continued discussion of the charette was deferred to the next Facilities Committee meeting.

Finance Committee: D. Morel presented the update. The Finance Committee met on December 21, 2021, and January 18, 2022. The Committee reviewed the various financial reports for November and December. Larger than expected expenses were discussed including heating facilities, but overall, the year ended mostly as budgeted. D. Morel thanked the staff for the extra work they carried out to ensure that the Finance Committee can monitor and report the library's finances in the most robust way possible. The Finance Committee has discussed the audits extensively, the 2017 audit is close to completion and work has commenced on the 2018 and 2019 audits.

Personnel and Policy Committee: N. Johnson presented the update. The Personnel and Policy Committee met on January 19, 2022, to discuss the 2022 NPL organizational chart. The Committee also discussed the chart in relation to vacancies and positions. The departmental descriptions are in the process of being completed. Closures due to COVID-19 were also discussed at this meeting and staff was able to return to work based on a negative PCR test, with 100% of staff complying with this policy. New isolation and quarantine protocols were reviewed. Two grievances were also discussed, and J. Bowling-Dixon is working with HR to work through those issues. A public comment policy was drafted by the Committee and will be shared with the Board.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

Contract for Audit/Financial Systems Consultant: J. Bowling-Dixon presented the contract to the Board. She explained that the delay in getting completed audits is in part due to the contractor, Tanya Mitchell, being part-time. The new contract allows for her to double her hours and provide overall expertise to assist in improving current systems and bringing them up to date to allow future audits to be expedited.

The Finance Committee has reviewed this contract proposal with the staff and endorses entering into this contract.

On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by T. Crist, it was moved to enter into a contract with Mino AFP and Associates LLC to facilitate completion of legally required financial documents and to provide consulting advice and services to the finance department at a rate of \$12,902 per month for a period of 12 months. Motion carried unanimously.

11. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

A public comment policy that will help to guide public comments during public library meetings was drafted in the last personnel and policy meeting. The policy has been reviewed and commented on by the Board prior to this meeting. The final policy was presented for approval and was read in full by L. Wells.

On a motion made by M. Rodriguez, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to accept the Newark Public Library Public Comment Policy as read by L. Wells. Motion carried unanimously.

A new statement will be read at the start of the public comment section of the next meeting, reflecting this new policy.

J. Bowling Dixon read a comment from Facebook questioning why the state grant did not provide funds for the HRIC. L. Wells noted that with HRIC, the Development Committee, and the Foundation working more closely on this project, how important information is communicated to partners will be improved and she apologized for the oversight. It was noted the Board was informed of this when receiving the package for this meeting, and HRIC is one of five projects that will commence if other funded projects do not have matching funds by April.

12. **FORMING COMMITTEES**

L. Wells noted that she wished the committees to remain the same for the most part but requested changes to chairs and for the committees to be four-member committees instead of three.

For the Personnel and Policy Committee, it was agreed that Toni be the chair working with N. Johnson, A. Richardson, and D. Morel as Vice President.

D. Morel will continue to chair the Finance Committee with participation from T. Crist and R. Steinbaum.

T. Crist will be the new chair of the Facilities Committee with participation from Toni and H. Abdus-Sabur.

The Development Committee will continue to be chaired by R. Steinbaum with participation from A. Maat and M. Rodriguez.

13. MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion made by M. Rodriguez, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved that The Newark Public Library Board of Trustees move into Executive Session at 7:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

14. 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:

Kevin Wilks	New Hire	November 22, 2021
Asha Mobiley	New Hire	December 6, 2021
Mary Gable	FMLA	December 20, 2021
Jamish Montague	New Hire	December 12, 2021
Mohend Mechiet	New Hire	January 3, 2022
Scharron Little	New Hire	January 3, 2022
Kevin Chung	Promotion	January 3, 2022
Evelyn Fabian	FMLA	January 10, 2022
Tanika People	Resignation	January 21, 2022

On a motion made by R. Steinbaum, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to approve the Personnel Resolutions for January 26, 2022. Motion carried unanimously.

15. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by A. Maat, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 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