

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes
February 12, 2019
Headquarters Branch Library

Present: Commissioners Grace Abramov, Brian Boms, Mary Ann Musich, Christina Requa, and Frank Wells; Also present: Freeholder Lillian Burry, Director Judi Tolchin, and Assistant Director Heidi Amici

Absent: Chairperson Renee Swartz and Commissioner Nancy Grbelja

Guests: Muriel Smith, Publicity Consultant

The meeting convened at 11:07am.

Vice Chairperson Frank Wells opened the meeting of Tuesday, February 12, 2019 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.

Minutes

Vice Chairperson Frank Wells gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from January 8, 2019. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions.

A Motion to approve the open public meeting minutes of January 8, 2019 was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously Approved.

Oath of Office

New Commissioner Christina Requa was sworn in by Freeholder Lillian Burry with the following oath:

“I, Christina Requa do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the Governments established in the United States and in this State, under the authority of the people; and that I will faithfully, impartially, and justly perform all the duties of the office of Commissioner of the Monmouth County Library Commission, according to the best of my ability, so help me God.”

Library Liaison Report

Freeholder Lillian Burry stated the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders is currently working on the County budget. The library budget is separate from this and is approved by the Monmouth County Library Commission. The proposed tax levy will require Monmouth County

Board of Chosen Freeholders approval, not the Monmouth County Library Commission. If the tax levy is not approved by the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the library will need to revise the budget and resubmit. Judi Tolchin stated the proposed budget remains level from the previous five years.

Food for Fines and National Library Week

It was brought to the attention of Freeholder Lillian Burry that Social Services would like to collect food for those in need. Over the last several years, the library has participated in food donation collecting through a Food for Fines program. This program allows for patrons to have one dollar of their fines forgiven per each item donated. It was stated that the food collection occurs in conjunction with National Library Week. Collection receptacles from FulFill Monmouth & Ocean will be delivered to some branches locations, with some of the smaller branches using smaller boxes sent through inter-library delivery. It was stated the rules and regulations relating to this program will be printed and made available. Judi Tolchin suggested the members of the Monmouth County Library Commission bring an item for donation to the scheduled April 2019 Commission Meeting.

A Motion to approve the month of April for food donation collection with the Food for Fines Program to run the week of April 7th through April 13th, coinciding with National Library Week was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously approved.

Lillian Burry stated that Muriel Smith, Publicity Consultant was instrumental in seeing the return of a Freehold Borough citizen's Congressional Medal of Honor to the family of the medal recipient. A suggestion was made to contact the family and gauge their interest in conducting a program with the library relating to the medal and the history surrounding it; records of the medal's whereabouts are missing from 1916 through 1957. Muriel Smith stated she would speak with the Programming Department.

Headquarters Renovation Update

Project Status

Director Judi Tolchin provided an update on the status of the Headquarters renovation. She spoke with Christopher Marion, Deputy County Administrator, and an RFPQ (Request for Professional Qualification) has been submitted for qualified architects to develop architectural plans for the adult room and lobby. There were six architectural vendors who brought forth proposals; Arcari + Iovino Architects, DMR Architects, The Musial Group, Netta Architects, Zambrano Architects, and Spiezle Architectural Group. These architectural groups will be under review by the Monmouth County Engineering Division. They will then request RFPs (Request for Proposals) and select an architect to receive the competitive contract. Following the receipt of architectural plans, a general contractor will be selected. It is anticipated selections will be made during or after the March Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting.

Furnishings have been delivered and are being stored on site. Assistant Director Heidi Amici completed a check to ensure all boxes slated for delivery were received. The boxes will remain closed until the necessary phase of the renovation project is reached. A letter was received from Library Interiors, Inc. certifying all materials were delivered and if an issue arises during

assembly regarding any missing or damaged components they will rectify the situation. The temporary walls purchased have arrived and are being used to section off the furnishing materials storage area. These walls will be used during the renovation to section off work areas. After the completion of the Headquarters renovation, the library is brainstorming ways to repurpose the walls for continued library use.

Areas of the Headquarters library have been restored to their previous functional status for patron use; tables, chairs, and power outlet access. Access to electrical power is of high importance to patrons.

A question was asked about the state of the current flooring that has been installed. It was stated that spot cleaning efforts have increased. Details between Buildings and Grounds and the outside cleaning vendor still need to be established. Frank Gomes from Direct Flooring stated he would perform a how-to carpet cleaning and treating seminar. It was suggested that both Buildings and Ground and the outside cleaning company participate in this seminar.

Concord Partial Payment Request

Concord Products has requested partial payment for components of the glass walls already constructed that will be installed during the Headquarters renovation project; which has been delayed. Concord Products has modified the original purchase order for the glass door and additional necessary hardware that was not contained in the initial proposal. The additional added cost is \$11,229.16. A partial payment of \$36,001.36 [of \$78,978.96] has been requested. The library does not currently have the space on site to store the glass walls so they will remain in the possession of Concord Products until further notice.

A Motion to approve an amendment to the Concord Products purchase order in the amount of \$11,229.16 and approval of a partial payment to Concord Products in the amount of \$36,001.36 for items fabricated and being held by the vendor until the glass walls may be installed was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously approved.

Judi Tolchin requested authorization from the Commission to sign all related vouchers on behalf of the Commission as they will be over the amount of \$10,000 and would not relate to library materials.

The Commission was in agreement and authorized Judi Tolchin to sign the vouchers.

Furnishings Partial Payment

A request for partial payment has been made for the furnishings that have been delivered and are being stored on site. Currently, \$300,448.20 of furnishings has been delivered of the \$403,886.16. Nickerson Corporation is requesting a partial payment of \$300,448.20 for furnishings delivered. The installation cost of the furnishings is not included in the invoicing; still to be delivered is the circulation desk. The Agati pods have not arrived as they are a separate purchase order.

A Motion to approve a partial payment to Nickerson Corporation in the amount of \$300,448.20 for furnishings delivered was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously approved.

A request for payment has been received from the Jasper Group in the amount of \$33,986.84 for lounge seating. This will complete Purchase Order #260305.

A request for payment has been received from Library Interiors, Inc. in the amount of \$30,674.88 for furnishings. This will complete Purchase Order #259413.1.

A request for payment has been received from Library Interiors, Inc. in the amount of \$6,560 for furnishings fabric. This will complete Purchase Order #259693.1.

A Motion to approve payments to the Jasper Group in the amount of \$33,986.84 for lounge seating, to Library Interiors, Inc. in the amount of \$30,674.88 for furnishings, and to Library Interiors, Inc. in the amount of \$6,560 for furnishings fabric was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Christina Requa. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

January Financials - Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Grant Budgets, Capital Accounts

Director Judi Tolchin submitted the January 2019 Financial Report to the Commission, including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Grant Budgets, and Capital Accounts wherein the Detail Budget charged year to date is \$823,036.62 posted to the temporary budget of \$4,458,562.00. These charges were primarily for wages and library materials. This total includes encumbered amounts. The 2019 Reserve Budget includes \$1,522,519.73 in remaining 2018 funds with \$1,021,859.96 available. The available amount excludes encumbered funds. 2018 expenditures of \$1,129,638.66 were posted to the Reserve Budget as of the end of January 2019. January expenses posted to the Reserve were primarily fourth quarter fringe benefits, wages, and library materials. As of January 1st, the 2019 Fund Balance is \$5,321,403.29. The Capital Account of \$977,000 has a remaining balance of \$87,487.09, though these funds were encumbered by County Engineering during February for architectural services. The first round of the Capital fund is now complete and fully encumbered. The second Capital Account for the renovation in the amount of \$1,497,000 remains unexpended, as of January 31, 2019. Some of the funds have been encumbered for the balance of the architectural services that are expected to be awarded to the selected architect. The Capital Account for the Eastern Branch ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) ramp was included in the summary for informative purposes only, as the project is not managed by the library. The Grant Fund Accounts reflect the amounts used for the Career Connections grant.

A Motion to approve the January 2019 Financial Report including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Grant Budgets, and Capital Accounts was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.

Budget Approval and Tax Levy Recommendation

Freeholder Lillian Burry stated, for 2019, there is a budget for indirect costs of approximately \$3,000,000. Judi Tolchin said that \$3,500,000 is budgeted – the same amount as 2018. The amount paid in 2018 was \$3,219,830. Judi stated that our concern should focus on remaining sustainable and keeping the tax rate as low as possible while maintaining members and branches. A compliment was given regarding the wonderful and extensive services the Monmouth County Library system provides.

The proposed budget and tax levy recommendation has been discussed with Craig Marshall, County Finance Director and it does coincide with his ten year sustainable plan. The fringe benefit rate did decrease approximately \$100,000 since the first budget introduction and allowed for those funds to be redistributed to consultants for potential grant application assistance and website development assistance, to equipment to maintain technology standards while attempting to remain ahead of current software compatibility and technology security issues, and to furnishings for either the children's side of the library or the lobby. The lobby area is used heavily daily and additional furnishings and electrical access will be necessary going forward.

A Motion to request the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders increase the tax levy by 1.5% with a sum to be raised by the amount of \$15,300,000 in accordance with the sustainable plan set forth by County Finance Director Craig Marshall was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Christina Requa. Unanimously approved.

A Motion to approve the library budget in the amount of \$16,985,000 was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Grace Abramov. Unanimously approved.

A Motion to allocate \$3,500,000 in the 2019 library budget for indirect charges was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Christina Requa. Grace Abramov opposed. Approved.

Director's Report

Minimum Wage Increase

Director Judi Tolchin stated the proposed minimum wage increase will have a substantial effect on the library. Currently, the library employs approximately sixty Monitors working ten or more hours per week at an hourly rate of \$8.85. When the hourly rate of pay is increased to \$15, the director is concerned that they cannot handle the financial burden. A suggestion was made to decrease the number of Monitor positions and increase the number of Library Assistant positions with the Library Assistant position additionally taking on the duties of the Monitor position. By the year 2024, the minimum wage rate of \$15 per hour will fully be in effect. By the year 2021 or 2022, it is anticipated that the library may need to consider things such as self-checkout to help minimize the burden. It was stated that if the tax rate is increased that could help alleviate concerns but could then create the potential for losing member libraries. The increased minimum wage rate will have a lingering effect on the library and exploring alternative staffing solutions may be necessary. The estimated financial impact for this year (July 2019 – December 2019) is approximately \$40,000, which has not been allocated in the budget.

Judi Tolchin is working on completing the State Aid report, which is due March 15th. She anticipates that the report will be completed on time. The report is a time consuming process during the beginning of the year.

Assistant Director's Update

Assistant Director Heidi Amici stated the new website development has begun and it is anticipated to be completed and launched in the summer, with a goal of June 1st as the completion date. The current vendor contract expires at the end of March and the library is working to extend through the summer.

At the Headquarters and Eastern branches, the library maintains internet access through an EVPL (Ethernet Virtual Private Line) service through Verizon. The New Jersey State Library negotiates contracts and pricing for libraries in the state to take advantage of. Last year the State Library negotiated a price for two libraries that was \$35,700 per year. The state contract was \$36,720, so the Monmouth County Library paid \$1,020 more than the cost of going through the New Jersey State Library. The New Jersey State Library has renegotiated the contract and the new rate, if a three year deal is signed, is \$13,200 per year plus the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) fees. The library could see an approximate annual savings of \$20,000 if they are able to go through the negotiated contract to provide service. On a temporary basis, Purchasing has been authorized to establish a three month extension to allow time to work through the process in order to obtain this service. NJ State Library law permits specialized library services which are not subject to competitive bidding or state contract rates. The library is working with County Legal and County Purchasing to resolve this issue.

Publicity Report

Publicity Consultant Muriel Smith stated the branches have been contacting her directly to inform her about specific programs at their branches they would like to promote. More individual stories are needed for individual newspapers based on the papers distribution radius. Eastern Branch has several programs being held in the month of March that they requested be promoted. Muriel commended the branches on having programs developed in advance as it allows for the time necessary to submit promotional articles in advance for printing.

Congressman Smith was present for the Congressional Medal of Honor presentation in Freehold Borough. He commended the library on the Eastern Branch 50th Anniversary event and stated he was happy to have been part of it.

Closed Executive Session

A motion to adjourn to Closed Executive Session was made by Grace Abramov and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.

The Commission adjourned to Closed Executive Session at 12:40pm.

A Motion to resume regular session was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.

The Commission resumed the regular session at 12:56pm.

A Motion to authorize the Library Director to act on behalf of the Monmouth County Library Commission regarding a wage offer, when negotiations progress to that point was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Comments

The Commission complimented the recent library concert performances.

Lillian Burry asked about the status of the grant money and preparations being made for the application process. Judi Tolchin stated the application criteria have not yet been announced by the New Jersey State Library. On January 16, 2019 the New Jersey State Library posted the following update on their website:

“The State Library has continued to work on various iterations of documents which will be needed for the Library Construction Bond Act so that we may be ready when the bonds are issued. At this time, however, there is no news on when the bond act will begin to be enacted. Thomas Edison State University has also done their part in the process. The State Library is waiting on direction from the Governor’s Policy Office as to when we may begin to move forward.”

Judi stated libraries are advocating for the legislative process to move forward. There is an extensive list of libraries that will be applying for a portion of the \$125,000,000 in grant funds. Lillian stressed being prepared for when the application becomes available. Judi stated assistance may be needed in preparing the grant application.

Lillian Burry suggested recognizing recently retired staff members for their years’ of wonderful service to the library. Judi Tolchin suggested establishing criteria to implement going forward on how to recognize staff members for all their hard work. Staff recognition ceremonies do occur at Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders meetings. A suggestion was made to have staff recognitions for retiring employees. Grace Abramov suggested continuing discussion on this topic at the next Monmouth County Library Commission meeting.

Grace Abramov asked if Freehold Borough Library was to join the system, would they be a branch or a member. Judi Tolchin stated the recommendation was made that, if Freehold Borough Library decides to join the Monmouth County Library system, they are brought on as a member. Over the course of ten years, the library would experience a deficit in excess of \$3,000,000 if Freehold Borough Library was to become a branch. The condition of the building and accessibility issues are concerns regarding the Freehold Borough Library. Judi stated she presented information relating to the challenges of maintaining a Carnegie library; most are no longer functioning libraries. A suggestion was made that Freehold Borough could consider a different location for the library. It was stated that the Freehold Borough Library has a large walking population and moving locations could affect that.

Lillian Burry asked about the status of staffing vacancies. Judi Tolchin stated the library has experienced the filling of vacancies but also experienced the tendering of resignations and

retirements. Current vacancies remain approximately the same as stated at the previous Monmouth County Library Commission meeting.

Lillian Burry asked Judi Tolchin about museum passes held by the library for patron use. Heidi Amici stated it is easier for singular municipality libraries to offer museum passes than it is for larger library systems. Judi stated offering museum passes would be great but typically this program is funded by a library's friends group that could maintain the program financially. For a larger library system, a higher number of passes would be necessary to maintain than with an individual library. Heidi stated the cost of passes can range from \$50 to \$400 or more per pass and would be difficult to maneuver between multiple libraries. The foundation at the Holmdel library has inquired about offering the service but it would need to be a system wide shared and sustainably offered program not just an individual branch. Overdue passes and passes that are not returned could pose potential problems for patrons who have booked and are waiting for a pass. A plan has not been developed to execute a program like this successfully.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at the Eastern Branch Library at 11:00 am.

Scheduling of Closed Executive Session at Next Meeting

A Motion to schedule a Closed Executive Session at the next meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Christina Requa. Unanimously approved.

Adjournment

A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Christina Requa. Unanimously approved.

The meeting concluded at 12:57pm.

Submitted by Kimberly Conover