

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
MARCH 22, 2023, 5:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS

Domingo Morel	Vice President
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee

STAFF:

Ingrid Betancourt	Interim Director
Anna Coats	Assistant Director, Public Services

ABSENT:

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Nicole Johnson	Trustee

Minutes prepared by Mary-Margaret Scrimger of 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, The meeting was called to order.

2. APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

On a motion made by A. Maat, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to approve the Public Session Board of Trustees minutes dated January 25, 2023, as amended. Motion carried.

There was discussion regarding errors in the Facilities Committee section, which required amendments.

3. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I. Betancourt congratulated D. Morel, as his new book was recently published. She also congratulated R. Steinbaum for coordinating, organizing, and co-producing the Roth events. She highlighted that the facilities team has completed the assessment of the infrastructure, repair, and maintenance needs and costs through the NPL system, the next priorities will be discussed with finance. There were issues with the glass floor panels from floors two to six. A structural engineer has been selected for the repairs.

The third-party PSEG efficiency program is almost finished, and upgrades have been completed with the exception of one branch. The PSEG efficiency program has upgraded lighting and will be more efficient, allowing the Library to save money. Branches have also reported improvements in the quality of light.

There has been development on the LCBA main branch renovation and modernization, as well as progress at the Clinton branch project. HR processes are being streamlined, and the library will be closed on March 24, 2023, for a staff wellness day. This will include team-building activities, workshops on stress management, mindfulness and meditation, and sessions on movement and dance, the aim is to help reduce burnout.

A. Coats highlighted programs by the Public Services challenges. There was a STEM event that created parachutes for characters from *Where The Wild Things Are*, and teens worked with 3D printing to explore architecture. For adults, grants were provided for ESL and GED classes. There are three social workers interning at various libraries.

Dale Colston provided highlights regarding Black History Month, which was successful thanks to staff. Mr. Kenneth B. Morris Jr. kicked off the celebration. There was a photography event, celebrating black photographers, which was extremely successful. The struggles of the African American community were acknowledged.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

On a motion duly made, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheet 1332 and Bill Sheet 1333. Motion carried.

On a motion duly made, it was resolved to ratify the approval of amendment number three to the contract with OCA architects for \$21,350, which will include interior design services for the renovation and development of the New Jersey Hispanic Research and Information Center in the main library. Motion carried.

T. Crist provided the report. There were two payrolls in both January 2023 and February 2023. There will be enhanced information regarding the accounts at the next meeting.

T. Crist provided information regarding the OCA architects' contracts, which includes adding an interior design element to the contract.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **Development Committee:** R. Steinbaum explained the needs and development of the library via a chart and noted the majority of it will be on hold until the library hires the library director. There are numerous empty roles, such as a director of development and a grant writer, which will likely be a part-time consultant. The gala is a significant upcoming event, and a consultant will be hired for the gala and other events to work with the library until the end of the year.

The NPL Foundation Board meetings have been suspended until the new development director and library director are hired. The NPL Foundation Board will continue to receive quarterly financial reports to stay updated. The object of the NPL Foundation Board involves outreach, research, and cultivation, however, with limited library staff, this is not currently possible. The Newark Public Library ambassadors are a fairly new group and asked for more communication regarding events.

b. Facilities Committee:

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to approve Triple D Construction for \$149,630 for the repair of the stack tower floors. Motion carried.

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve transferring funds to the HRIC project in the amount of \$1,426,673. Motion carried.

T. Crist advised that the stack tower has significant cracks in the glass floors. This was built approximately 120 years ago, and engineers have been hired and evaluated the glass floors. They advised that the first two floors be reopened. Plywood can be placed on the other floors for approximately \$150,000. The repairs should take approximately two to three weeks.

There are challenges with the lighting in the stack towers. The light fixtures are old and the appropriate light bulbs are no longer manufactured. There is a plan to address this.

At the Clinton branch, it was suggested that there be a request for expressions of interest to investigate options.

The HRIC project is progressing. There will be a request for bids in April 2023, which will be due in May 2023; this project will address HVAC issues. Funding will come from the State Library Construction bond grants and foundation support. Money needs to be transferred into the HRIC account to support this project.

The staff lockers, which are approximately 80 years old, will be replaced.

c. Finance Committee: The Finance Committee met in February 2023 and March 2023. The financial report has changed and is more comprehensive, ensuring a clearer picture of Library finances. In the 2023 budget, revenue is lower due to the expectation that there will be lower film revenue and lower grant income. There will be an effort to catch up on independent audits to ensure the library continues to be eligible for various grants.

Regarding expenses, it is expected that there will be higher costs for facility repairs, an increase in payroll, and insurance. The draft expenditures outpace revenue by approximately \$25,000. The Library has received the 2018 independent audit.

There have been two fraudulent acts against the Library. The first was a fraudulent check for \$18,607, which was caught, and the Library is not responsible for. The second was a check for \$2,624, while this is fraud, it is below the \$5,000 threshold and the Library is responsible.

Additional processes are being put in place to reduce the risk of fraud. The Board discussed what "check washing" is. This is when a check is stolen and a chemical solution is applied to remove the recipient's name, which is replaced with a new recipient. The perpetrators are aware of delays in check issuances and reconciliation of accounts.

There was discussion on whether the Board needs to accept and approve audits.

d. Personnel and Policy Committee Report:

On a motion made by A. Richardson, seconded by H. Abdus-Sabur, it was resolved to provide the Personnel and Policy Committee with the authority to approve the hiring of staff. Motion carried.

A. Richardson noted that the Personnel and Policy Committee met on March 13, 2023. The Committee discussed vacancies, librarians, public services, etc. It was highlighted that staff are starting work before they are officially approved by the Board.

Human Resources has requested an employee policy for the investigation of criminal conduct or activity. This will be a process for accusations.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Richardson noted that there has been an interview for the Library Director role. There are two candidates that have been vetted and will be interviewed in the next two weeks.

7. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

9. RESOLUTION TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved that the Newark Public Library Board of Trustees move into the Executive Session. Motion carried.

10. APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL RESOLUTIONS

On a motion made by M. Rodriguez, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve the personnel resolutions report. Motion carried.

11. WRITING CONTEST

It was noted that there will be an open mic on March 30, 2023 for the youth writing contest. There will be a publication of the top 15 submissions. Winners received \$500 for first place in each category, \$250 for second, and \$100 for third.

12. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by A. Maat, seconded by M. Rodriguez, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 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. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Lauren Wells, President

Ingrid Betancourt, Interim Director

Date

Date