



Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes
March 15, 2016
Eastern Branch Library

Present: Chairperson Renee Swartz; Commissioners Don Burden, Frank Wells and Peter Doyle; Director Judith Tolchin

Absent: Commissioners Grace Abramov, James Gray and Nancy Grbelja; Freeholder Lillian Burry, Liaison

Guests: Muriel Smith and Kimberly Avagliano

The meeting convened at 12:22 p.m.

Vice Chair Frank Wells opened the meeting of March 15, 2016 with the following statement:

“The Library Commission has complied with the regular requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act by giving written notice to the Press and County Clerk’s Office and by posting on the Library we page the date, time, and place of the meeting.”

Everyone in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

Commissioner Peter Doyle brought to the Commission's attention the minutes from the open public meeting on January 12, 2016.

A motion to accept the January 12, 2016 open public meeting minutes was made by Don Burden, and it was seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.

Peter Doyle brought to the Commission's attention the minutes from the closed executive session meeting on January 12, 2016.

A motion to accept the closed executive minutes from the January 12, 2016 meeting was made by Peter Doyle, seconded by Renee Swartz, and unanimously approved.

Commissioner Peter Doyle discussed the minutes from the open public meeting on February 24, 2016.

A motion to accept the February 24, 2016 open public meeting minutes was made by Don Burden, and seconded by Renee Swartz; unanimously approved. Peter Doyle abstained, as he was not in attendance at the February 24th meeting.

Commissioner Doyle made note of the need to schedule a closed executive session at the next meeting, April 12, 2016.

A motion to schedule a closed executive session at the April 12, 2016 Commission Meeting was made by Peter Doyle, seconded by Don Burden, and unanimously approved.

Chairperson Swartz's State and National Report

Chairperson Swartz brought to the board's attention the New Jersey Center for the Book. She suggested that the Commissioners be put on the mailing list, and the board should become honorary members. Mrs. Swartz noted that it would be advantageous for the Commissioners to come to NJ Center for the Book meetings and spoke of Frank Well's past appearances there. The organization has very interesting statewide events, where you meet with many types of people from around the country. Chairperson Swartz discussed that this is a national initiative and each state has their own organization. She mentioned that in addition to being the Chairperson of the Monmouth County Library Commission, she is also the Chair of the New Jersey Center for the Book.

Mrs. Swartz recounted one of the organizations goals: declaring literary landmarks in the state of New Jersey. One of the missions of the Center for the Book is to bring the cultural riches of each individual state forward for the population. In essence, this brings the whole country's historical significance forward. Starting March 17, 2016, there will be a serialized, weekly, 8-part story about literary landmarks. This is written around an adventure story of young travelers trekking through the state and their "seeds of imagination." This will bring attention to reading and writing initiatives and will be unique to the country.

Chairperson Swartz noted that Director Judith Tolchin is now a member of the board at the New Jersey Center of the Book, and she has been very involved in helping bring their initiatives forward.

Chairperson Swartz recounted a recent program at the Rutgers Newark Campus, where the Library Jazz Institute was declared a literary landmark; this is one of the most famous jazz libraries in the world.

Financial Report

Ms. Tolchin introduced the financial data into the open session. In summary, the February financial report reflects the following expenditures:

- \$477,058.95 was spent in salary and wages, with a year-to-date total of \$968,794.46.
- Other expenses- \$77,129.00 were expended in February with \$184,277.34 encumbered. This results in a total of \$399,459.56 charged year-to-date, which is reflected in the financial report.
- The combined year-to-date spending totals \$1,368,254.02 applied to the temporary budget including encumbered expenses.
- As of 2/29/16 \$1,129,449.87 remains in the Reserve Budget for 2015 expenses. Additionally, there are \$34,032.37 that are encumbered.

Motion was made to approve the financial report by Peter Doyle, seconded by Frank Wells, and unanimously approved.

Master Gardeners

Judi informed the Commission that the Master Gardeners are requesting funds for the garden island at the Eastern Branch Library. Renee Swartz and Don Burden confirmed that the Commission had previously approved up to \$1,000 for the Master Gardeners. Mrs. Swartz noted the Master Gardeners had also requested a new recycling bin for the front of the Eastern Branch Library. Judi said regarding the island, the Master Gardeners would need to go to vendors who would accept a voucher. Mrs. Swartz noted that the Master Gardeners are a dedicated group and an asset to the Library.

Commissioner Frank Wells suggested a plaque be erected on the Eastern Branch Library's island to recognize the Master Gardeners' efforts. Chairperson Swartz confirmed that this was a really nice idea, and Don Burden added that we should look into where we purchased Janet Kranis' honorary plaque.

Eastern Branch Report

Renee Swartz welcomed Eastern Branch Manager, Kim Avagliano. Kim discussed the upcoming programs and events at the Eastern Branch Library.

- March 20, 2016: Kevin Westley, local radio host, will do an old-fashioned Irish sing-a-long.
- April 9, 2016: "Ye Olde Monmouth County Authors Book Fair"
- March 19, 2016: Beverly Seward Yackel, Past President of the Monmouth County Genealogy Society is coming to instruct patrons how to research their own family's genealogy.
- April 23, 2016: The Jersey Shore Poets will be back, presenting with poets from around the country.
- April 30, 2016: Flora Higgins and Betty Neals are doing a poetry program centering on African-Americans.
- April 27, 2016: Chris Bogart, Jersey Shore Poet and Shakespearean scholar, will present a program on what makes a sonnet, as well as a "dueling sonnets" program.
- April 2016: Shakespeare films will be presented each week, in honor of the anniversary of Shakespeare.
- Date to be determined: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* display by local artists Colleen Hopson and Barbara Reed, from up-cycled handmade creations and found/re-purposed objects.

Chairperson Swartz touched on having Colleen Hopson and Barbara Reed available certain times of the year to have displays made for the Library. Kim suggested we could provide the artist an honorarium; Renee echoed we should encourage this addition to the Library. Mrs. Swartz inquired whether they were interested in being called upon more often, and Kim stated she will bring this up when they meet next, March 16, 2016 at 4:00 pm. Mrs. Swartz assured this will be very lovely based on the *Alice in Wonderland* display.

- Date to be determined: There will be a surfing program.

Renee stated this program would be best done in May, prior to summer. Don Burden suggested the Library team-up with local vendors such as Billabong to display surfboards. Don Burden later stated that perhaps the Monmouth County Parks Department could get involved to sell beach passes; Renee, Kim, Frank, and Muriel echoed this was a good idea.

Don Burden also noted the bestseller *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics*, and he suggested sculls (oars used for sculling, a form of rowing) be brought into the Library as well. Photos of the old boats off the Navasink River can be included in the program. Renee Swartz stated this would make a good program as another possibility.

Mrs. Swartz touched on Eileen Huang, 2015 National Student Poet of the northeast region. Ms. Huang attends High Technology High School, and she will be speaking at an event with the New Jersey Center for the Book. Mrs. Swartz stated that it would be very wonderful if we could include her in one of our Library programs.

Renee Swartz commended Kim on the good report, a big step-up for the Eastern Branch Library. She noted that Don's comments on the surfing program, adding a commercial element, were a great addition. The Library needs to massage the community element, this gets the Library out into patron's everyday lives.

Kimberly Avagliano exited the meeting.

Children's Technology

Judi stated that the Children's Department received a special promotion for additional AWE machines, early literacy machines for use within the libraries. We would like to have one at every branch. The vendor is a sole-source provider, so we cannot get competitive quotes. Judi requested the approval of the purchase of these popular computers: six machines at a cost of \$16,218.00. Judi noted that this is a significantly discounted price.

Don Burden mentioned the **Ivy Group recommended** we obtain more technology, and so we should proceed with the purchase. Mrs. Swartz inquired whether this purchase would ensure every branch library has an early literacy station; Judi confirmed. Renee Swartz echoed that it is very necessary we move forward with this.

Chairperson Swartz requested a count of the Launchpad's usage at each library by the May meeting. If there is heavier usage at one location, we can provide more Launchpads to that Library. Mrs. Swartz expressed this would make for a great article, to reflect the new addition to the Children's Department of the Monmouth County Library. Don Burden suggested that we tie in the Summer Reading programs, to which Mrs. Swartz said this would be an excellent idea.

Mrs. Swartz inquired how these ideas come to our attention. Judi stated there is a collaborative effort within our library system to bring in new technologies. Mrs. Swartz expressed that this should be stressed to the Freeholders, we have a well-planned, well-thought-out, and well-executed way that we spend our money. We should remember that we are forward looking in setting up teams and committees, we are an amalgamation of many ideas and nothing falls on one person. Judi went on to state that we work as a team, not in a vacuum, and new ideas are executed in a collaborative manner. One thing leads to another, and technology must be purchased in a well thought out manner so we may bring the best value to our patrons. When ideas are brought up, we investigate to see if, when, and how they should be implemented. Our system is not staff intensive at the present time, and we must bring forth projects that make the most sense for our particular library.

A motion to approve the purchase of six (6) Advanced Workstations in Education early literacy stations for \$16,218.00 was made by Frank Wells, and it was seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.

New Jersey Per Capita State Aid Report

Judi presented the highlights of the New Jersey Per Capita State Aid Report, done for the State Library. This report was submitted today, March 15, 2016.

The Monmouth County Library receives significantly less per capita state aid than what other libraries would get, as they tax at a higher rate. The State Library rewards those who are fully funded, as opposed to those who are more economical. Our tax rate falls below .0002 and we tax at a rate of .0001815577, so we would get the lowest amount of the per capita state aid. If our tax levy increases, this would increase the amount of per capita state aid we could receive.

Mrs. Swartz noted this would be a very significant chart to present to the Freeholders; we would receive more funding if we taxed at a higher rate. Don Burden inquired as to whether Freeholder Burry was apprised of this information. Judi stated that she did not believe she was, as the report was just completed today.

Judi assured the Commission that she had taken painstaking efforts to ensure the correct figures, and Judi looked into the definitions for the state aid codes. Interestingly, the Library had reported previously that roughly \$1,700,000 dollars was spent annually on books, and **the Ivy Group** criticized us for spending too much on our collections. What we found was the book processing costs are not intended to be included into that figure, but instead towards miscellaneous expenses. When processing costs are excluded from this figure, the cost of materials decreases approximately 20%, down to \$1,400,000 dollars. This puts us on a comparable range with other libraries.

Peter Doyle summarized that if we raise the taxes we would then get more money from the state as well. Judi responded that it is in our best interest to keep the tax rate as low as possible, being that communities have additional expenses to maintain their libraries.

Judi reported that we received \$73,696 dollars from the state last year. A 4.9% increase to the tax levy will not change the per capita state aid, but over the sustainable plan it might. It is important to note that the per capita state aid is not fully funded, so every library receives a reduced percentage.

Mrs. Swartz stated that this issue should be presented to the Freeholders. Don Burden interjected that the Annual Report should be completed prior to the presentation. Judi assured there has been progress, and she is working diligently to complete this project. Mrs. Swartz noted Judi's hard work, but expressed moving forward this process must be streamlined. Judi confirmed that once Public Relations has a new head and more support in the department, the Annual Report will be streamlined; however, it has been very challenging given the staffing we presently have. The Annual Report will be completed by April 30, 2016.

Director's Report

Branch and Member Report

Manasquan Library has not been pleased that we discontinued the Member Store; we are trying this approach for one year. We encourage members to use funds alternately to purchase books and programming. This is a pilot project, and we do encourage feedback from the member libraries. Some libraries are thrilled that they are receiving more funding for either more books or programs. Judi assured she aims to keep an open dialogue with the towns.

The Administrator of Interlaken called to inquire what their tax levy was; Judi informed them of this figure, as it was stated to the public on the Monmouth County Tax Board website. Judi theorized that perhaps they were questioning if they would like to maintain their reading room. Interlaken is a member town, and they are autonomous and can choose what they would like to do. If they were to leave the county system, they would then have to establish a municipal library. Judi informed the Administrator

that the Monmouth County Library spends \$300,000-\$400,000 on databases alone, and all of their patrons can use these. Interlaken pays \$45,000 into the county system; they could never get the economies of scale that our system brings to them, in addition to the use of all of our branches.

Frank Wells stated that it is a shame that Keyport, his neighboring town, does not belong to the Monmouth County Library system. In Union Beach, it costs about \$38 dollars a household. Judi added that not all towns are this low. Peter Doyle expressed that regardless, it is very minimal as opposed to running your own library. Judi stated that we are a very economically sound institution, and everything we do is in the best interest of the entire community.

The Oceanport Library is talking about the possibility of a new location in Fort Monmouth.

Programs

Chairperson Swartz expressed that we have very much improved the programming. We are using the resources of the library to coincide with the cultural dimension of the country. Peter Doyle questioned what next year's big programs will be. Mrs. Swartz stated that we should go over the next year's programming in the meeting in June. Peter Doyle said that these plans should be thought out a-year-and-a-half or two years out.

Staffing Report

There have been a number of Branch Manager changes:

- Beth Henderson (formerly Branch Manager of Ocean Township) is now the Branch Manager of Howell Library.
- Rachael Yost-Scalise (formerly Branch Manager of West Long Branch) is now the Branch Manager of Ocean Township Library.
- Katie Kenny (formerly Branch Manager of Oceanport) is now the Branch Manager of West Long Branch Library.
- There is an opening as Branch Manager for Oceanport Library, and we will be interviewing for this position in the near future.

Facilities

Pictures of the Headquarters Library were taken which reflects what the architect saw. Judi noted that there are lots of issues that we need to address.

Publicity

The Monmouth County Library was mentioned in the "Senior Scoop" article in *The Asbury Park Press*. The article discussed programs at the Monmouth County Library that are geared towards seniors.

We were mentioned in the "Best Bets" article in *The Asbury Park Press*.

We also were mentioned in the "Communicating Across the Racial Divide" article in *The Atlantic Highlands Herald*.

Consultant, Muriel Smith's Report

Muriel announced she was very excited about the upcoming book fair. All of the author slots are filled, and next year it will be even larger. Mrs. Swartz stated that it will only get bigger, and Freeholder Burry will give a proclamation at that event. She stated it would make a lovely article.

Muriel stated she will continue stories on the Shakespeare events, and commended Donna Mansfield on a very diverse spectrum of programs which she created in a very short period of time.

Motion was made to go into executive session by Frank Wells for the purpose of discussing union negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, and contractual obligations, seconded by Peter Doyle, and unanimously approved.

Closed executive session began at 1:51 p.m.

Closed executive session ended at 2:04 p.m.

Motion was made to go back into an open, public session by Frank Wells and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.

Motion to extend the Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement with Ocean County Library for three years with a cap of \$10,000.00 dollars annually was made by Don Burden, seconded by Frank Wells, and unanimously approved.

Motion to reclassify one part-time with benefits position to a full-time with benefits position in the Monmouth County Library's Table of Organization was made by Peter Doyle, seconded by Frank Wells, and unanimously approved.

Motion to approve the 2016 budget in the amount of \$17,485,000 dollars for salary, wages, and other expenses was made by Don Burden, seconded by Frank Wells, and unanimously approved.

Peter Doyle requested a motion that will request that the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders to approve a tax levy of \$14,950,000, an increase of 4.9122%. This increase is consistent with the proposal for sustainability put forth by the Craig Marshall, Director of Finance at the County of Monmouth, to the Monmouth County Library Commission in 2015.

Motion to request that the Board of Chosen Freeholders approve a \$14,950,000 library tax levy at a 4.9122 % increase consistent with the proposal for sustainability put forth by the Director of Finance for the County of Monmouth to the Library Commission in 2015 was made by Frank Wells, seconded by Peter Doyle, and unanimously approved.

The Monmouth County Library will discuss in the future a place for a piece of artwork to present to the public.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Don Burden and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 2:06 pm.

The next meeting will be at Headquarters Library on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 at 12:00 p.m.

Submitted by Christina Roma