

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes  
January 12, 2021  
Headquarters Library

**Present:** Library Commissioners Brian Boms, Nancy Grbelja, Barbara McMorrow, Mary Ann Musich, and Frank Wells; also present County Commissioner Lillian Burry, Director Judith Tolchin, and Assistant Director Heidi Amici

**Absent:**

**Guests:** Muriel Smith, Publicity Consultant; Fay Szakal, Special Counsel; and Christopher Marion, Deputy County Administrator; also present Kim Avagliano, Eastern Branch Manager; Robyn Miller, Headquarters Branch Manager; Pat Findra, Children's Coordinator; Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator; Kate Hardy, Senior Management Assistant; and Beth Stamp, Friends of the Library President

**The meeting convened at 11:02 am.**

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Nancy Grbelja opened the meeting of Tuesday, January 12, 2021 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.”

**Essential Staff Team Reports**

Director Tolchin stated this year has been unusual and presented difficulties for all of us. Through everything that was encountered this past year she is proud the library remained operational. This was due, in great part, to the hard work of the essential staff team. Director Tolchin then took a moment to recognize and thank the Monmouth County Library Commission for their support and dedication. She extended a thank you to County Commissioner Lillian Burry for her support and esteemed efforts to keep the library flourishing. A thank you was extended to County Counsel Fay Szakal and Publicity Consultant Muriel Smith. Director Tolchin also recognized the Friends of the Monmouth County Library for their tremendous help.

The first presentation was made by Kim Avagliano, Eastern Branch Manager. She stated the Eastern Branch began 2020 with a bang by hosting door busting programs in January, February, and the beginning of March. The library saw overflowing attendance for programs, such as: Armchair Art Tours, Underground Railroad Tour, and the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. But, then the library closed due to the pandemic. While the library was closed, construction continued and was completed on ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) upgrades to the building's entrance. Staff worked diligently when the time came to prepare the building for reopening; initiating safety protocols and logistics. In June, the sculpture was installed and then

the landscaping was completed. Hopefully, the sculpture dedication event can be held in the spring. The library was able to still bring art to the community by having artist's display works in the lobby cases. In October, the staff was excited to have some fun with the Halloween holiday and all dressed up. For the winter holidays, the library worked with a local paper artist to create fun and festive decorations. Staff worked diligently this year to maintain continuity in service to the public and it is incredible what we have been able to accomplish.

The next presentation was made by Robyn Miller, Headquarters Branch Manager. She stated the essential team jumped right in to quickly establish how to bring services to the community. Robyn highlighted how staff answered phones, answered emails, and began virtually chatting as well as participating in trainings and Zoom meetings. Headquarters staff began the social media segment called MonCoReads where staff provides book recommendations and suggestions. The library overcame challenges to ensure staff safety by installing Plexiglas, ropes, stickers, and socially distancing work stations and tables. Staff has continued to work hard under these difficult circumstances. Beginning in July, Headquarters reference staff has been spearheading the virtual book discussion groups with two to three discussions held monthly. They have also been able to have some of the books' authors visit virtually during the discussion. We have all stepped out of our comfort zones and she is proud of the staff. Robyn extended a thank you to the essential team for being supportive and listening to each other's ideas to make the library a success. This library system stands out because of all we have been able to accomplish and she looks forward to the future.

The third presentation was made by Pat Findra, Children's Coordinator. She stated for the first ten weeks of 2020 children's services proceeded as usual, but then we encountered the pandemic. Eventually, we found a new normal and are still in the process of discovering new ways to conduct services. Much of the children's work this past year can be divided into two categories: working from home and working after reopening. While at home children's staff attended weekly Zoom meetings, attended webinars, prepared for the summer reading program, connected with member library Directors, increased juvenile Overdrive electronic titles, recorded weekly story times and crafts, completed reports, provided weekend virtual chat services, and provided weekly suggestions to patrons on how to spend time during quarantine. Since our reopening, children's staff continued with story time production, providing take home crafts, participating in door-side services, shelving materials, conducting reference, ordering new titles, attending monthly meetings, and much more. To connect with our young patrons, we have learned new recording technologies and editing software to provide virtual content. Pat extended a thank you to Joan Moss for her help in coordinating social media. Joan Moss also posted on social media STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) series generated by staff as well as weekly bedtime stories. In addition, staff prepared and posted a document titled Understanding Covid-19; resources made for children to help parents explain the pandemic to kids. Special events programming took on a new look as many performers adapted their content into a virtual format. The summer reading challenge saw a nationwide trend in the reduction of participation. The children's department has seen many staff changes during this year, but we look forward to continuing services.

The fourth presentation was made by Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator. She stated 2020 was a year like no other, filled with challenges that presented opportunities at every turn. Programs held from January through mid-March saw great community response, with the last in person event taking place on March 13, 2020. As Covid-19 became the new normal, the first order of business was to cancel all scheduled in person events. Staff shifted to a work from home environment and programming shifted to a virtual platform. This shift saw the programming department creating a virtual branch of the library and staff learning new platforms, including WebEx. Virtual programming guidelines and procedures had to be established, along with a virtual performer agreement and social media guidelines. Virtual programming was created on the foundation of library basics and in pursuit of the library's mission statement. The first official virtual program was a book discussion led by Robyn Miller on July 1, 2020. Programming continues to facilitate book discussions through staff training and hands on support and publicity. More virtual programs were developed, including: a film discussion group, a bereavement group, children's story times, and concerts. The programming department has fostered new community partnerships that continue to grow and service the community on a countywide scale. All events are promoted on the library's website, social media, printed flyers, an e-newsletter, and press releases. The library has seen: YouTube subscriptions increased to 244, programming videos were viewed over 20,000 times, Pinterest is developing with 496 followers, Facebook has seen the addition of over 3,000 followers, Twitter averages 38,500 hits per month, Instagram averages 400 views per post, and the bimonthly newsletter subscriptions has increased to over 8,000. As of June 1, 2020 the programming department held 360 virtual events. In addition to adult and assisting with children's programming, the department recruited librarians Jessica Laddaga and Rebecca Gokberk to assist with teen programming. A unique variety of teen activities have been experimented with in an online environment, including: a book club, book review crew, a writer's workshop, coding classes, and the teen advisory board meeting monthly. Looking back at 2020, Laura Migliore stated these efforts would not have been possible without the help and support of her colleagues in the programming and art departments, the essential management team, and branch staff who stepped in to offer help and suggestions. We continue to work to bring the best of programming to our patrons and look forward to what the New Year has to offer.

The fifth presentation was made by Kate Hardy, Senior Management Assistant. She stated the last year was distinctive with changes to procedure, protocol, and policy. The staff came together as a team and we are proud of the work we have accomplished to keep staff and patrons safe while continuing to provide service to the community. The year began as business as usual, but that changed quickly. All staff had to transition to working remotely and Kate took a moment to thank Assistant Director Heidi Amici and her department for the amazing job they did supplying staff with the equipment needed. Their department was able to provide administrative staff with laptops, printers, and software to be able to process purchase orders, accounts payable, personnel paperwork, and payroll. Lisa Lonigro was able to process 99 purchase orders totaling \$628,487.43; with 33 of these purchase orders being items needed in response to Covid-19. Lisa also sends needed supplies to branches and is responsive to emergency supply needs. Her work is complex and she is meticulous. Marie Minneci processed over 750 vouchers totaling \$8,227,285.36. While some vouchers contained one invoice, many contained up to 60 invoices each. Marie's work requires attention to detail and she does an exemplary job ensuring thoroughness and accuracy. Given the restrictions due to Covid-19, the library was unable to

maintain the recruitment goal set for 2020. Currently, the library has 30 vacancies and recruitment will be a top priority in 2021.

The final presentation was made by Heidi Amici, Assistant Director. Assistant Director Amici stated we have much to be proud of this year. She extended a thank you to the technology staff that handled the tremendous task of making it possible for staff to work from home. A thank you was also extended to the essential team members who were there through everything. Technology staff set up and deployed 80 laptops, programmed IP and cell phones, and other necessary equipment within days so that services to the community could continue. Virtual chat services were established through the help and support of the Friends of the Monmouth County Library. To date, the library has received over 3,000 chat interactions. This year the library was able to transition the EVPL (Ethernet Virtual Private Line) service through the New Jersey State Library and has seen a significant cost reduction while maintaining the same level of service. When launching the chat service, the library took the opportunity to make additional improvements to the webpage. Due to the library's closure, there was a significant increase in e-book usage and the number of e-collection titles was increased. During our closure, library cards were issued and renewed via email to help patrons gain online access. At this time, the e-collection remains popular amongst patrons. New databases were also added to the library's collection and some in-library only databases were given temporary at-home access. No matter what, the library and staff never stopped and continued to move forward. Additionally, the library has received two new vans for transporting materials and supplies. In 2021, the library hopes to purchase a third van. Also moving forward, staff will begin learning to use new technology and recording equipment purchased for use in virtual programming. The library is in the process of purchasing 3,000 popular magazine titles to compliment other downloadable material. Through the CARES Act, the library was able to fund the purchase of tablet stations where patrons can use their library card to checkout a Wi-Fi tablet for in-library use. Eight branch locations will also be receiving self-service kiosks with the ability to accept card payment for fines and fees. The technology department will be continuing the installation of new computers at all branch and member libraries. Outdoor Wi-Fi equipment has been received for the Headquarters and Eastern branch locations and the library is working with Monmouth County ITS for installation. Assistant Director Amici extended a thank you to the remarkable staff and all they have accomplished.

Rachael Scalise, Branch Services Librarian, was also a member of the essential team, but was unavailable to present during the meeting.

Beth Stamp, Friends of the Library President, complimented the library, the staff, and the Monmouth County Library Commission for their transition into virtual platforms to continue services to patrons. The Friends of the Library are happy to provide their continued support. The annual scholarship to a staff member in the pursuit of a library degree was offered in 2020. The group was also able to purchase a new refrigerator for the Eastern Branch staff area. The Friends of the Library hope that hybrid services continue to be brought to the community. The library has made positive steps during a difficult and challenging time.

### **Commission Remarks**

Commissioner Frank Wells commended Library Administration and staff on the wonderful job they have done during the past year with the challenges faced due to Covid-19. He also congratulated the library on being a recipient of the New Jersey State Public Library Construction Bond Act grant.

### **Commission Reorganization**

Director Tolchin announced Commissioner Mary Ann Musich has been reappointed to the Monmouth County Library Commission through December 31, 2023. Following the announcement, nominations for the offices of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary Treasurer were made.

**Frank Wells motioned to nominate Nancy Grbelja for the office of Chairperson. The nomination was seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved and Nancy Grbelja accepted.**

**Nancy Grbelja motioned to nominate Barbara McMorrow for the office of Vice-Chairperson. The nomination was seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved and Barbara McMorrow accepted.**

**Barbara McMorrow motioned to nominate Mary Ann Musich for the office of Secretary Treasurer. The nomination was seconded by Nancy Grbelja. Unanimously approved and Mary Ann Musich accepted.**

### **Review of Bylaws and NJ State Library Law for County Libraries**

Modifications have not been made to the bylaws.

### **Library Liaison Report**

County Commissioner Lillian Burry stated the library is vital and important. She also congratulated Mary Ann Musich on her reappointment to the Monmouth County Library Commission. Currently, the Monmouth County Library Commission has two vacancies. The Board of County Commissioners intends to submit a candidate for review and appointment to the Monmouth County Library Commission. The Board of County Commissioners is still seeking a candidate for the second vacancy.

County Commissioner Burry stated some library staff vacancies will be filled shortly. Director Tolchin confirmed there are five pending action requests and she is awaiting confirmation.

County Commissioner Burry complimented the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) improvements that were made to the Eastern Branch. Additionally, she is looking forward to the sculpture dedication event and hopes it will be held in late April or early May of 2021.

### **Minutes**

Chairperson Nancy Grbelja gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from December 8, 2020. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions.

**A Motion to approve the Open Public Meeting minutes of December 8, 2020 was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Frank Wells abstained. Approved.**

**New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act Update**

Director Tolchin stated the library was awarded the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act grant. There are requirements the library must complete, including a project due diligence request and a tax questionnaire. Director Tolchin will be working with Craig Marshall, County Finance Director to ensure the completion of these requirements. Additional forms will need to be submitted through the online portal of the New Jersey Construction Bond Act website. Director Tolchin will coordinate with Chairperson Grbelja for necessary signatures and allocations. \$200,000.00 will need to be moved to the fund balance to support the project.

**Financial Report**

**December Financials - Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets**

Director Tolchin submitted the December 2020 Financial Report to the Commission, including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets wherein the 2020 Detail Budget Account charged year to date is \$13,696,213.72 posted to the Actual Budget of \$17,485,000.00. The current remaining balance is \$3,788,786.28 and this total includes encumbered amounts though County Fringe benefits are not yet charged to the budget. The 2019 Reserve Budget reflects \$611,290.20 remaining unencumbered. Any remaining unused amounts will transfer to the Fund Balance on January 1, 2021. The remaining Capital Account for the renovation is \$60,486.02 unencumbered from the first capital appropriation of \$977,000 and \$1,485,770.84 unencumbered from the second capital appropriation of \$1,497,000.00 for a total of \$1,546,256.86 remaining unencumbered as of December 31, 2020. These funds are reserved for the completion of the adult library and the lobby, including lobby furniture. There is an additional \$216,385.20 available from the toilet renovation and has been allocated as matching funds as a recipient of the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act grant.

The Estate of Charles Raffetto Grant Detailed Account status reflects \$3,038.80 remaining in unencumbered funds. These funds were used for the sculpture and site amenities.

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 reports are submitted into the meeting record for Commission approval.

**A Motion to approve the December 2020 Financial Report including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets was made by Barbara McMorro and seconded by Brain Boms. Unanimously approved.**

A voucher for approval for the fourth year of a five year purchase order for SirsiDynix was submitted for Commission approval. SirsiDynix is used for the library's catalog services.

**A Motion to approve the voucher for SirsiDynix in the amount of \$153,423.00 and authorize the Director to sign the voucher was made by Barbara McMorro and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.**

Authorization for the purchase of a 2021 van in the amount not to exceed \$36,000.00 was submitted for Commission approval. The library intends to retire the 2008 van due to high mileage.

**A Motion to authorize a van purchase for the year 2021 in the amount not to exceed \$36,000.00 was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Brain Boms. Unanimously approved.**

Director Tolchin coordinated with Craig Marshall, County Finance Director and as of January 1, 2021 the Fund Balance reflects \$4,728,582.29.

### **CARES Act Projects**

Director Tolchin stated the CARES Act was extended through December 31, 2021. She is not aware at this time if any additional funds will be available for library use. The library has received self-checkout kiosks and tablet stations and is awaiting installation. Outdoor Wi-Fi equipment has also been received and is awaiting installation. Consulting services may be needed for the installation process. If the cost of consulting services exceeds \$10,000.00, the Director will bring the voucher before the Library Commission for approval.

### **Indirect Charges 2021**

Director Tolchin stated a letter has to be authorized for the Director to provide to County Finance for indirect charges. In the 2021 budget, \$4,000,000.00 has been allocated for indirect charges.

**A Motion to authorize a letter and allocate the amount of \$4,000,000.00 in the 2021 Budget for Monmouth County Indirect Charges was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously approved.**

### **Art Donation Agreement – Shrewsbury Historical Society**

Director Tolchin thanked Special Counsel Fay Szakal for her work on the art donation agreement. The agreement acknowledges the Shrewsbury Historical Society as the donor and Director Tolchin will work with Don Burden to complete the signature process. Once the agreement is complete, the tapestries will become the property of the Monmouth County Library and be placed on display at the Eastern Branch location.

### **Director's Report**

Director Tolchin stated the library currently has 31 staff vacancies, but there is one pending new hire which will reduce the number of vacancies to 30. The library will continue to work with County Administration and Human Resources in order to fill these vacancies. If these vacancies cannot be filled, the Director may need to request approval from the Monmouth County Library Commission for a reduction in the hours of service.

Service to Sea Girt residents has been suspended as of January 1, 2021. Sea Girt cards to the Monmouth County Library have been expired and Sea Girt member card accounts are in the process of being removed from our system. Sea Girt materials are in the process of being removed from the library's catalog. The library's website has been updated to reflect that Sea Girt is no longer a member library and databases' access has been suspended.

AARP tax preparations services will not be offered at the Monmouth County Library in 2021 as the co-sponsor is not able to provide a service model at this time due to the pandemic.

Director Tolchin stated Vice-Chairperson Barbara McMorrow would like to suggest motion censored video surveillance be considered at the Headquarters and Eastern Branch locations. Vice-Chairperson McMorrow stated with the increase in outdoor activity related to door-side services having a service such as this would allow for increased safety for patrons and staff. She will look for further information regarding service for discussion at the next scheduled meeting. Director Tolchin will also reach out to Robert Compton, County Buildings and Grounds for additional suggestions.

On January 6, 2021 the Headquarters building experienced an electrical emergency. It has been confirmed that there is no major damage.

The Kanopy streaming service has been renewed with a fixed rate program. The service will be more limited than it was previously due to a capped negotiated pricing model.

The reciprocal borrowing agreement with Ocean County has resulted in a \$10,000.00 payment from Ocean County Library to the Monmouth County Library for 2019. The 2020 statistics have been provided by Assistant Director Heidi Amici to the Ocean County Library for reconciliation.

Overdrive magazines are anticipated to merge into RBDigital on February 1, 2021. This will significantly increase the online magazine collection.

Director Tolchin provided the Monmouth County Library Commission with some statistics from the 2020 year. The library had 18,424 door-side pickups, 12,931 in-person reference questions, 25,436 phone reference questions, and 9,911 inquires made via chat and email.

Director Tolchin will be working on the New Jersey State Aid Report. The report will be due on March 15, 2021. Some of the reporting categories have been changed due to closures that resulted from Covid-19. However, the staff training category will remain unchanged.

#### **Assistant Director's Update**

Assistant Director Heidi Amici stated there are currently two benches placed near the Eastern Branch sculpture. Some lighting still needs to be completed and the plaque still needs to be installed.

#### **Publicity Consultant Report**

Publicity Consultant Muriel Smith extended a thank you to Commissioner Frank Wells and stated how dynamic he has been to work with. She congratulated Chairperson Nancy Grbelja and Vice-Chairperson Barbara McMorrow and wished them well. She also thanked Commissioner Brian Boms for his commitment to the library and taking the opportunity to promote everything the library has to offer. She also stated an article will be printed in the paper about the teen programs held through the library.

### **Closed Executive Session**

A Closed Executive Session was not held during the course of the meeting.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Chairperson Nancy Grbelja thanked Commissioner Frank Wells and took a moment to highlight the work he has done as Chairperson during the past year. 2020 was a difficult year and he did a tremendous job. She is proud to be a part of the library and commended Director Tolchin, Assistant Director Amici, and all of the staff for taking the library to new heights.

Vice-Chairperson Barbara McMorrow thanked Commissioner Frank Wells for showing such compassionate leadership. She also took a moment to highlight that many staff mentioned during their essential team reports that they came together not just as colleagues, but also as friends. She appreciates the wonderful library staff and all they provide to the community.

Commissioner Mary Ann Musich thanked Commissioner Frank Wells for the wonderful job he has done over the past year. The library is such a welcoming place and it has been great to hear how much the patrons enjoy the door-side service. She also thanked Director Tolchin and all of the staff.

Commissioner Brian Boms thanked Director Tolchin, Assistant Director Amici, and all of the staff for all the hard work they do.

### **Public Comments**

**A Motion to open the meeting to public comment was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Brain Boms. Unanimously approved.**

Let it be known for the record that no comments were made.

**A Motion to close the meeting to public comment was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.**

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at the Monmouth County Library Headquarters 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, February 9, 2021 was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.**

### **Adjournment**

**A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.**

The meeting concluded at 1:20 pm.

Submitted by Kimberly Conover