

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes

January 12, 2015

Headquarters

Present: Commissioners Grace Abramov, Peter Doyle, James Gray, Frank Wells, Chairperson Renee Swartz, Freeholder Lillian Burry, Acting Director Judi Tolchin

Absent: Commissioner Nancy Grbelja

Guests: Freeholder Director Gary Rich,
Additional Guests: Kathy Allert, Kelly Tubridy, Virginia Lyon

The meeting convened at 12:31 pm.

Frank Wells opened the meeting of January 12, 2015 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 web page the date, time, and place of the meeting.”

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

Grace Abramov, Peter Doyle, James Gray, Frank Wells, Chairperson Renee Swartz, and Freeholder Burry were all present at the time of roll call.

The meeting began with the reorganization of the commission. Commissioner Frank Wells opened the meeting with nominations.

James Gray asked the commission in light of the Ivy Group Report to consider a co-chairing of the commission. Renee Swartz stated they do have deputy chair and Grace Abramov stated for the commission to move forward with the new bylaws [with a commission elected chairperson.]

Frank Wells nominated Renee Swartz for Chairperson, seconded by Grace Abramov. Motion approved by Grace, Peter, Frank and Renee, opposed James Gray based on his previous reason.

Frank Wells nominated Don Burden as secretary, seconded by Grace Abramov, unanimously approved.

Renee Swartz nominated Frank Wells as Deputy Chair, seconded by Grace Abramov, unanimously approved.

Frank Wells suggested the idea of two treasurers stating the commission has two good people with Peter Doyle and Nancy Grbelja. Freeholder Burry stated to define the role of treasurer. James Gray stated the treasurer signs vouchers that are over \$9,999. Renee Swartz stated that Nancy is very good with negotiations and representing the board. She also stated that Peter Doyle has met with the Acting Director Judi Tolchin and has been available to speak with Craig Marshall to discuss and go over points about the budget and has given advice to the commission and the acting director. Peter Doyle stated he is honored and would like to share it with Nancy Grbelja if she agreed to it also stating if the bylaws

would allow it. Frank Wells stated the bylaws could be amended to include two treasurers. For the purposes of this meeting Peter Doyle would serve as treasurer.

Chairperson Report

Renee Swartz stated that she looks forward to everyone on the board in being participatory with their valid commitment to the library. She further stated that the library has been vibrant and productive under the stress of finances, and diminishing staff. Renee Swartz stated that she would like to commend and express the commission's appreciation to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for the Ivy Group report. It has helped the library commission to look at the libraries situation and see what areas need to be improved and to get the resources to keep the library viable. Renee further stated that it was recognized that 72% of the population of Monmouth County is walking in through the doors of the library with the endorsement of programs and reaching out to the community in serving their needs. Renee stated the commission knows the library is behind on technology, needs replacement of staff and money to move forward. *Freeholder Burry stated administration has offered the assistance of Greg Putnam, unfortunately they had problems of their own and was not able to follow through with giving the assistance to the library. She stated there were things in the report to take note of and anyone reading it may not understand that some things were in progress and there were situations beyond the commission's control.*

Freeholder Lillian Burry has been renamed the liaison to the library and will continue to be a hands on representative that she has been all along. Renee Swartz thanked Freeholder Burry on behalf of the commission stating that she has been the most productive addition the board, she has not missed a meeting, she has moved the library agenda forward, has provided input and putting through things that the board has tried to get through.

Renee Swartz stated that this year to have an emphasis on public relations and be aggressive in letting the public and the Board of Chosen Freeholder's know what the library is doing with programming and serving as a community center. There was a criticism on too many programs from the Ivy Group report however the \$110,000 spent on programming is minuscule. James Gray inquired if the library could use the auspices of Laura Kirkpatrick since the library lost their public relations person. Lillian Burry stated that yes however because of the volume of work that Laura has, the library may not get the attention it needs and it would be best to get a replacement. Acting Director Judi Tolchin stated the public relations position was allocated to technology. Renee Swartz stated that it is a serious issue to get the message out about the library. Freeholder Burry stated not just the public should know but also the Freeholders and they should hear it from the public. Renee stated that the library should do an advertising series in the newspaper for the public in a campaign entitled - Did you know? Ie: that the library has free tax help. Grace Abramov suggested a quarterly insert in the paper. Don Burden suggested appealing to the younger crowd with Facebook and Twitter.

Peter Doyle stated a focus should be on hiring a director full time and then give the director the guidance to make this happen. Renee Swartz stated the commission has put in place a procedure of advertising the position, an interview process and a decision. The commission will charge and oversee what the director has to do and think over exactly what the agenda is to accomplish this and give that person the ability to do what they can.

Judi Tolchin stated the library is working with at least 20% less staff. Staffing the public service desks and staffing the library with a safe number of people has become difficult. Things we would like to do has become more difficult, staff are doing extra hours at straight time and often times we have to get someone there last minute and we don't have the staff anymore to do it. The Ivy Group indicated to accomplish basic core functions of the library given the amount of hours we are open often times people who are in roles of leadership/management positions find themselves on public service desks actually handling patrons because that's what they have to do; it is the new reality we face. Grace Abramov stated when you don't have enough money or staff something has to be cut like services and hours. Renee stated the commission knows that and to establish an agenda for this year and the Board of Chosen Freeholders knows we can't keep on and keep the level of service if we are handicapped by staff and funding. We need extra financial help with the dedicated tax stating not 10% but by adding about \$5.00 to \$35 or \$40. Freeholder Burry stated it's the only way. Don Burden stated the county has made an investment in the library system and to not reinvest in the assets they have is bothersome. A plan itself would need major work. Renee stated there is a priority of a staff and technology. There are only so many ways to spend money and may have to include architectural changes where Eastern Branch has done without a stairway for years, leaving for space that is not fully utilized. This year the commission should concentrate on the overall picture of money and staff which is a reality they can't do without.

Freeholder Report

Freeholder Director Gary Rich commented on why the study was done and it was not to look at the library in a negative way, just what is the future of the library and where is it today. He was not aware that 72% of the county that uses the library and stating that it does provide a function. He suggested the commission to justify and come up with a plan and based on the report have the opportunity to say what the library has done since the report has come out. He suggested to the commission to make a plan and request for the next director as quickly as possible. Lillian Burry interjected and stated that the commission did not receive the report until about a month ago and that is not enough time to respond to the report. Renee Swartz stated that there is a divide and the intentions are good and it was good for the Freeholder's to see how the commission is run and see the deliberation and how it is organized. She stated the Ivy Group Report was a good thing. Don Burden stated to prioritize in a 3 year or 5 year plan with capital investments and how we are going to get there and asked for the definition of what resources we can expect from the county versus what is internal. Renee stated that it has been on a decrease and other issue of losing staff is a priority. Lillian Burry stated that she doesn't think we should be responsible for paying the utilities in the buildings owned by the county; it is in excess of \$3,000,000 stating what the money would mean to the library. Three years ago it was the other way. Grace Abramov gave the example of Howell and it is responsible for the Howell Library Building. Renee Swartz stated it was good for Freeholder Director Gary Rich to come to the meeting because it was when the Freeholder's decided to take over the money through the charges. She stated that we were fine until the county was taking out \$3,000,000 and cutting the budget. That was when the problems began. Freeholder Director Gary Rich exited the meeting.

Judi Tolchin requested a motion to accept the minutes from the December 16th 2014 meeting. A Motion was made to accept the Minutes from the Dec. 16th, 2014 meeting and the closed executive meeting minutes by Frank Wells seconded by Don Burden, unanimously approved.

Publicity Report

Renee Swartz stated to reach out for a more public image with a Valentine project. Boxes will be placed at the charge desks, and in the children's room where slips of papers will be given and provided for the public answering the question Why I Love My Library? Some of the answers will be publicized in articles also with Did you know... telling the public of the services of the library. Renee stated to have 5 or 6 articles written that tells the story of the library quoting some of the responses. Judi stated that she, Rick, and Donna had idea for publicizing the library with the library being at the palm of your hand, with the Apps and accessing the library electronically. Freeholder Burry stated that the library webpage needs some work. Judi stated the library does not have a webmaster and that 5 different librarians each have a portion of the webpage. Renee Swartz stated for an emergency appropriation should be made to get a webmaster. Donna Mansfield entered the room and brought in the prototypes of the boxes for the Why I Love My Library campaign. Renee stated it is a great project and on Valentine's Day have some of the quotes drawn from the boxes and candy kisses given out.

Judi stated the library will do the campaign to the middle of February and starting on the 15th the Did you know Campaign will begin. All the branches will be included in both campaigns. Renee stated it is a good start to the public relations campaign and the public support results of Why I Love My Library should go to the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Freeholder Burry stated Renee and she are going to meet with the editors of newspapers and the greater media. **Don Burden suggested having a luncheon at the library for the media people find out what their expectations are of what they can and can't do and show them around the library. Renee suggested using the in house printing for the invitations and need to set an agenda for the luncheon and appropriate emergency funds for it. Lillian Burry stated it would come out of programming. Renee made a recommendation to set a date for the luncheon where the commission can reach out to the media of this county for the purposes of educating them to the resources of library. It was agreed to wait until April or May for the luncheon. Don Burden agreed to be the point of contact and Renee Swartz agreed to help him.**

Financial Report

Judi brought to the commission's attention a voucher to the Sirsi Corporation for a contract of \$126,431.78.

Motion to sign the vouchers was made by Frank Wells and seconded by James Gray, unanimously approved.

Acting Director Judi Tolchin stated that the December budget reflects \$15,491,146 in spending with \$1,368,853 unexpended and not encumbered which will transfer to the reserve budget for 2014. Salaries and wages were unexpended by an amount of \$112, 672. Of the \$1,368,853, expected expenditures include \$756,000 for fringe benefits and \$300,000-\$350,000 for pending vouchers and it is anticipated that there will only be a small amount returning to the reserve account balance at the end of the year.

The Revenue Budget reflects \$14,118,933 in funds. The funds derived from the dedicated tax of \$13,585,000 added and omitted taxes of \$57,438, fines and photocopy \$332,839, state aid of \$74,403, interest revenue of \$47,364, and unanticipated revenue of \$21,867. The total checkwriting was \$386,075 in spending of which \$351,523 library materials, technology equipment purchases, programming charges, tuition reimbursement, equipment maintenance, MCCI charges which will be reimbursed and other expenses. The December reserve budget of the \$3,714,011 available at the beginning of 2014, \$1,297,446 was spent; \$9,744 reimbursed leaving \$2,426,309 to return to the reserve account. The reserve account balance is \$7,118,629 as of January 8, 2015 will sustain approximately 2-2 ½ years as present spending with no improvements. *Grace Abramov inquired about tuition reimbursement and Judi stated it will discontinue this spring. In the 2016 budget the line item will not be there.*

Renee inquired if the library commission has the ability to strongly recommend or send a memorandum to the Board of Chosen Freeholders stating to seriously consider raising the dedicated tax stating before the next 2 years and before the budget is done. Freeholder Burry stated the commission has the opportunity to go before the Board of Chosen Freeholders before the budget is done. *Peter Doyle stated he talked to Craig Marshall and he posed an incremental increase over a period of time to get a budget.*

Judi stated that Colts Neck filed for state aid and got \$210 for the library, stating each municipality can apply through Gov connect which is done through the state library. The money can be used for library services. Judi asked the commission if each community could be asked to apply for this state aid stating it could add up to approximately \$2,100. Judi stated the money would go to the library and given back in services to each library giving examples of purchases of more books, DVDs, etc. Lillian Burry inquired if anyone can apply and Judi stated each municipality [with a branch it supports] can apply and the money would go to their library.

Motion was made by Grace Abramov that Judi sends to all the library branches requesting them to apply for the state aid and whatever money comes to that goes to the library to support library services in their community, Frank Wells seconded, unanimously approved.

Acting Director Judi Tolchin stated that the preliminary budget is higher than last year by only \$100,000 extra for staffing because of replacements and a wage increase in both 2014, 2015. Don Burden inquired about if the library is starting to see a cost differential between print and electronic. Judi stated that the budget for print books has been reduced. Judi stated an additional amount was added for the director. She also asked to purchase a new van to replace the 2007 vehicle; it was decided not to do that this year however adding safety features to the vehicles if it was necessary. Lillian inquired what was included in fringe benefits and Judi stated pensions, health benefits, [employer paid social security] and noted the fringe benefit rate is being paid for part time employees equally though they do not receive health benefits.

A motion was made to go into closed executive session by Peter Doyle, seconded by James Gray, unanimously approved.

Closed executive session began at 2:10 pm.

Closed executive session ended at 2:40 pm.

Open session resumed at 2:41 pm.

Meeting Dates

A new calendar was set for the year with May's meeting being located at the Ocean Township Library, the June meeting at the Allentown Library, September Wall Township Library, October Eastern Branch, November Headquarter, December Eastern Branch. There was discussion for a summer meeting July 14th as a date to meet and/or August 11th. Chairperson Renee Swartz stated there may be an emergency meeting to concerning the new director.

Branch Report

Judi Tolchin stated the West Long Branch Library is closed due to and electrical fire and should reopen mid- February. The Howell Library will reopen on Tuesday. The Oceanport Library got a new bookdrop. The commission received appreciation notes about from the member libraries for the cookie trays. The Sea Bright Library is moving [temporarily] into a church.

Judi stated that a staff member was retiring Feb. 1st and asked the commission's approval for replacing their position.

Motion to approve hiring new Library Assistant was made by James Gray, seconded by Don Burden, unanimously approved.

Judi stated it is a new year and asked if anyone would like to go for Trustee Training. Grace Abramov and Frank Wells agreed they would go to it.

Motion to adjourn was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Frank Wells, unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 2:53 pm.

The next meeting will be on March 10th, at the Eastern Branch Library.

Submitted by Susan Domas