

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes

March 10, 2015

Marlboro

Present: Chairperson Renee Swartz, Commissioners Don Burden, Peter Doyle, James Gray, Nancy Grbelja, Frank Wells, Acting Director Judi Tolchin

Absent: Grace Abramov, Freeholder Lillian Burry

Guest: Daphne Mishkin, Marlboro, Juli Mercado, Marlboro, Gail Gnesin, Marlboro, Joan Moss, Morganville, and Barbara Bateman

The meeting convened at 12:15 p.m.

Renee Swartz opened the meeting of March 10, 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 we page the date, time, and place of the meeting.”

Minutes:

Renee Swartz welcomed and thanked the Board of Trustees from the Marlboro Library for coming to the meeting.

A correction was noted to the minutes of the February 10th, 2015 meeting by Acting Director Judi Tolchin stating that Don Burden was not in attendance; it will be reflected in the minutes.

Motion was made to accept the Minutes from the February 10th, 2015 with the correction by Nancy Grbelja, seconded by James Gray, unanimously approved.

Introductions were made by Renee Swartz, Peter Doyle, Atlantic Highlands, Don Burden, Mayor of Shrewsbury, home to Eastern Branch of the Library, Nancy Grbelja, Millstone, Jim Gray, Manalapan, Judi Tolchin Monmouth County Library Acting Director.

Public Comments:

Joan Moss inquired if she could get a copy of the commission’s bylaws. The commission agreed to post the bylaws on the library website. Renee Swartz requested ideas or thoughts from the guests from the Marlboro Library Trustee Board on how to form a stronger Monmouth County Library Friends Group. Daphne Mishkin suggested advertising to the people who already use the library that may be interested in becoming a friend through displaying posters and banners within the library. It was stated the Friends of the Monmouth County Library is not a 501(C)3. Renee stated that the Friends were in need of revitalization. Daphne Mishkin stated that Robyn, the librarian at Marlboro, identified patrons that were capable and interested to meet with the Marlboro board and discuss becoming a member. Renee suggested that the staff at the charge out desk could identify patrons who may have an interest in becoming more involved in the library and may want to become a Friend of the Monmouth County Library. Don Burden asked the Marlboro Board about their fundraising and it was stated with a board of 5 members that they get funds from their book sale and room rental. Gail Gnesin stated that she

believes the Freeholders have a large influence of what goes on and she stated that the Marlboro Library has an incredible staff along with the Manalapan branch and believes it prevails throughout the system and if the Freeholders don't support what the library needs for staff or what the public is looking for in the library, there is a need to make the Freeholders more enlightened to the library. Renee stated forming a Friends group with the public involved that are voters and support with tax dollars can help to enlighten the Freeholders and will help make them more aware of the library. The library has been criticized for too much programming. Nancy Grbelja stated that only about \$100,000 comes out of the budget for programming which is only a small amount of the library budget. Nancy Grbelja asked the Marlboro Board about what they would like to see and what should be the focus of the library. Juli Mercado stated that the children's programs are excellent with the summer reading and there are programs for the seniors, you may want to reach out to the in between genre. Renee stated the more visible the library is through programming enlarges what the library does with good publicity and being of value to the community. Renee stated the comments from the Marlboro Library Board about programming is an endorsement to the commission that they are valid in their thinking that programming is a great resource to get people to come to the library. Juli Mercado stated an emphasis on electronic resources and eBooks would be helpful. Judi stated that the library has added the downloadable magazines with positive feedback and perhaps more publicity on it would be helpful. She also stated the library has tried to put in multiple copies of eBooks however there are publisher restrictions on the eBooks and whereas a Kindle book may regularly be \$14.99 the library may get charged \$90 for the resource. Daphne Mishkin commented on a library that loans out eReaders two weeks at a time. Judi stated that the libraries concern is the cost to the patron for the device if it is broken. It could likely turn a library user into a nonuser. Gail Gneisin stated she has a friend that just moved to Monmouth County and has been to the headquarters branch. She couldn't believe the library size, what is available and the comfort of it - the entire package compared to Edison library further stating there are eyes that need to be opened. It was asked if articles about library events go into the Patch/Transcript papers. Judi stated the amount of coverage they give us is diminishing but they do give us some. Gail inquired about the library Facebook likes; Joan Moss stated Parents which is children's has 1200 which should skyrocket with summer programming, teen is 500, and the general population is 1500. Renee stated that the web page needs to be redone and upgraded with more publicity of what the library has been doing. Joan Moss inquired if the Commission will be visiting other libraries and will they include their friends group. Renee stated they will be visiting the other branches and will invite their friends group. Barbara Bateman inquired about the Atlantic Highlands Library and their Friends group stating that when the Atlantic Highlands Library joined the Monmouth County Library system they had a friends group; this may have changed. Renee stated that they may want to become a part of the Monmouth County Friends Group. Judi Tolchin stated it may be difficult having a one unified Friends when each town has their own Friends and will want any fundraising to go their local library for programs and other things, this is a challenge the library will have with a unified friends group.

Motion was made by Peter Doyle to go into Executive Session, unanimously approved.

Executive session began at 12:45 pm.

Executive Session ended at 1:30 pm.

Motion to accept the executive session minutes from the February 10th meeting was made by James Gray and seconded by Frank Wells, unanimously approved.

Commissioner Comments

Renee stated since Coleen has left there has been little publicity put out about the library. National Library Week will have food for fines program starting April 12th where patrons can bring in food and have their fines forgiven. Renee stated the for National Library Week she would like an event combined with a reception of wine and cheese to have people join the Monmouth County Library Friends Group. Reference was made to the Middletown Public Library Friends advertisement in forming a new nonprofit fundraising group that the Monmouth County Library could duplicate to advertise for members to become a friend of the Monmouth County Library. Renee stated to put it on the webpage and to make fliers along with bookmarks on good sturdy paper. Renee asked for ideas to go along with the wine and cheese reception. Music, lecture talks and antiques road show were some of the ideas, Nancy Grbelja suggested an art contest to coincide with June being Horse Month. She suggested an art contest for children for Horse Month that could be kicked off in April for National Library Month with a wine and cheese reception to recruit members to the friends group. The art work would be collected in June for Horse Month and then have a third event in September with a wine and cheese reception and art work display with a second recruitment for members. The winners will then be announced at the track in September. Renee stated to start the process in April with National Library Week. Discussion over the programs for Horse month stating including getting the Wells Fargo horses for a program.

Don Burden inquired if Judi had the resources to get this done and she stated the library is strapped but could have the fliers and bookmarks made. Don suggested when patrons are checking out the charge out desk people could put a bookmark in the books.

Renee stated that April is National Library Month and asked about the Monmouth County Spring promotion brochure that she receives and asked about the library participating in it and doing an outreach to the Monmouth Arts.

Financial Report

The February Budget Account Status reflects \$438,549 expended in salary and wages in February with a year to date total of \$1,105,675. Other expenses totaled \$295,978 with a year to date total of \$326,174. The combined year to date total is \$1,431,849 applied to the temporary budget. The check writing reflects \$225,982 applied to the 2014 budget, \$1,091 to the 2014 grant fund used for Oceanport bookdrop and \$295,977 applied to the 2015 budget.

The February Reserve Budget reflects \$226,014 in spending with \$1,122,511 remaining. Today's approval of the voucher in the amount of \$756,045 for fringe benefits will decrease the reserve to \$366,466 and is significantly lower than previous years. Little will be left to return to the fund balance. .

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

The commission requested Judi to add bullet points to the budget cover beginning with a comparison of the budget beginning 2008 before the indirect charges started to the current year. Judi stated in the 2015 budget there is no where to go to reduce anything. The county is allowing for a modest increase to wages, and the fringe benefits remain flat and Judi inquired if the board would like her to rework it and put more into it. Renee suggested a sidebar be added to show how strapped we are; it would where we

have been and where we are now and how much we have been reduced. Judi stated she will include it based on the library spending from those years. Frank Wells stated there was a meeting with the Freeholders a few years ago that the Monmouth County Library is the most efficient library in the state. He further stated that possibly having a large program and extending an invitation to the Freeholders to speak. Renee stated Freeholder Ted Narozanick often attended the programs and spoke at them. Renee stated that you can't have technology without money or the staff to show the people how to use the technology.

Motion to approve the invoice for fringe benefits was made by James Gray, seconded by Frank Wells, unanimously approved.

Judi requested approval for the programming budget for the children's department to book their programs which will include the summer reading programs at branches and members. The budget will remain the same as the previous year. It was decided to approve it.

Don Burden gave the example of Lunch Break in Red Bank - that they have full time people working on fundraising. He further stated that there are many organizations trying to raise funds and we need professionals to help fundraise. Renee suggested another bullet to add to the report is if the Board of Chosen Freeholders intends to the library to raise funds then they need to provide someone to help raise the funds.

Judi stated that she has agreed to cosign with Jeff Sauter the contract with Monmouth County Correctional Institution (MCCI) for the jail library. It would be a 2 year contract at which point the library fund balance will run out and the library won't be able to continue with it. The library provides Lexis Nexis which is \$20,000-25,000 and Charlie Gross spends part of his time advising the library jail and once a year auditing it. The Monmouth County Library does not get compensated for his time only gets reimbursed the exact cost of the databases and other library materials. Another bullet should be added for compensation of his salary for that service.

Chairperson Renee Swartz represented the commission in attending the celebration of the Allentown Public Library and its 50 years. She stated that it was the first branch of the Monmouth County Library system and the historian who spoke at the event did a nice job. Renee stated she had comments from the people of Allentown and how thrilled they are with the Monmouth County Library system. The Commission and the library presented the Allentown Public Library with a citation for their achievement.

Technology Report

Judi stated the children's department got a promotion for more early literacy computers, (AWE are early literacy machines that have special software for children to use) if they trade in one older one they can receive 3 new ones at a cost of \$8,300, a new one will replace the old trade in at its current location giving two other branches an early literacy computer. Renee asked how many more do you need so all the branches have one. Judi stated after the promotion they would need 5 more to cover all the branches. Renee stated to add another bullet was that not all libraries have them the library can't afford to buy them. Don Burden inquired about leasing and Judi stated they didn't offer that. Nancy Grbelja suggested asking schools if they sell their old computers. Judi stated the children have access to

the internet at each library. Judi asked the commission to make a motion stating the offer was only effective until March 31st.

Motion was made to trade in one and purchase 3 new AWE machines for the library was made and seconded by Frank Wells, unanimously approved.

Renee stated there have been new trends in libraries with some offering recording studios. Further stating we are handicapped back in time we are trying to play catch up however we are hindered by shrinking resources. If the board has to make up a fundraising organization then the Freeholders may need to hire someone.

James Gray stated that patrons come up to him asking about the bookdrop at Manalapan not being open during business hours. Judi stated the location of the bookdrop is near an office space and the constant dropping of materials would be a disruption along with letting in the cold.

Acting Director's Report

Judi stated that the West Long Branch Library reopened February 24th after being closed for about 8 weeks. Oceanport will be making a decision for a permanent location for the library or to keep it in the community center. The Sea Bright Library is opening in a church until a permanent location is found.

Judi stated the library is at a critical shortfall with staffing especially library assistants due to staff leaving, retiring, long term absences. Staff positions are being filled by moving part time into full time which doesn't completely help with the shortfall. The commission stated to add this as another bullet to the report. Judi requested the commission to approve positions for 4 part library assistants and 2 seasonal library assistants stating it is in the table of organization. The commission asked if benefits are paid for all employees. Judi stated yes. The benefit rate is applied to each and every employee though part time employees don't receive medical benefits, the most costly part of the rate. It was stated to request full time employees.

A motion was made to hire 4 part time library assistants and 2 seasonal library assistants was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Frank Wells, unanimously approved.

Renee stated to have the flyers printed and bookmarks made on good quality paper with the same message on both for advertising to join the Monmouth County Library Friends Group. Judi stated she will have the art department print them.

A special thank you was made to the Marlboro Library Board of Trustees for attending the commission meeting and expressing their creative ideas.

Motion for adjournment was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Peter Doyle, unanimously approved.

The meeting ended at 2:32 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 14 at the Eastern Branch Library in Shrewsbury [later rescheduled to Friday, April 17 at the Eastern branch at 11:00 am].

Submitted by Susan Domas