

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes
September 8, 2015
Headquarters Branch

Present: Chairperson Renee Swartz, Commissioners Don Burden, Peter Doyle, James Gray, Nancy Grbelja, and Frank Wells; Freeholder Lillian Burry, Liaison, Director Judith Tolchin

Absent: Grace Abramov

Guests: Muriel Smith, Joan Moss, and Kathy Allert

The meeting convened at 12:32 p.m.

Chairperson Renee Swartz opened the meeting of September 8, 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.”

Everyone in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes:

Mrs. Swartz noted a few corrections to the minutes of the August 11, 2015 meeting. In the section *Vision of the Library*, the “Ivy Group recommendation” should be bolded. In the section - *Funding for Renovations*, the “Joyce Church bequest” should state \$25,000 as the amount. Also the article from Christine Barcia should include where it was published, *The News Transcript*.

A motion to accept the August 11th meeting minutes with the corrections was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Peter Doyle; unanimously approved.

A motion to accept the closed executive minutes from the August 11th meeting was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Jim Gray; unanimously approved.

Motion was made to go into executive session by James Grey for the purpose of contracts and personnel issues, seconded by Peter Doyle, and unanimously approved.

Closed executive session began at 12:37 p.m.

Closed executive session ended at 12:54 p.m.

Subcommittee Decision

There was a meeting of the subcommittee of the library board, which consisted of the liaison from the Board of Freeholders, Lillian Burry; Commissioners Don Burden and Jim Gray; Commission Chairperson Renee Schwartz; and Director Judith Tolchin. A series of interviews took place for the position of Assistant Director for the Monmouth County Library. There were qualified candidates, and a decision was made by the subcommittee. The subcommittee, after evaluating the candidates and the questions that were asked, has recommended to the commission that Heidi Amici be offered the position within the salary range that was previously agreed upon.

The subcommittee had a unanimous decision which has been presented to the board. **The motion to accept Heidi Amici as Assistant Director was made by Jim Gray, and it was seconded by Nancy Grbelja; unanimously approved.** Judith Tolchin, Monmouth County Library Director, will announce the appointment of Heidi Amici as Assistant Library Director when the time is appropriate.

Freeholder's Report

Freeholder Burry noted that she was looking forward to the *Alice in Wonderland* celebration. Mrs. Burry stated that she announced the events at the Freeholder meeting, but urged that the library needed to get a visual message out.

Chairperson's Report

Renee discussed how in addition to the previously decided public relations tactics; she would like to create bookmarks which publicize the Alice events. These bookmarks would be on the circulation desks of all of the branches and perhaps members as well. They would include all of the Alice events, which would give publicity to a great many of the branches and member libraries. The bookmark distribution process should begin at the end of September.

Renee commended Muriel for her recent *Alice in Wonderland* article (published in *the Atlantic Highlands Herald*, *the News Transcript*, and *the Two River Times*), and inquired whether there could be a follow-up article as well. Muriel noted that she wrote the article as a press release and gave it to Donna Mansfield for revision. Mrs. Swartz questioned whether that was necessary, and Mrs. Burry agreed that this slows the process down. Ms. Tolchin noted that this was recommended until Muriel has a thorough understanding, and generally press releases have been generated through the Public Relations Department. Mrs. Swartz also requires publicity oversight by the Director to insure Commissioner and Freeholder comments are appropriately included. Renee continued to state that the article was both fabulous in its content and its spread. Muriel noted that it was getting increasingly more difficult to submit articles to newspapers, and local papers are more interested in the events of their local libraries than as the system as a whole. Muriel mentioned this was the case at the paper in Wall Township, and Renee proposed a commission meeting can be scheduled at Wall in hopes of publicity.

Nancy Grbelja made a motion that the Commission supports the letter written by Judi to Craig Marshall, dated August 28th, reiterating the selection of Muriel Smith as consultant, administered as quickly as possible. The motion was seconded by Frank Wells; unanimously approved. Freeholder Burry stated that she would hand-deliver the letter to Craig Marshall along with the commission's resolution.

Renee expressed the Commission's desire to have Muriel write another article to cover the *Alice in Wonderland* events as well as the reception to honor Judi. Renee noted that would be the next big push for Muriel.

The discussion from the previous Commission meeting continued, whether the celebration in honor of Judi should be held on October 24th, with more intellectual Alice events, or October 25th, with more theatrical Alice events. Freeholder Burry noted that October 25th has universally appealing events, to which the commission agreed. The Commission decided it would be best to hold the reception on Sunday, October 25th from 1-2pm.

Judi noted the Friends' have come forward looking to fund the Museum Pass Program; the Library would get several memberships to different museums (such as Grounds for Sculpture, Guggenheim, Intrepid

Air and Space, etc.). The Friends' groups would pay for the museum passes, and the library would pay for the portal which will allow patrons to book the tickets online. Judi noted this would be inexpensive for the Library. There will be a two-year pilot program, during which patrons can pick up the passes at three different branches. The Friends' of the Holmdel library have joined in on the initiative with the Friends' of the Monmouth County Library enabling us to offer a third location. The Friends' of the Holmdel Library will be presenting the Library Commission a check at the next meeting. Judi noted this is a wonderful initiative that the Friends' groups have taken in helping us get things that patrons are interested in. Renee noted this was a nice start, and a great opportunity for the Friends' groups. Renee and Muriel expressed this would be another article-worthy event.

Financial Report

August Financials—Detail Budget, Check Writing, Cumulative Book Budget, and Reserve Budget

Judi stated that the August expenses in the Detail Budget Account Status reflect \$430,005 expended in salary and wages in August with a year to date total of \$4,007,694. Other expenses totaled \$218,764 with a year to date total of \$1,830,973. The combined year to date total is \$5,855,653 applied to the adopted budget including encumbered expenses. Fringe benefits and Indirect Charges (budgeted at \$7,006,231) have not yet been charged. The August Reserve Budget reflects \$1,059,080 spent year to date with only \$330,777 remaining. Only a few charges from 2014 are expected for the balance of the year.

Judi opened the floor for questions regarding the August Financial report, but there were no questions.

Renee made note of the new procedure of Judi sending out the financial data prior to the Commission Meeting. Renee felt this would allow for the Commissioners to study the data and prepare questions, and will save time during the meetings.

A motion was made by Nancy Grbelja to approve the financial report, and Peter Doyle seconded the motion; unanimously approved.

Library Improvements & Facilities Report

Renee reviewed the letter from Dawn White to Diana Larson, Master Gardener. Ms. Larson was responsible for the people who did the planting at the Eastern Branch Library. Renee noted that the plantings were a lovely addition. Renee noted how arduous it was to find someone, and how appreciative the Commission is for all of the work that was done. Renee stated she also sent a letter a few months ago to the Master Gardeners for the great job they did at Eastern Branch.

Nancy Grbelja expressed that after seeing how nice Eastern Branch Library looks, the Headquarters Library needs to be improved. Renee agreed that it is terrible, but there have been a few things already done to improve the facade. Lillian Burry stated that not only is the building in need of planting, but also the sidewalks are in deplorable condition. Judi noted that this was one of the areas of the Headquarters Library that was approved for capital improvements starting next year. Judi was very favorably impressed that the county was coming forward with those improvements to the entire walkway, some of the landscaping in the front, and the median. Judi stated they will come up with a plan, and they have already been to Headquarters Library to begin the planning process. Renee requested Jim Gray to find Master Gardeners like Dawn White did for Eastern Branch Library. Judi noted to the Commission that they should wait to see the County's plans to replenish the landscape, prior to seeking additional Master Gardeners to further enhance the plans. Renee requested a letter be written from the Commission to

the County expressing the Commission's desire to see how the plans are coming along, but Lillian stated she would like this to be done after she speaks with them.

Library Card Sign-Up Month

Judi expressed that the Library Card Sign-Up Month is getting off to a great start; Renee explained that Library Card Sign-Up Month is a national initiative to get people to sign-up for a library card, and this would be a great subject for Muriel to write an article about. Judi presented the video produced by Rick Brancadora promoting library card sign-up.

Judi stated the video is posted the Library's YouTube page, and is accessible through the webpage. Renee requested the video be shown all of the time on the televisions at Eastern Branch and Headquarters, even though there would be no sound. Judi continued to state that the Library reached out to forty member municipalities. From that, the Library has received publicity from both print and online newsletters, as well as virtual backpacks. Judi noted this was one of the initiatives she and Donna Mansfield have begun, reaching out to the member municipalities to inform them of the Library's services. They felt September was a great month to begin this initiative to get library cards in people's hands. There has been great success in the early stages, as reflected in the publicity of virtual backpacks and newsletters. Judi explained that "virtual backpacks" are given to children when they go back to school. Renee expressed that the initiative has been outstanding. Don Burden suggested the video be played on the screens at the YMCA, as this would be a way to reach children.

Renee segued to another library card issue, a patron wanted to know if the library could give a senior discount to seniors from communities that do not pay tax to the county system. Renee reviewed that the library charges \$100 to people that come from towns that are not a part of the library system. Judi stated the patron sent a letter to Renee, expressing their interest in having the discount available for seniors. Judi expressed her concerns, as many families have similar financial issues, not only senior citizens. Jim Gray agreed the discount would be a bad idea. Renee noted this would be an inequity, as it would be a discrepancy for seniors that come from towns that do pay the library tax. Don Burden, a mayor of a town himself, stated that if that was the circumstance, his constituents would feel slighted as they had to pay while others did not. Renee proposed the citizens take the issue up with their towns, in hopes their town will offer something. Renee noted the library is a capital expenditure, and while they cannot borrow books and DVDs, they can use the other services the library provides.

Branch and Member Report

The Mobile Monmouth County Connection with County Clerk Christine Giordano Hanlon will be at the Wall Township Library on September 10th. They are going offer the services the County Connection provides such as passports services.

The Colts Neck Library has just completed their carpet installation, which looks lovely. It was an effort by both staff and volunteers, reopening on September 8th at 1 p.m. with regular hours. Heidi's department supported Colts Neck by getting all of their computer equipment back up and running.

Sea Girt is having their fundraising event on Saturday, September 12th from 5 – 7 p.m. As part of what the Library gives them, Sea Girt has used some of their programming money to aid in postage and mailing; we have supported them in that effort. Judi assured the Commission will be recognized by Mayor Ken Farrell on September 12th. Judi noted she received a complementary invitation to attend, but if anyone from the Commission wishes to attend, to let her know so she may work on doing the same.

Tinton Falls Library has a temporary closing, with an anticipated opening of October 5th. They are experiencing ADA renovations to get their facilities handicap accessible.

The Oceanport Library Association is celebrating their 50th anniversary of October 19th from 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. The Commission will be invited.

Allentown's branch manager, Nancy Stein, has decided to retire effective January 1, 2016. We will have to seek her replacement.

Technology Report

We are looking into updating our PAC (Public Access Catalog) computers. As some of the Commission may know, the PAC computers are rather slow to access the catalog. Heidi and Judi have been in discussions to get new, touchscreen computers. This will allow patrons to interact by both typing and touching in order to be able to get to the items they want. This will work in synchrony with the updated catalog, and will be wonderful. This will be a large commitment, as we will need so many machines – at least 60. This would be quite an expense, but we are looking to spend our technology money for this project.

The door counters are moving forward. They will be at all of the branches before the end of the year. Purchasing does take a bit to go through, but we look to them for their expertise.

We are looking into a high-tech meeting room at Headquarters. This will allow people to have great meetings, perhaps using this room as a revenue source for businesses in the future and as a training room. We are looking into the equipment necessary, and the room has been cleared out from all of the old computer equipment. The cost and timeframe has yet to be determined at this point, but Judi will bring the estimated cost and timeframe to the Commission.

Renee noted that perhaps for the next meeting, instead of the oral report, Judi should list things the technology department is thinking about getting, as well as what has been ordered and their anticipated delivery dates. This way if there is a limited budget, we can look into what the Commission would like to move forward with in advance of planning the budget.

Lillian Burry questioned whether we can charge (for use of the high-tech meeting room) as a free, public library. Judi noted that certain libraries in the state have started charging to use rooms, giving the public priority to use rooms, and if there is availability they will put it out for businesses or corporations. This would be something to look into, as Judi would like to uphold the concept that we are a free and public library. Judi noted we have never rented rooms to corporations, we would have to rethink our mission, and the Commission would have to decide whether or not to explore this avenue.

Renee requested the reference librarians do a survey about the libraries in NJ that charge for a space for tutors. The commissioners noted that oftentimes tutors can be disruptive, resulting in complaints from other patrons. Judi noted that in the library patrons and tutors alike must maintain the quiet enjoyment of other library users. There was no way to tell who is getting paid to do the job, who is a literacy volunteer, or someone who is not getting paid to do the job. The question arose whether a patron can be approached to be asked if they are a paid tutor. Nancy Grbelja requested Andrea Bazer be consulted to see if this is permissible; Renee agreed this is what we will be doing. Renee stated that the Patron Code of Conduct must be reviewed at the next meeting.

Judi noted she drafted a Patron Code of Conduct. She expressed time is of the essence as there have been a number of patrons have become disruptive; there needs to be a more extensive policy. Renee felt it would have to be approved at the next meeting, and Judi should give the new Patron Code of Conduct to both Nancy Grbelja and Andrea Bazer for review. Don noted that if it is needed immediately the new code should be posted with the phrase "pending approval;" Nancy Grbelja agreed.

Renee thanked Rick Brancadora and Donna Mansfield on their work on the Library Card Sign-Up Month video and brochure. Renee noted the brochure should be not only disseminated during the Sign-Up month, but also distributed year-round on check-out desks and display stands.

Judi noted the Trustee Academy is available online, but please let her know if it is used as there is a seven hour annual trustee training requirement for State Library Aid. The password information has been sent, and will be resent to the Commission as per Renee's request.

Renee noted the meeting was very productive, and thanked everyone for coming. Renee welcomed Muriel yet again and commended the subcommittee's very thorough job. Lillian noted Teri O'Connor should be informed the position has been filled as per protocol.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Frank Wells; seconded by Don Burden; unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm.