

## **Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes**

**July 18, 2017**

**Headquarters**

Present: Chairperson Renee Swartz, Commissioners Don Burden, Peter Doyle, Frank Wells, Grace Abramov, James Gray and Nancy Grbelja. Also present: Freeholder Director Lillian Burry, Director Judi Tolchin, and Assistant Director Heidi Amici.

Absent: N/A

Guests: Muriel Smith

The meeting convened at 10:07 am.

Commissioner Frank Wells opened the meeting of July 18, 2017 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.”

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**A Motion to approve the open public meeting minutes of June 20, 2017 was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.**

**A Motion to confirm the date of a public meeting on October 10th, 2017 at 11:00 AM was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.**

Muriel Smith brought up the fact that the 4th of July event at the Monmouth County Historical Society at the Allen House in Shrewsbury had a great turnout. She congratulated Judi Tolchin, and stated that the event was well received, with many people taking photographs in front of the Declaration of Independence historical print.

### Freeholder Director Report

Freeholder Director Lillian Burry stated that the library had received great attention with the Declaration of Independence event, and that she herself was proud to have read the Preamble of the Declaration.

There was a discussion of the forthcoming meeting dates and times.

Joining the meeting in progress were Chairperson Renee Swartz and Commissioner Nancy Grbelja.

### Financial Report

Judi reported that \$522,988.77 was spent in Salary and Wages; \$269,863.77 in other expenses for a monthly total of \$792,852.54.

Year to date total expended \$3,965,403.43 with an additional \$220,486.20 encumbered for a total of \$4,178,402.70 charged year to date.

Frank Wells asked if funds that were not used would be reimbursed to the library. Judi Tolchin replied that any funds not spent in the reserve budget would be returned to the library fund balance.

\$1,597,985.17 remains unexpended in the reserve budget for 2016 though an additional \$56,118.00 is encumbered. The financial report also included charges posted to the grant budgets.

**A Motion to accept and approve the June 2017 financial report was made** by Frank Wells and seconded by Grace Abramov; unanimously approved.

Freeholder Director Burry reminded the commission that the Monmouth County Fair would be taking place in the next week. She stated that the library had always, in the past, been well represented by staff at the County Fair, and that she was glad the great exposure for the library would continue.

### Director's Report

Judi Tolchin stated that she and Heidi Amici spoke to the architect of the new Oceanport branch and that the plans for the new building encompassed approximately 3,000 square feet. more than doubling the size of the branch. Heidi Amici discussed with the architect the necessary technology hookups. Judi Tolchin stated that the current plan for the new building included seating for 48 people, which may have been more than necessary. She stated that making the tables smaller, or having less of them, while utilizing the area for more shelf space, may be more beneficial.

Judi Tolchin brought to the attention of the commission the fact that some branches were currently facing issues with air conditioning. She stated that the West Long Branch and Ocean branches had reported issues, and, that while Ocean's issues have been resolved, the issues in West Long Branch may take more

time to address. She stated that for public safety and in accordance with PERC guidelines, all library buildings are recommended to close with a sustained temperature over 80 degrees, and branch services would continue to do so should the problem persist, as it would neither be safe and comfortable for patrons or staff. She stated that, at West Long Branch, the library was unfortunately forced to close during the night of a teen program, which had had to be rescheduled at the last minute, but as online registration had been required for the event, all patrons were notified.

Peter Doyle asked if maintenance of the air conditioning in West Long Branch fell under the responsibility of the township. Judi Tolchin replied that yes, it did, and the township was in the process of seeking the appropriate funding needed to fix it. Nancy Grbelja asked if the employees scheduled to work at the branches that were forced to close were sent home, and Judi Tolchin responded that if there was a significant amount of time left in their assigned shift then they were reassigned to nearby branches that required assistance. Renee Swartz suggested that the commission send a letter to the West Long Branch Mayor and/or Borough Administrator to encourage them to look into the issue, to which Judi Tolchin responded that the West Long Branch manager had already seen to it. Don Burden suggested that it be added to the library closure policy that police be notified when the library closes early. Judi Tolchin replied that the library will notify the town of branch closures, and that it is posted on the website. Judi Tolchin continued that the Ocean Township air conditioning issue was a one-time problem and had been corrected.

### Staffing Report

Judi Tolchin reported that, since January, the library has hired 7 new permanent part-time employees and many seasonal part-time employees, noting that seasonal employees often move up to fill permanent positions. She stated that a priority for 2017 will be to fill the need for qualified employees, notably at Holmdel due to its expansion and move, as well as at other branches. Frank Wells asked about the 3 standing job openings, and Judi Tolchin replied that the library had been working with the county to fill those vacancies. Frank Wells brought up concerns that if the positions were not filled, the county may deem them superfluous and remove them, to which Judi Tolchin replied that that would not be a concern, as a standing vacancy from 2015 had recently been filled. Peter Doyle asked when it would be necessary to increase the staff of the Holmdel branch, and Judi Tolchin replied that it would likely need to be done by October. She noted that while Holmdel would not be extending its hours too greatly initially, their needs may increase gradually- for example, for the Monday morning opening hours. Peter Doyle asked how many more employees would be needed onsite. Judi Tolchin estimated that an additional 14 hours

would be required of a children's librarian, and that a secondary full-time support reference librarian may be needed. Also, an additional 16 hours would be needed in circulation, possibly necessitating another additional full-time employee.

Renee Swartz asked about Holmdel's current circulation. Heidi Amici replied that she had performed a monthly analysis of circulation by hour in all libraries, and deduced that on Mondays, most small libraries that opened at 9 am- for example, Atlantic Highlands and Colts Neck- had a low circulation count for the first hour, usually from 0-5 items. She also noted that higher circulation counts were usually a result of book discussions or special events, but that the 9 am hour was definitely the lightest. Peter Doyle asked if library hours were to be adjusted based on the data gathered, to which Heidi Amici replied that the data was used more to ensure that libraries had the proper staff when needed. Peter Doyle asked if individuals using the library were tracked by hour. Judi Tolchin replied that the people-counters currently installed track by day, not by hour, and therefore the only hourly snapshot of patron usage that can be gleaned is from circulation and employee feedback. Judi Tolchin stated that many patrons came into the libraries early in order to run businesses, do research and utilize the Wi-Fi for Internet access.

Don Burden asked if Holmdel was a large children's or business library. Heidi Amici replied that Holmdel was a very popular library for children's programs. Don Burden asked if there was a tenant assessment, as new patrons in a mall environment would likely be looking for more than children's programming. Judi Tolchin added that the location change to the Bell Works building could bring about a different group of clientele, such as business people in need of printing services for meeting materials and business books. Heidi Amici stated that mobile printing would be enabled for this assumed tenancy. Peter Doyle asked if data would be collected at the Holmdel library beginning on day 1. Heidi Amici stated that data would be collected and compared every 6 months. Renee Swartz shared that the Holmdel library would be opening on November first at the latest. Peter Doyle asked Heidi Amici if the data collection had been difficult, and if it had been done manually or electronically. Heidi Amici replied that it had been a combination of both, that the data had been gathered electronically put together to be presented manually. She stated that she chose a relatively innocuous month to investigate- March, a month that was not in the summer and without any major holidays, and stated that she would revisit the data around October, and compare it every 6 months. Renee Swartz thanked Heidi for her hard work.

Frank Wells asked for reassurance that we would not be moving the books from the current Holmdel library to their new site at the Bell Works building, as he had heard that money from the county would be used to move the books. Peter Doyle stated that we would only be moving our equipment. Renee

suggested that we send a letter to Holmdel, stating how much the commission is looking forward to the great new addition to the system, and to reiterate the commitment to move our equipment. Freeholder Director Burry stated that the Holmdel fundraiser had succeeded in raising quite a bit of funds, and that moving should not be a financial hardship. Peter Doyle suggested sending the letter that Renee Swartz suggested to the mayor and borough administrator.

Judi Tolchin shared that County Council had recommended that the library adopt the county policy for meeting rooms. Renee Swartz asked if their policy was available, to which Judi replied that it had been requested to be made available by August 8th.

Judi Tolchin stated that she had attended the County Library Directors Meeting, wherein the issue of reciprocal borrowing throughout the many communities was spoken of. Judi shared that she did not believe that reciprocal borrowing would be advantageous for our county library system, because allowing others to borrow from our library without joining the library would be detrimental to us and our revenue.

Judi Tolchin also brought up the issue of the equity of per capita state aid which seems to penalize county libraries which tax at a rate lower than 1/3 mill per dollar upon the equalized valuation, even though they exceed the statutory rate of 1/15 mill. She stated that the NJ State Library would be reviewing the state aid policy, and that she believed that the Monmouth County Library, as a county library, should weigh in and advocate for the county libraries to get a fairer portion of state aid. The Monmouth County Library is not the only library that taxed under 1/3 mill rate though we were the lowest taxing library of all of the county libraries, taxing at a rate of .0001802. It was noted that most library systems provide some support to branch buildings and therefore spend more of their budget on facilities issues. Somerset County taxes at .0005, nearly triple the funding rate that Monmouth County receives.

Renee Swartz shared that the library bill for which the commission had strongly advocated had passed both the assembly and the senate, and that, should the governor sign it as a referendum in November, it could be bonded going forward. Judi Tolchin shared that both the Asbury Park Press and the Atlantic Highlands Herald had printed the letter that Renee Swartz had written in support of the bill. Freeholder Director Burry shared that she herself had sent a letter to the legislature on the bill's behalf. Renee Swartz stated that Monmouth County had been well represented in support of the bill.

Judi Tolchin congratulated the Friends of the Monmouth County Library, who had recently restored their 501(c)3 after working tirelessly on its behalf. She stated that there may be an issue regarding the Helen

Schultz fund, which had been set aside to be used by the West Long Branch library. The library will request of the Friends that it be turned into a grant, and that she would write a letter requesting the funds for that purpose. Renee Swartz stated that the commission should congratulate the Friends on their diligence and hard work with a letter. Judi Tolchin added that it would now be easier for the Friends to collect funds, as the contributions would be tax-deductible.

Judi Tolchin brought up the MCCI agreement, an annual agreement to support services to the jail library without a staffing cost to them. The Monmouth County Library would continue to be reimbursed for materials, but staff support would continue to be provided. Mrs. Burry stated that the program was helpful in sharing the public image of the library. Renee Swartz asked about the cost of a librarian, to which Judi Tolchin replied that a librarian is not sent to the site, rather the librarian assisted externally with collection oversight and recommendations and invoice processing. Approximately \$35,000 is put aside from the Monmouth County Library budget for this program, and the Library expends between \$25,000 and \$30,000 on materials, which is reimbursed by MCCI.

Freeholder Director Burry stated that the Brookdale Community College would be celebrating its 50th anniversary, and that the new president of the college, Dave Stout, was excited about re-initiating the plans that had been previously established for program collaboration between Brookdale and Monmouth County Library, perhaps to create a study track for library sciences. Judi Tolchin stated that, unfortunately, there was no Library Science program at Brookdale. Peter Doyle suggested that Brookdale could provide the first step in a plan to eventually acquire a Master's degree in Library Science. Grace Abramov asked why a Master's Degree was a necessity for a librarian, and Frank Wells replied that it was a state mandate. Freeholder Director Burry stated that, at the very least, a collaboration with Brookdale could drum up interest in the profession. Renee agreed, stating that many younger students may not realize that the degree includes a lot of new and interesting technology, data, research, and IT areas of study. Don Burden stated that it would be worth pursuing during the summer before students arrived in the fall. Renee Swartz stated that there would be a fair in the spring, open to students, showcasing many different options for majors. Grace Abramov asked if current pages at Monmouth County Library were high school students, to which Judi Tolchin replied that eligibility for pages begins at age 15, but adults can be pages (monitors) as well. Grace Abramov stated that employment as a page during high school may introduce young adults to a career that they may want to pursue. Freeholder Director Burry compared the hypothetical program to the Brookdale nursing program- a very popular 2 year program and a great way to start out in the field. A comparable program could be started for Library Science and then be finished at Rutgers University. Don Burden stated that such a program would be a great way to

promote the Monmouth County Library. Freeholder Director Burry stated that she would initiate communication between the library and Dave Stout. Peter Doyle added that the library was always on the lookout for part-time help, and that a program may encourage Brookdale students to apply for these positions.

**A Motion to approve continuing support for the MCCI annual agreement was made** by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Frank Wells; unanimously.

The Commission adjourned to Executive Session at 11:03 am

The Commission resumed the regular session at 12:20 pm.

Grace Abramov asked that the public comments be moved to the beginning of the agenda for commission meetings. Renee Swartz stated that, when the public was present to comment, they were typically invited to do so in the beginning, but that the request to formally move public comments to the beginning of the agenda would be taken under consideration.

Renee Swartz thanked the renovation subcommittee for presenting the results of their fact-finding to the entire commission. She also commended Judi Tolchin and Heidi Amici for their hard work.

**A Motion to cancel the public meeting on August 8th, 2017 and the committee meeting on August 1st, 2017, as well as to confirm the dates and locations of the following meetings: September 12th, 11 am at Headquarters**

**October 10th, 11 am at Howell November**

**14th, 11 am at Eastern Branch December**

**5th, 11 am at Headquarters**

**was made by Peter Doyle, seconded by Frank Wells; unanimously approved.**

**A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made** by Nancy Grbelja, and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.