

**Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes**  
**Eastern Branch Library**  
**October 13, 2015, 12:00 PM**

**Present:** Commission Chairperson Renee Swartz, Commissioners: Donald W. Burden, Peter T. Doyle, Grace Abramov, and Frank Wells; Freeholder Lillian Burry (Liaison); Director Judi Tolchin

**Absent:** James A. Gray and Nancy Grbelja

**Attendees:** Muriel Smith and Assistant Director Heidi Amici

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**The meeting convened at 12:00 PM**

**Opening Statement:**

Renee Swartz gave the following statement at the start of the meeting:

*“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.**

**Minutes:**

Renee Swartz opened the meeting by requesting that the Commission review the minutes from the previous meeting.

**Donald Burden made the motion to accept the minutes of the September 8, 2015 meeting. Peter Doyle, seconded the motion. With no objection, the minutes were approved.**

**Frank Wells made a motion to approve the closed executive session minutes of the September 8, 2015 meeting. Peter Doyle seconded the motion. With no objection, the minutes were approved.**

**Archives Day**

Renee Swartz discussed Archives Day, a program that was held on October 3, 2015 presented by the Monmouth County Archives. It was a well attended event, despite the inclement weather that day. She also congratulated (on behalf of the Commission) Freeholder Lillian Burry, who was the first recipient of the M. Claire French Award, for her efforts and leadership in Historic Preservation. The Commission was commended for showing their support for Freeholder Burry as she was presented this award. Renee Swartz suggested that when important things happen at the library (like Archives Day), there should be some presence from Commissioners at these events. It is very meaningful to appreciate all the work, planning, and efforts that have been put into these special occasions and events at the Library. She also thanked Muriel Smith for her presence at Archives Day to publicize the event and the activities related to it.

Freeholder Burry made a comment about some staff members who did not know about Archives Day. Renee Swartz pointed out that it is the obligation of the library to have a better system for promoting events such as this, in addition to the efforts that are already being made within the libraries (such as the use of more posters). Regardless of the fact that there are many forms of media being used to help patrons become aware of these events, it is still important to find more ways to relay these packets of information to the public. Judi Tolchin stated that the smaller branches do not have bigger areas to promote events at the libraries, unlike the large screen television at Eastern Branch and

Headquarters. However, a suggestion will be given at the next branch meeting on how to increase patron awareness of library programs and activities throughout the system.

Renee Swartz then discussed the annual report for 2014. The report still had not been produced, but Judi Tolchin assured her, as well as to the rest of the Commission, that she will coordinate with Donna Mansfield to complete it. Renee then praised the library system for doing a great job on the celebration for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* for the wonderful displays, as well as the amount of planning and efforts to make it successful in all of the branches. The performance that will be held at Headquarters (including a tea party and parade) is a wonderful thing to coincide with the event to introduce Judi Tolchin as Library Director in addition to the new Assistant Director.

### **Heidi Amici, Assistant Library Director and Her Vision**

Renee Swartz was pleased to introduce Heidi Amici as the new Assistant Library Director, who will be working with Judi Tolchin. With her qualifications and talents, she will bring much innovation to the library. Judi Tolchin added that she is delighted to work together with Heidi, who has been with the county for over twenty years, providing the libraries with numerous technological advances and improvements. Many of these advances would not have been possible without Heidi Amici. Even now, there are more future technological advances that Heidi has planned for the library. Freeholder Burry noted that the Commission was delighted to create the Assistant Director position, and she has high hopes that it will prove to be a positive motion for the future.

Heidi Amici thanked the Commission for giving her the opportunity to become the Assistant Director, and Heidi praised Judi Tolchin for being both supportive and encouraging as she starts to take the next steps into her new responsibilities. Once the library staffing has been figured out, she proposed plans for the library that will soon be carried out. Heidi Amici gave the Commission her vision for the library (coinciding with Judi Tolchin's), including many different plans that she hopes to implement sometime during the next year or so. Some plans made from last year were completed (or on the verge of completion and implemented which include:

- **The Enterprise Catalog upgrade**
  - This system will be the library's new upgraded public catalog; Staff members will be trained on how to use it. It will be a more user friendly catalog and easier to access.
- **A new accessible digital government document depository**
  - There will now be more ways access the depository in the catalog allowing patrons to see actual documents. In addition, they will be able to print.
- **New child-friendly learning technology**
  - The new technology is a small child-friendly tablet device that is pre-loaded with games (both educational and fun) encased in a sturdy and durable case. This follows the concept of the early learning station computers that are already placed within most branch Children's sections. They may be checked out to children with an adult library card for in-library use.
- **Overdue Email System**
  - The library is working to facilitate an email system for overdue materials; email notices will be sent out to patrons when materials are not returned when due.

Renee Swartz said three years ago, the county asked the library about removing the Government Documents section from the library system and to no longer be a depository. The Commission firmly believed and thoroughly discussed that this section was crucial to the library and to the public. The Commission decided to keep the Monmouth County Library System as a Government

Documents Depository. Heidi Amici's plan for digitally accessible government documents on computers will help patrons offering an easier way to obtain them and enhance their library experience. The updated public catalog computers will be available sometime around the New Year and staff training will be held.

Renee Swartz suggested that Heidi should have a workshop for the Commission to show them what technologies will be coming to the library and how they will be used by the public. In addition, a technology day for the public was also suggested to showcase the technology the library has to offer (new services and technologies). Frank Wells pointed out that if demonstration videos were made for these technologies they could also be put onto the library website for patrons to access. Renee Swartz emphasized to Heidi that, once she settled in, she should submit her list of technologies and services that she would like to have at the library. They should be submitted early so that they would be considered and accounted for in the budget. Heidi Amici's talent and expertise in the technology field will show that the library system is going into the right direction, becoming more technologically advanced and modernized.

Freeholder Burry made a comment about the many different talents that were present during the interviews for the Assistant Director position. She noted that it is really important to try and find sponsorships to help fund the library (for activities, programs, and more). For the future, the Commission may have that individual work on grants.

Grace Abramov stressed that grant writing is just as important as fundraising. There needs to be someone who can be designated to work with all kinds of fundraising. Renee Swartz said that grant writing is something entirely in and of itself. Judi Tolchin also agreed that grant writing is very competitive, as the library recently applied for one and was not selected for it. Even if one put in many resources for the grant application, it does not necessarily guarantee the award of a grant. Grants have many steps and take a great deal of time, effort, and resources to make sure that everything is in order.

Frank Wells suggested that the Commission should have the aforementioned individual from the interview work with fundraising. Judi Tolchin added that Donna Mansfield has been the library liaison for grant writing and has also been working with the Friends of the Library for a long time. With the amount of work that is being put into increasing the presence of the library in various areas, it is important to have a team aid in these efforts in the areas of technology, fundraising, as well as reaching out to the community.

Renee Swartz then discussed the monthly event calendar sent by the library. She wanted to know how far it reaches outside of the library system. She requested, by the next meeting, to see the statistics of how many people and places the calendar goes to, as well as what communities it reaches. Judi Tolchin stated the event calendars have vast reaches through the branch and member libraries, users who access the library web site, and senior communities. The library electronic newsletter is sent monthly to subscribers. The printed postcard and event flyers help disseminate the outreach for the library. Renee Swartz wants to try and find a way to help extend and improve the outreach for the library by having better postings at the other library branches. Grace Abramov said that a Howell councilman has acted as a liaison for the library by sharing event information within the town's communities. Peter Doyle liked Grace's point to have councilmembers become liaisons of the library to help reach out to the member libraries. Judi Tolchin liked the idea; however, she mentioned that not all of the member libraries would like to have such outreach for the branch libraries. Such outreach could overshadow member libraries own activities and events. Renee Swartz suggested that instead of

promoting all the events, the library should try to just reach out to the members for major events such as Archives Day, but this idea can still be worked on.

Freeholder Burry talked about improvements planned at the county owned libraries (Headquarters and Eastern Branch), especially the Headquarters branch. The exterior of the library, the sidewalks, and side gardens still need to be attended to in order to better benefit patrons, most notably the senior citizens. More accessible walkways are needed get into the library. Renee Swartz complimented Buildings and Grounds staff on maintaining Eastern Branch's traffic island, which is now a beautiful garden space. Donald Burden mentioned the Master Gardeners group, as they have been taking care of the new planting space (watering, maintaining, planting, and so forth). The Shrewsbury Gardeners Club has also been in charge of maintaining the smaller planters, while the Master Gardeners have been working on the traffic island. Lots of work has been put into improving the soil in the traffic island to be suitable for planting and the Commission commended the work that has been put into such improvements.

Don Burden discussed a couple of points that would affect the budget. He felt that there are neglected spaces within the libraries, such as where the cafe used to be in the Eastern Branch Library. He felt that a facilities analysis would be needed. He also stressed that the Commission does not have an updated strategic plan since the last plan in 2011. There needs to be a plan layout for the next three to five years, together with the demographics from the Ivy Report, and the communities in the surrounding towns. The Commission had an architect come in years ago to give advice and support to make initial improvements, but issues with the budget had hindered these efforts – especially Headquarters. The exterior and interior of the Headquarters Library needs improvements. Renee Swartz suggested making note of what improvements have been targeted, what is in the works, what has been updated, and the associated funding. From this, the question was raised if there should be a complete funding amount to be provided by the County? Or should the library be responsible for any of the plans through indirect expenses paid from the fund balance?

Judi Tolchin said that the funding for projects such as capital improvements for the Headquarters bathrooms and walkways will be done through the county under the capital improvement program. This would not be something that the library would have to expend from the fund balance. The inside furnishings of the library would be the responsibility of the library, from funding allocated by the Commission. Perhaps the Commission could earmark funds unspent from 2015 to be used for such improvements. In addition, the Joanne Church bequest of \$25,000 could also be used toward the project. An outreach would need to be made in order to start the process and create a design plan for the library interior. A suggestion was made for the next meeting to research whether or not the Commission has to go into using funds from the budget for improvements, and if it would be possible get free consultations for the library. Judi Tolchin has literature from a few architects to consult with. With this in mind, Grace Abramov suggested to project a long range strategic plan at the end of 2016, which would be used and referenced for the next five years (since the last one ended in 2011).

Renee Swartz pointed out that there is a new team with stellar individuals, Library Director Judi Tolchin and newly appointed Assistant Director Heidi Amici, who bring their skills and experience to help move the library in the right direction in technology and much more. When it comes time to work on the budget process, it is important to start with a long range plan. As well as having a committee see how funding can be obtained, how it can be accomplished, and what can be done as of right now. One way is the reconstruction of the strategic plan, which will be worked on in the near future, and will be created by looking into recommendations and advice from knowledgeable individuals. Moreover, it is important

to have Muriel Smith be more involved to publicize any library projects and events. This would bring a positive image of the library to the people.

### **Financial Report**

Judi Tolchin presented the September financial report which reflected the following:

- \$428,682- spent in as salary and wages with a year-to-date total of \$4,426,377.
- Other expenses- \$255,336 with a year-to-date- total of \$2,105,868
- Combined year-to-date total \$6,542,246 applied to the adopted budget including encumbered expenses
- A nine month fringe benefit voucher was submitted to the Commission for approval amounting to \$2,256,028.63, as reimbursement to the county. Consistent with last year, it excluded the full rate for accumulated sick pay for retiring employees. The social security benefit rate is still applied to these amounts. There will be one more quarter to pay [for fringe benefits] near the end of December or early January of next year,
- The library system received \$73,696 in state aid which is slightly less from last year, but there was no change from the state aid funding.
- There has been no change in the reserve budget, whatever is remaining will likely go into the fund balance.

**Don Burden made the motion to approve the fringe benefit voucher. Grace Abramov seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.**

**Peter Doyle made the motion to accept the financial report. Grace Abramov seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.**

### **Director's Report**

For the branch and member report - Tinton Falls, a member library, has a construction delay. They are planning a tentative reopening for early November. The previously expected date was October, but issues with the flooring and other problems affected the renovations, which were for ADA upgrades. The Tinton Falls Library is very happy for the support of the county library system, otherwise their patrons would not have library services. Tinton Falls patrons are able to obtain library cards at their member library and any branch library.

In terms of programming, the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration for Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is currently ongoing. The final program will be the Directors' event, followed by a theatrical performance and a tea. Wegmans is donating tea, and Battlefield Orchard is providing the refreshments.

September was 'Library Card Sign-up' month; there were over one thousand people who signed up for a library card. It was a successful campaign, more than last year's total of approximately 950 people. There also was a sign-up event with the Seabrook Village senior community where Donna Mansfield went to help seniors obtain library cards.

Marlboro Library will be having a Viking Program for children, ages 3-5, talking about Vikings (based on Rick Riordan's *Sword of Summer*.)

There was an art piece donated to the library, a reprint of the original 'Declaration of Independence' from the 1880's. The donor, Mr. Warner, had it in his family since the 1920's and wanted

to give the piece to be showcased at the library. It will be reframed with special acid-free paper to preserve the artwork. It is suggested the donor can be recognized during Independence Day, through the Monmouth County Historical Association. Frank Wells and Don Burden are part of the Art Committee, and they will work with the other members on the donated piece. A discussion continued on whether or not it will be available for loan to other organizations. The issue was also raised of amending the guidelines of the Art Committee when it comes to accepting artwork donations for possible display at the library.

The online resource called 'Universal Class' will be reinstated as one of the library's research resources; there was favorable pricing offered. This research resource will be available to patrons at anytime and will be established as part of a future learning lab resources for the library.

E-book usage has slightly declined. The usage numbers are at a normalized level, though statistics indicate that people are still looking for physical books.

A motion is needed to hold a closed executive session in next month's meeting as recommended by Andrea Bazer. Each meeting should have a motion to hold a closed executive session at the next meeting.

**Peter Doyle made the motion to hold a closed executive session at the November 10, 2015 meeting at the Wall Township Library. Frank Wells seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

#### **Code of Conduct**

Renee Swartz discussed the library's 'Code of Conduct' in relation to a recent incident. Judi Tolchin stated that there have been recent incidents of great concern. The 'Code of Conduct' has always been present, and it is now displayed in all thirteen of the branch libraries; however, there is a need to make adaptations to the code to make it more comprehensive and up-to-date. It has been adapted to have similar criteria to that of the Princeton Library's 'Code of Conduct,' as well as including the needs of the Monmouth County Library system. It was a draft for the Commission to approve, submit to the Monmouth County Legal Counsel, before the final adoption by the Commission can be made. Renee Swartz agreed that the current 'Code of Conduct' needed to be updated, and has been for a long time. Incidents have happened at various branches, and police have been called to enforce the violations.

Updates and/or amendments have been made to policies at certain points, such as conduct between individuals, leaving children unsupervised at the library, the wearing/ usage of wheeled shoes, skateboards, and other related issues. Any future changes will be made to the 'Code of Conduct' when the time comes to do so.

**Peter Doyle made the motion to accept the new 'Code of Conduct'. Grace Abramov seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.**

**Peter Doyle made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Grbelja seconded it and it was unanimously approved.**

**The next Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at the Wall Township Library. Meeting ended at 2:45 PM.**