

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
VIA TELECONFERENCE  
MARCH 30, 2022, 5:00 P.M.**

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Domingo Morel	Vice-President
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee
Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee (from 5:02 p.m.)
Nicole Johnson	Trustee (from 5:05 p.m.)
Timothy Crist	Treasurer

**STAFF:**

Joslyn Bowling Dixon	Director
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
Rod Jefferson	Assistant Director Finance
Ingrid Betancourt	Assistant Director Special Service
Jacqueline Jones	Security
Diego Quintero	Head of IT
Kirsten Giardi	Assistant Director, Development
Anne Webb	Executive Administrative Assistant to the Director

**ABSENT:**

Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
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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 M. Rodriguez, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve the Public Session minutes dated January 26, 2022, as amended, correcting the spelling of Toni's name. Motion carried unanimously.**

**3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

L. Wells provided a brief President's Report. She thanked staff for their work on all the events that took place since the last meeting.

**4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

J. Dixon provided the Director's Report in writing to the Board for information. She instead used this time to provide a Bridge Report.

J. Dixon apologized for the way the State Construction Bond was communicated at the last meeting and expressed those communications have improved since that time.

I. Betancourt presented Bridgepoint goals the special collections department has completed over the past six months, including training on exhibition development. The workshops were presented by a Rutgers' professor, and two public services team members also joined this training. Special Collections staff also partnered with two community groups to create two co-curated exhibits. The first featured Black women entrepreneurs in Newark presented in partnership with the Self-Made Photojournalist Project in Newark. The second exhibit was presented in partnership with the Souls Shot Portrait Project, which links artists with families of victims of gun violence. Five additional goals and their progress can be found in the documentation for this meeting.

A. Coats updated the Board on their progress with reimagining spaces, noting vaccine clinics have been hosted at four branch locations. The Winter Reading plan was successfully completed in February. Public services staff have completed 130 hours of professional development and are continuing to participate in a wide variety of training sessions in customer service, leadership, equity and in committees that promote networking and peer learning. A. Coats outlined several branch managers and other staff who are participating in various committees, conferences, and groups. Recent programs for patrons were outlined including Minecraft Coding Classes for children, knitting classes, and crafting programs for children. In partnership with the mayor's office, the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Program is underway to support parents and families to introduce literacy to children. A. Coats will ensure this is in participation with public schools. Parents are free to choose whatever books they would like, and library staff can make book recommendations. In 2022, 8,284 children, 1,980 teens, and 328 adults participated in programs.

L. Colson outlined the tasks of the human resources department. Their first goal was to reinstate the Newark Library Staff Service and Recognition Awards Breakfast by August 2020, and L. Colson outlined the importance of these awards. In early April, they will have a breakfast celebration for Library Appreciation Week, and certificates, pins, and a gift of appreciation will be presented to employees for their service in increments of five years. The second goal was that by May 2020, Human Resources will implement an employee evaluation system, and L. Colson outlined the importance of these evaluations. The 360 Platform used by the City of Newark Staff for reviews will be used by the Newark Public Library Human Resources Department, and L. Colson outlined the evaluation structure.

K. Giardi noted her department is responsible for fundraising and communications and expressed her appreciation for the extra assistance while one of their staff is on maternity leave. A new CRM is being used and their templates will assist in the goal of creating an internal newsletter that can later be used as an external newsletter. The first newsletter should be

completed in Spring 2022. The NPL Ambassador Program was launched in August 2021 and allows people to create a pledge that they have three years to make payment on. Currently, nine ambassadors have been recruited, which bring in \$31,000 over a three-year period, and for Library Appreciation Week, an ambassador recruitment event will take place. The goal is to have 20 ambassadors by the end of 2022. Shop NPL website is up and running and includes t-shirts and bags. Communications announcing this effort will be sent out in conjunction with Library Appreciation Week.

R. Jefferson outlined his goals in conjunction with the funding of technology tools. Finance was to complete all audits in arrears and the 2017 audit was completed and the 2018 and 2019 audits are in progress and are scheduled to be completed by September 2022. The completion of these audits will allow the library to apply for more funding and grants and be in alignment with state requirements. Finance is to migrate to QuickBooks and this process is underway.

J. Jones outlined the goal of a producing a better evacuation plan, conduct semi-annual fire drills, ensuring all signage is correct and working, having a point person for each department to ensure all departments are clear in case of a fire, and providing a muster point for staff. A fire extinguisher workshop will take place in early April to train staff on their use.

Z. Meri explained that a team of two is tasked weekly with maintaining the grounds, and this is all done without gas-powered tools. Checklists were created and are being used for maintenance staff to follow to ensure all tasks are completed regularly. A new pickup truck has been purchased that is more fuel efficient and will be wrapped with the library logo and messaging. Two electric cargo vans are being purchased thanks to a \$150,000 grant. GPS systems were installed in the library vehicles to monitor the use of the vehicles and cameras to ensure safety in case of an accident.

D. Quintero noted that all public areas of each branch are now covered by Wi-Fi. Several branches have already received updated hardware. The IT department has successfully migrated to a cloud-based Office 365 platform along with a global signature for branding and personalized contact information for each staff member. The new CRM platform has been implemented, and IT is training staff to use this.

G. Williams updated the Board on the progress of reutilizing vacant and underutilized spaces. The repair of the façade at the main branch will begin in April 2022 along with an exterior lighting program. A charette has been designed to look at the library system potential overall and focus on the Clinton branch. A viable option in the relocation of the Clinton branch has been identified. Funds were received from the city's municipal bond to allow renovations of the Hispanic Research and Information Centre, and this will kick off in April and completed by the end of 2022. Funding was received for the phase 1 relocation of the vacant 34 Commerce Street building, which has been vacant for decades, and construction will commence in April 2022.

## **5. TREASURER'S REPORT**

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

### **Bill Sheet 1320, January 2022**

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

<b>Gross Payroll Activity</b>	
November 12	\$ 236,118.78
November 26	\$ 242,793.16
<b>Disbursement Activity</b>	
Operating Account	\$ 155,864.30
Grant Account	\$ 11,918.95
Endowment Account	\$ 14,434.58
Capital Account	\$ 00.00
<b>Total Disbursement for November 2021</b>	<b>\$661,129.77</b>

**Bill Sheet 1321, February 2022**

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

<b>Gross Payroll Activity</b>	
December 10	\$ 243,173.23
December 23	\$ 246,974.45
<b>Disbursement Activity</b>	
Operating Account	\$ 649,961.39
Grant Account	\$ 90,119.41
Endowment Account	\$ 5,653.05
Capital Account	\$ 0.00
<b>Total Disbursement for December 2021</b>	<b>\$ 1,235,881.53</b>

**On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheets 1320 and 1321 for January and February 2022, respectively. Motion carried unanimously.**

**6. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Development Committee:** The Development Committee met recently, and the grant report was provided, which included grants from the Victoria Foundation. This foundation has revised its mission and is reconsidering future grants. In the meantime, a substantial grant was provided and is being used for a DEI consultant, employee scholarships and pathways to professional librarianships, and other staff PD.

Several events are upcoming to expand the ambassador pool, including a brunch on May 21 by several Library Friends groups. Board members were encouraged to attend this event. The 2022 gala will take place on December 7, 2022, and the Board was encouraged to share ideas for corporations, foundations, or community members who could be spotlighted at the gala as well as suggestions on the after party.

The Development Committee was asked to expand the library's donor base, and a consultant has been hired for three months to generate prospects, provide marketing and programs to attract an

updated and diverse donor base. An additional staff member may be hired in the future, and the consultant will assist in educating the committee on choosing the right member with the right position description.

A programming policy is being prepared and will be discussed at a future meeting.

Friends of the Library are supporting the ambassadorship and HRIC project and looking at an event in early May to celebrate educators in Newark. They are also doing a book sale April 28 to 30, 2022, in the main library and branches were asked to cull their books and donate to the Friends.

Nikole Hannah-Jones has committed to being a speaker for the 2022 Philip Roth lecture, and this is in partnership with the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and Credential to assist in funding this event. This will take place in November 2022.

**Facilities Committee:** The facilities committee met February 17, 2022, and March 9, 2022, and a slide presentation provided updates on recent events.

The Children's Room at the main library will be recarpeted. The heating issues are being addressed and a plan to systematically review the traps and gate valves on the radiators is underway.

The \$50,000 grant to create a maker's place has been received and this will be installed at the back of the main library where the video collection currently is by the end of June 2022.

A list of capital needs is being compiled, and this includes the windows at the rear of the main library need to be replaced, brickwork needs to be redone, and the fire alarm system needs to be replaced.

The Vailsburg branch has a roof leak and damaging the walls. The foundation and stairs leading up to the building are in need of repair. Repairs will begin in early April 2022.

The Clinton Branch temporary location is in advanced discussions with NAN Tech at 400 Hawthorne Avenue, and the goal is to open this temporary branch in June 2022. Staff is working with city hall and other area organizations to gain support for this project, and community outreach efforts will commence once the agreement is finalized with NAN Tech. This location was discussed with various contacts in the community provided by the mayor and others, and this resulted in the decision to find a branch in the Clinton Hill neighborhood. The outline for the development of a relocation plan has already begun.

The HRIC project is underway and funding for this is from City of Newark, capital allocation, a corporate foundation and a private foundation. This project includes moving the computers and potentially includes elevator repair and restroom renovation. Costs are being carefully scrutinized.

The Philip Roth Personal Library humidification levels have been adjusted and repairs resulting from the humidity in the building will commence shortly.

Required façade repairs were outlined and funding is from Preserve New Jersey, and the hoped-for lighting plan was discussed, which still requires funding.

An update on the charette was presented, and a meeting will take place in late April 2022 to discuss this further.

Newark 360 was briefly discussed, and the Committee is working to ensure the library continues to be considered in the City's new master plan.

**Finance Committee:** D. Morel presented the update. The Finance Committee met on February 16, 2022, and March 16, 2022. The Committee focused on completing the 2017 audit and the 2022 budget. At this point, the financial standing of the Board is as expected for 2022. The grant report was reviewed, and it was noted that it doesn't reconcile with what the Development Department is showing.

**Personnel and Policy Committee:** N. Johnson presented the update. The Personnel and Policy Committee met on March 10, 2022. A social media policy was discussed in this meeting. A new payroll system is being rolled out and employees will be paid in 26 biweekly pays each year and a meeting with the respective union representatives took place to discuss this. A document developed by legal counsel was presented, which assists the library in implementing best practices for policy development and changes.

George Hawley was congratulated for his 49 years of service.

7. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

**Resolution: 2017 Draft of Audit:** The finance committee has completed the 2017 audit, and the audit was presented to the Board prior to this meeting for acceptance. This is the last audit to be completed with the current audit firm. Future audits will be completed by Weinstein and Weinstein.

**On a motion by T. Crist, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Newark Public Library accept the audit completed by WatsonRice LLP for the fiscal year 2017. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Social Media Policy:** The social media policy assists the Library in addressing issues related to staff social media use. This was vetted by the Library's counsel. This policy was provided to the Board prior to this meeting.

**On a motion by M. Rodriguez, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve the Newark Public Library Social Media Policy. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Acceptance of NJ State Library Bond Funds:** All libraries accepting State Library Construction Bond monies are passing a similar resolution. The full resolution was provided to the Board prior to this meeting.

**On a motion by T. Crist, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to accept the resolution to accept State Library Construction Bond Funding. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Day after Thanksgiving and Christmas Policy:**

**On a motion by D. Morel, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved that the Newark Public Library will be closed on the day after Thanksgiving and the day after Christmas. Corresponding dates will be added to the holiday calendar. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Approve 2022 Budget:** The budget is for planning and financial monitoring purposes. This budget allows for a conservative approach to managing the finances of the library. The library has requested an increase in city funding, and if approved, a revised budget will be created.

**On a motion by A. Maat, seconded by D. Morel, it was resolved to adopt the 2022 budget as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Return to in Person Meetings:**

**On a motion by N. Johnson, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to return to in-person meetings for the May 25, 2022, meeting and every meeting thereafter. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Resolution: Appreciation for Retirees:**

**On a motion by T. Crist, seconded by N. Johnson, it was resolved to show appreciation for George Hawley and Joan Benjamin for their many years of service to the Newark Public Library and congratulate them on their retirement. Motion carried unanimously.**

9. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The public comment statement was read. There were no public comments.

10. **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. 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:


**On a motion made by N. Johnson, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to approve the Personnel Resolutions for March 30, 2022. Motion carried unanimously.**

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 25, 2022.

**On a motion made by H. Abdus-Sabur, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 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

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Joslyn Bowling Dixon, Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date