

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes
February 8, 2022
Headquarters Library

Present: Chairperson Brian Boms and Library Commissioners Barbara Lovell, Barbara McMorrow, Marcy McMullen, and Mary Ann Musich; also present County Commissioner Lillian Burry, Director Judith Tolchin, and Assistant Director Heidi Amici

Absent: Commissioner Frank Wells

Guests: Meghan Bennett, County Counsel; Kim Avagliano, Eastern Branch Manager; Pat Findra, Children’s Coordinator; Kate Hardy, Senior Management Assistant; Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator; Robyn Miller, Headquarters Branch Manager; Rachael Scalise, Branch Services Librarian; Also present were Maureen O’Connor Leach, Friends of the Library; Muriel Smith; and Nancy Grbelja

The meeting convened at 11:03 am.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairperson Brian Boms opened the meeting of Tuesday, February 8, 2022 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.”

Minutes

Chairperson Brian Boms gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from January 11, 2022. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions.

A Motion to approve the Open Public Meeting minutes of January 11, 2022 was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

A Motion to approve the Closed Executive Session minutes of January 11, 2022 was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

Department Presentations

Director Tolchin introduced the Department Heads in attendance to present. She stated this is one of the best teams she has ever had the honor and opportunity to work with. The Library is fortunate to have the knowledge, support, loyalty, and dedication of those presenting today.

The first presentation was made by Heidi Amici, Assistant Director highlighting 2021 accomplishments in Technology and Member Services. The Library expanded the Wi-fi access at the Headquarters and Eastern Branch locations in 2021 and it can now be accessed from the parking lot. Thank you to Monmouth County Information Services and John Zawodski and his team for working with the Library to expand this service. Tablet stations were installed in twelve

of the thirteen branch locations; Oceanport branch and seven member locations to be completed soon. The tablets are durable, flexible, and fun. New computers were purchased in 2020 and installation is approximately sixty-percent complete. Once installation is complete, additional software upgrades will be installed. New databases were added to the Library's collection, including Medici, and Access Video On-Demand. BrainFuse which provides online homework help was provided on a temporary basis with NJ State Library funding. The Overdrive e-book and e-audiobook collection continues to be popular amongst patrons as the Library saw a 39% increase from 2020 to 2021. E-magazines were also added to the Overdrive collection and the Library now has over 3,000 digital magazines. Self-checkout machines were installed at eight branch locations and patrons can check out items, reserve a computer, release prints, and pay fines via credit/debit card on these devices. Assistant Director Amici continues to work to obtain a new delivery van for the Library. In 2022, the Technology and Member Services Department looks forward to working toward auto renewals, online card registration, emailing hold and overdue notices, expanding student database cards, and making upgrades to the online catalog.

The second presentation was made by Robyn Miller, Headquarters Branch Manager. Headquarters reference staff have been facilitating virtual book clubs for the Library and held forty book discussions in 2021 with 4 additional author talks. Staff saw 619 total registrants for these discussions. Thank you to staff members Rebecca Goberk, Stephanie Laurino, Katie Kenny, Trish Shrodo, Ragini Chaturvedi, Jeanmarie Kantor, and Mary Patterson who made all these book discussions possible. Staff worked diligently to remain safe while providing services for patrons. Focus was given to displays and making them innovative and engaging. Staff members continue to work every day to make this a great environment for staff and patrons.

The third presentation was made by Kim Avagliano, Eastern Branch Manager. The Eastern Branch saw the retirement of three reference staff in 2021: Karen Harrington, Dawn Burke, and Bill Hersh. New staff members joined the team and many staff have taken on additional responsibilities. The Eastern Branch also trained fifteen new circulation staff throughout the system. New equipment and services were installed, including: self-checkout kiosk, tablet station, extended outdoor Wi-Fi, and children's department virtual programming recording equipment. The branch continued to support local artists through various displays during the year. All members of the staff are active in the creation and maintenance of displays throughout the branch. The Children's department facilitated a bookmark design challenge, virtual story times, Summer outdoor story time, and take-home crafts. In May, the sculpture dedication event was held and the branch is looking forward to the communities' continued enjoyment of it. In September, an outdoor pop up concert was held that was enjoyed by all. Throughout the year the branch has seen an increase in patron traffic and library use. The Eastern Branch was the recipient of an art donation from the Shrewsbury Historical Society and was featured in local newspapers. This year's holiday decorations were made by patron Colleen Hopson who created custom paper and recycled material ornaments for a twelve-foot tree. The Eastern Branch was voted Best Public Library of 2021 by the Asbury Park Press Community Choice Awards. They are proud to receive this honor and extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the patrons. In 2022, the branch is looking forward to increased patron traffic, possible outdoor programming, creating study rooms, increasing staff cross-training, collection updates, promoting databases, and increasing staffing.

The fourth presentation was made by Pat Findra, Children's Coordinator. 2021 saw the continuation of Covid-19 restrictions and accommodations. Staff worked diligently to protect families and communities while providing services. The first half of the year saw the continuation of door-side service, virtual programs, and take-home crafts. The second half of the year saw the addition of limited in-person, socially distanced programming. Take-home crafts have grown in such popularity that they exceeded the previous in-person craft options. Children's staff participated in circulation functions, assisted with door-side services, shelved materials, conducted reference service, ordered new materials, covered chat and email service, and more. In the months of July through October, children's staff conducted outdoor story-time. Staff in locations without outdoor areas conducted live Zoom story-time. In the months of November and December, story-time was conducted indoors and socially distanced, but there was a significant decline in attendance during this time. Special virtual events were scheduled throughout the year with performers presenting virtually with on demand replay options available for up to thirty additional days. The 2021 summer reading program was titled *Tales and Tails*. It was a challenge to promote the program and increase participation as staff were not able to conduct in person school visits and students were overloaded with screen time due to various schooling formats. Summer reading statistics were higher than in 2020 but still approximately 50% compared to 2019. The children's department underwent many staffing changes this year and scheduling has been challenging. In 2022, the children's department is looking forward to increasing staff and continuing to engage the community with programs.

The fifth presentation was made by Rachael Scalise, Branch Services Librarian. 2021 was a difficult and challenging year, but it also showed our resilience and team effort. It was a year of change that included changes in staffing and staffing levels from retirements, resignations, hiring new staff, and staff reassignments with all locations feeling the effects of lower staffing levels. The Library saw changes in the way services were delivered and blended virtual with in-person to continue to serve the community. Branches experienced change in how patrons are using libraries with a slower than anticipated return of foot traffic. However, services such as door-side pickup, virtual reference, outdoor programs, and virtual programs remained popular. Some branch locations experienced changes in service hours with reduced daily hours or daily closures throughout 2021. The Library continues to view change not just as an obstacle, but an opportunity. The Branch Services Department looks forward to 2022 and learning from the challenges of 2021. To highlight each branch:

The Allentown Branch experienced building repairs and upgrades throughout the year with roof patching, new LED lighting, and driveway paving. The branch focused this year on weeding the collection and creating new spaces for patrons.

The Atlantic Highlands Branch remained door-side service only until July 1, 2021. During that time, staff made creative juvenile book bundles and set up a cart for door-side browsing when weather permitted.

The Colts Neck Branch experienced the start of many new staff members in Fall 2021. The branch was a designated early polling location and saw double standard patron traffic during that time. The branch looks forward to beginning projects and weeding the collection in 2022.

The Hazlet Branch saw an increase in patrons and changing patron needs as the Township experienced an influx of new residents. The branch also had the addition of new staff members and experienced patron challenges related to Covid-19 protocols. Branch Manager

Mary Patterson continued to provide the monthly short story discussion group by establishing it as a virtual program.

The Holmdel Branch experienced changes in staff throughout the year. The branch's service hours were increased an additional 12 hours per week on October 1, 2021.

The Howell Branch experienced changes in staff throughout the year and looks forward to working on new projects and serving the community.

The Marlboro Branch experienced changes in staff throughout the year. The branch has seen the return of after-school library use and is very busy each day during this timeframe. The patrons enjoy Lucky Day titles and look forward to browsing the new books. The patrons have also enjoyed using the new self-checkout kiosk. Additionally, Marlboro Township purchased patio furniture for the library and increased the Wi-fi to allow for more outdoor use of the library.

The Ocean Township Branch experienced changes in staff throughout the year and worked tirelessly to serve patrons.

The Oceanport Branch remained in a reduced service hour (one day per week) capacity throughout 2021. In 2022, the service hours will increase to two days per week. Staff also spent the year weeding the collection.

The Wall Township Branch was excited to see the return of patrons to the building and continues to see high traffic use of tables/study areas and Wi-fi.

The West Long Branch library welcomed a new circulation staff member to the branch. The branch spent the year focusing on collection development, collection management, creating new displays, and providing services to meet patron needs.

The sixth presentation was made by Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator. The Library had 1,722 virtual programs in 2021 and saw 21,156 people attend programs. The Library had 257 in person meetings attended by 9,564 people. Virtual programming was coordinated and facilitated by Programming Department staff to provide programs encompassing all 13 branches of the Monmouth County Library System. Programming staff worked tirelessly to bring these programs to the community with help from Donna Mansfield, Sing-Long Wu, Robyn Miller, Jane Reynolds, Ragini Chaturvedi, Mary Mattia, Rebecca Gokberk, Trish Shrodo, and Kim Avagliano. Thank you to the Art Department and Buildings and Grounds for their creative behind the scenes assistance. Programming priorities focused in support of public service while keeping staff and patron safety a priority. Positive support and comments from the public have inspired our quest in providing superior programming choices. At this time, all virtual live programs are offered via Zoom and Facebook Live with rebroadcasts offered via YouTube. Through the department's willingness to adapt, change, and grow the Library's community partners have increased, including: the American Library Association, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Gilder-Lehrman Institute, Rutgers Master Gardeners, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Literacy New Jersey, Monmouth County Historical Association, Monmouth County Consumer Affairs, Family and Children's Services, Brookdale Community College, 180 Turning Lives Around, League of Women Voters, T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center, and AAUW. The Programming Department has developed relationships with presenters who have shared effective, dynamic, and engaging programs. Ongoing programs include ESL, citizenship classes, yoga, bereavement, knitting, cooking classes, and monthly themed concerts. The Library celebrated Black History Month, Women's History Month, Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, Earth Day, Holocaust Remembrance

Day, Jewish-American Heritage Month, Juneteenth, Patriot Day, Indian Independence, Hispanic Heritage Month, library card sign-up month, and Veterans Day. All events are promoted on the Library's website, through social media, monthly calendar, postcards, newsletter, and press releases. In 2021, the Programming Department assisted with the creation of the 2020 Annual Report. The department works to promote the library and library resources within the community. In addition to adult programs, the Programming Department assisted with juvenile programs and young adult programs. Teen programming included the book review crew, writers' workshop, an origami workshop, coding classes, teen advisory board, and a chemistry escape room. A booklet was created and added to the local author collection containing teen submissions of writing and poems. The Programming Department has many new ideas for 2022 and encourages use of the library and all we have to offer.

The final presentation was made by Kate Hardy, Senior Management Assistant. 2021 was a busy and challenging year for library staff. Working in a public service industry during a pandemic and coordinating library coverage needs to our large number of vacancies was difficult, however all staff came together to provide coverage, remain safe, and maintain excellent service. Lisa Lonigro, who is responsible for the Library's purchasing, processed 63 purchase orders totaling \$176,033.56. Some of these purchase orders were items needed in response to Covid-19 and will be applied for CARES Act funds in the amount of \$9,535.01. With Lisa's proactive planning necessary supplies were provided to all branches. In addition to purchasing, Lisa also took on the task of finalizing payroll. Marie Minneci, who is responsible for accounts payable, processed 1,048 vouchers totaling \$9,249,923.98. Marie also assists with payroll input. Lori Lombardo joined the Administration team in 2021 and works in the Branch Services Department. Lori provides circulation coverage at branch locations and processes cash records and deposits, maintains door count records, assists with entering timekeeping information, sends supplies to branches, and assists with projects. Kate Hardy processed 65 separations in 2021: 33 monitors, 8 retirements, 14 resignations, 14 temporary staff resignations, and 2 County department transfers. Additionally, 78 monitor positions were converted to 18 Library Assist positions within the table of organization. The Library received and reviewed 308 applications, held 123 interviews, and hired 33 new employees. The Library had 22 internal job postings and 18 title promotions, with 47 personal action request forms and 54 employee change of status forms processed in 2021. Between the pandemic and the nationwide labor shortage, recruiting new employees is harder than ever before. In addition, staff morale has been a challenge with the last few years seeing higher vacancy numbers that have put a strain on staff. The Library ended the 2021 year with 50 vacancies. In 2022, priority will be placed on recruiting new employees, focusing on staff morale, staff retention, and internal promotions.

Commission Remarks

Chairperson Brian Boms thanked all of the Department Heads for their presentations stating that the Commission appreciates the time, thought, and effort in preparing and presenting these annual reports. They were informative and enlightening.

Chairperson Boms reiterated the importance of meeting with all branch and member library locations throughout this coming year. It was suggested to visit some locations during National Library Week in April. The Commission will develop a small list of questions that they will ensure to ask when visiting locations.

Service Recognition Presentation

County Commissioner Lillian Burry thanked Nancy Grbelja for all her years of service to the Monmouth County Library Commission and presented her with a proclamation. As a member of the Monmouth County Library Commission for more than fifteen years, Nancy Grbelja served as Co-Treasurer, Treasurer, Vice-Chairperson, and Chairperson sharing her time and talents working on many committees, including the Commission's educational, cultural, and recreational programs. As Chairperson, Nancy sought and found alternative ways to meet the educational and recreational needs during the adverse conditions that the library faced during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In seeking alternative pursuits to benefit the residents of Monmouth County, Nancy met each new challenge with intelligence and measured decisions. The Monmouth County Library Commission has been fortunate to have had Nancy Grbelja as a member and we will miss the energy, expertise, dedication, research, and creative thinking that she brought to the Monmouth County Library Commission.

Nancy Grbelja extended a thank you to everyone and wished the Commission future success and knows they will continue to do a great job.

Library Liaison Report

County Commissioner Lillian Burry thanked all of the staff and encourages the continued focus on recruiting qualified candidates.

County Commissioner Burry recommended sending a warm greeting card to the Raffetto Family.

County Commissioner Lillian Burry exited the meeting at 1:03pm

Bylaw Review

Bylaw modifications have been made regarding the language pertaining to the term Freeholder and "Commissioner" to distinguish between Library Commissioner and County Commissioner.

A Motion to approve the changes to the Commission Bylaws was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorro. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

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

Director Tolchin submitted the January 2022 Financial Report to the Commission, including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets wherein the 2022 Detail Budget Account charged year to date is \$693,494.97 posted to the Temporary Budget of \$4,694,812.00; this total includes encumbered amounts. The 2021 Reserve Budget reflects \$3,859,552.67 remaining in unencumbered funds; still pending are fourth quarter fringe benefits as well as other 2021 expenditures. The remaining Capital Account for the renovation is \$81,252.16 unencumbered from the first capital appropriation of \$977,000.00 and \$1,497,000.00 unencumbered from the second capital appropriation of \$1,497,000.00 for a total of \$1,578,252.16 remaining unencumbered as of January 31, 2022. 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 that has been allocated as matching funds as a recipient of the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act Grant.

A Motion to approve the January 2022 Financial Report including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

Headquarters Renovation Update

Director Tolchin stated an update was received from Kristen Wishart, Monmouth County Engineering. The project schedule remains unchanged by Settembrino Architects. As of January 29, 2022, one-hundred percent construction documentation is in progress. Work will not begin until July 1, 2022 or after and forty days have been allocated to bid and award the project. It is recommended the Commission consider the high-tech enhancements to Room 8 be a non-priority as this may delay the project timeline.

Discussion was had regarding the access tunnel and if removing it and closing the area or fully closing the library would allow for the project to be completed sooner. Removing the tunnel would heavily impact the ability to provide library services during construction. Director Tolchin will pose some questions to Monmouth County Engineering, but the need to make changes to the construction documents could delay the project further.

Commissioner Marcy McMullen exited the meeting at 1:14pm

Covid-19 Library Operations Update

Director Tolchin stated the Library has been receiving inquiries regarding volunteer opportunities. Training and one-on-one interaction is needed relating to volunteers. At this time, the Library will continue its suspension of volunteer opportunities.

IDRC used meeting rooms at the Library for training. There were concerns regarding smoking outside of designated areas, not maintaining buffer zones, and food deliveries coming within the library to the Circulation desk. They may seek an alternative training location in the month of March. The Library is maintaining precautions in operating procedures.

Branch and Member Report

Director Tolchin stated teen programming will resume at the Holmdel branch with a two-part podcasting program on March 9th and March 16th. Librarian Eden Biskin will facilitate this in person program for up to ten teens. Registration and a waiver are required.

Tinton Falls Library was a recipient of the New Jersey State Library Construction Bond Act Grant and looks forward to when they can begin work on the library.

Director's Report

Director Tolchin stated progress has begun on the New Jersey State Aid report. The report will be completed prior to the March 15, 2022 deadline and will require the signature of the Monmouth County Library Chairperson.

The Commission was provided information on the equity, diversity, and inclusion initiative of the American Library Association and the New Jersey State Library. The Monmouth County Library has a diverse workforce and promotes inclusion.

Nationally there have been protests regarding books and a growing trend in book banning. Our library seeks to maintain a collection that provides for the needs and interests of our diverse communities. Updates and revisions are being made to our Collection Development Policy and Reconsideration/Challenge Policy.

All library branches were closed on Saturday, January 29th and Sunday, January 30th due to snow.

February is Library Snapshot Month. Throughout the month we will monitor statistics and promote library services and programs.

The Trustee Institute holds meetings monthly; attendance at meetings counts towards the annual training hour requirement.

We are moving forward with an eighteen-month renewal of our movie licensing contract and reviewing how we can begin resuming movie programs. As the renewal cost is under the purchasing threshold, the Library Director can process the voucher.

A new database has been added to the Library's website titled Learning Express. This database offers test preparation and tutorials for students in elementary, middle, and high school as well as college.

The Oceanport branch is working to increase service hours. Daily cleaning is necessary to be able to increase hours.

Special Counsel Meghan Bennett exited the meeting at 1:31pm. Special Counsel Fay Szakal will be present during Executive Session.

Assistant Director's Report

Assistant Director Heidi Amici stated she will continue to provide the Commission with updates regarding the status of the van purchase.

Updated drafts of the Collection Development Policy and Reconsideration/Challenge Policy will be provided at the next scheduled meeting for review.

Assistant Director Amici continues to research hybrid meeting technology.

Programming Report

AARP tax assistance services will be returning to the Library. This service will be offered by appointment only at the Headquarters and Wall Township locations. All appointments must be made online and the link can be found on the Library's homepage.

Commissioner Comments

The Commission extended a thank you to all department heads for their presentations.

Commissioner Barbara Lovell is interested in coordinating with Chairperson Boms and Vice-Chairperson McMorrow to schedule branch visits.

Public Comments

A Motion to open the meeting to public comment was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

It was reported that Maureen O'Connor Leach, Friends of the Library has a statement she would like to provide to the Commission. Someone will reach out to coordinate.

Muriel Smith stated that Director Tolchin is dynamic and the Programming Department is wonderful. She feels it is important that the community knows about the great offerings available through the library and how far reaching the virtual programs have been.

A Motion to close the meeting to public comment was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

Next Meeting

A Motion to maintain the virtual meeting for the next scheduled meeting was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Mary Ann Musich. Unanimously approved

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at the Monmouth County Library Headquarters at 11:00 am, with remote participation available.

Scheduling of Closed Executive Session at Next Meeting

A Motion to schedule a Closed Executive Session at the next meeting on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

Adjournment & Closed Executive Session

A Motion to adjourn the public meeting and enter into closed executive session to discuss the Library's Collective Bargaining Agreement and other personnel and legal issues as permitted by the Open Public Meetings Act was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Barbara Lovell. Unanimously approved.

No action will be taken after the completion of the executive session.

The meeting concluded at 1:46 pm.

Submitted by Kimberly Conover