Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes
February 21, 2023
Headquarters, Manalapan

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

Guests: County Counsel John Glynn, Eastern Branch Manager Kim Avagliano, Children’s Coordinator Pat Findra, Programming Coordinator Laura Migliore, Headquarters Branch Manager Robyn Miller, Branch Services Librarian Rachael Scalise, Howell Branch Manager Beth Henderson, Ocean Branch Manager Diana Zambrano, and Joan Moss, Programming & PR Department

The meeting convened at 11:15 am.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairperson Brian Boms opened the meeting of Tuesday, February 21, 2023 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.”

Agenda Approval
A Motion to approve the February 21, 2023 Agenda was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Barbara Lovell. Unanimously approved.

Minutes
Chairperson Brian Boms gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from January 17, 2023. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions.

A Motion to approve the Open Public Meeting minutes of January 17, 2023 was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

Department Presentations
Director Tolchin began the presentations by acknowledging staff retiring effective March 1, 2023. We will miss them tremendously. On behalf of the Library Commission, thank you for your years of dedicated service. We wish them well and congratulations and enjoy retirement.

Beth Henderson, Howell Branch Manager has been with the library for 20 years of service.
Joan Moss, Supervising Library Assistant of Programming has been with the library for 18 years of service.
Diana Zambrano, Ocean Township Branch Manager has been with the library for 11 years of service.
Jo Fiore, Allentown Branch Manager has been with the library for 15 years of service.

Director Tolchin introduced the department head presentations. This is a wonderful team and we are thankful for them every day for their wisdom, support, diligence, and dedication.

Commissioner Mary Ann Musich arrived at 11:23 am.

The first presentation was made by Pat Findra, Children’s Coordinator. 2022 saw a return to near-normalcy by the end of the year, after a rough beginning and a huge jump in programming in the middle. Overall, our branch program attendance increased by 375% and the number of programs offered by 197% from 2021. Special events programming received a budgetary increase allowing Assistant Coordinator Danya Romaner-Schussler to block-book many special events, from nature projects to LEGO® builds to craft and drawing workshops to sing-along concerts and yoga sessions. Take ‘n Make craft kits were made available semi-monthly at our libraries and were very popular. The Library’s Centennial was celebrated in many creative and unique ways through birthday-themed events. Oceans of Possibilities, the 2022 Summer Reading Challenge, lent itself to many programming interpretations, especially for an ocean-bordered county. The number of readers who completed the challenge rose by 22% over last year (2021) and the number of books read increased by 59%. In addition to planning and executing storytime and other creative programs, children’s librarians engaged in branch and member collection maintenance, provided reference service, and managed virtual chat and email services. The children’s department experienced staffing changes and said goodbye to two librarians but welcomed five full-time children’s librarians. We are starting off 2023 on a good footing, with staff, budgets, and materials ready to welcome back even more families into our libraries and meet the challenges of the year ahead.

The second presentation was made by Kim Avaglino, Eastern Branch Manager. 2022 began with continued modifications in service due to Covid-19 and the suspension of children’s programs in January and February. The AARP Tax Assistance program was not able to be held and meeting room use was reduced. In March and April, there was a return to library programs for adults and children. The summer saw the return of the very popular weekly Bridge card game programs. Program attendance continued to rise throughout the year. The Eastern Branch began the year with reduced reference staff and said goodbye to a full-time circulation staff but welcomed a full-time librarian. The Eastern Branch continues to be a training location for new permanent and temporary staff and saw fifteen new staff train at the branch. Reference staff continued weeding projects to maintain the collection, replace and repair items, and add new items to the collection. The branch also saw the return of newspapers and magazines along with patrons having access to the e-collection of periodicals. Branch staff and the community continued to work together for innovative and interesting displays, including crafts, artwork, jewelry, and wood bowls. Additionally, the Shrewsbury Historical Society mounted two exhibits, one on vintage wedding dresses and the other on historical seating. The branch celebrated the library’s 100th anniversary with children’s programs, a Dewey display, and a themed holiday tree. Additionally, lighting upgrades were completed in 2022 along with having the meeting rooms painted, chairs cleaned, floors polished, and maintaining roof issues. Thank you to the wonderful staff for their dedication to our patrons.
The third presentation was made by Robyn Miller, Headquarters Branch Manager. The Headquarters library continued to prepare for the upcoming renovation. Reflecting on 2022, the branch saw 6,379 computer uses, 18,433 reference questions, 10,320 phone reference questions, and 22,885 uses of the Wi-Fi. The library continues to see high usage of table and study spaces along with providing regular computer assistance as agencies within the community refer members of the community to the library for assistance. A space was created for patrons to attend virtual interviews and meetings so they could freely talk out loud. With the upcoming renovation, the library is reviewing options to temporarily relocate sections of the collection that are used more for physical browsing, such as foreign language and New Jersey history books. The reference staff increased the number of virtual book discussions offered and conducted 34 discussions in 2022. The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) has had great retention and attendance. Participating teens volunteer for Tech Tuesdays to help patrons with technology and device assistance. The circulation staff have been working with reduced staffing numbers and this has made the re-shelving of items a large undertaking within the branch. Overall, the staff are professionals at multi-tasking, providing reference service, reader’s advisory, ordering books, maintaining the collection, creating displays, tracking statistics, moderating book discussions, and providing virtual reference via chat and email. For 2023, the library looks forward to the renovation and to increasing community outreach. Thank you to the amazing team of staff.

The fourth presentation was made by Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator. The Monmouth County Library turned 100-years old in September 2022. Programs were held in person in September and October with virtual Centennial events ongoing through September 2023. The live weekend programs brought in 2,530 attendees. Additional birthday-themed events were offered throughout the whole library system. Our talented Art Department created a Centennial logo, which will be used sporadically through September 2023. They also provided decorations in the Headquarters’ lobby and meeting rooms, including a library timeline based on research compiled by Donna Mansfield. Tote bags were purchased to commemorate the Library’s birthday and over 13,000 were given out to patrons. In November 2022, we stopped in-person programs at Headquarters due to the pending renovations which had been scheduled to begin at that time. We continue to use Zoom, Facebook Live and YouTube to offer live and recorded virtual programs. Programming highlighted library resources and acknowledged Black History, Women’s History, St. Patrick’s Day, Earth Day, Holocaust Remembrance, Jewish American Heritage, Juneteenth, Summer Reading, Patriot Day, Thanksgiving, Library Card Sign Up Month, Veterans Day, and once again provided suggestions for library-related New Year’s Resolutions with ongoing events include virtual ESL and citizenship class opportunities, yoga, bereavement, knitting, and cooking classes. 7,582 in-person and virtual events were held in 2022 with 17,647 attendees. In-person Teen Programming was brought back for the first time since 2020 with more than 20 teen programs were offered, with over 300 teens attending. The Programming Department will continue to find new and innovative programs for our patrons, to encourage their use and enjoyment of library programming, whether virtually or in person.

The fifth presentation was made by Rachael Scalise, Branch Services Librarian. All of the wonderful things happening throughout the library system would not be possible without staff. The Branch Services Department schedules weekly coverage to meet needs for staffing vacancies, sick outages, vacations, and other scheduling needs. The training of new staff is also coordinated through this department. It is crucial to remain ahead of staffing concerns and the
library system as a whole comes together to work as a team. Every branch location took on additional hours and increased desk coverage to help each location remain open and serving the patrons. It truly was a herculean task and requires a lot of planning. The focus continues into 2023 to increase staff while looking to retain current staff and offer growth opportunities. The Branch Services Department is working closely with County Human Resources to seek more librarian applicants. Increasing staffing levels will allow us to sustain our organization and get out into the communities. A few highlights of each branch location:

- The Allentown library hosted programs such as blind date with a book, blackout poetry, and a special Daffodil Day themed story walk and craft.
- The Atlantic Highlands branch spent the year relearning the community needs and re-establishing themselves as a community service provider. Their adult computer class resumed and they hosted a Great Gatsby themed 100th Anniversary party.
- The Colts Neck branch has been working on relocating items within the library to better serve the collection. They partnered with the Navy Gold Star Office to highlight Gold Star Family month and it was a successful, interactive display.
- The Hazlet branch saw an increase in demand for in person services and programs. They hosted many new, exciting children’s programs and the popular Short & Sweet short story group. The Township also provided many furniture upgrades for staff and patrons.
- The Holmdel branch continued into 2022 with an extended interim manager and the addition of three new circulation staff. In December, a new branch manager began.
- The Howell branch received interior painting upgrades and welcomed new circulation staff.
- The Marlboro branch partnered with a local VNA donation drive and the Marlboro community was so generous to the library.
- The Ocean Township branch completed the installation of three large surfing photographs in memoriam of former library monitor.
- The Oceanport branch continues to be a space for local families to enjoy children’s programs. They hope to bring some adult programs to the library in 2023.
- The Wall Township branch welcomed back the AARP tax assistance program. The Wall Library Association held several successful book sales. Programming also returned to the library, including book club, art displays, and concerts.
- The West Long Branch library received interior painting and carpet upgrades.

The sixth presentation was made by Director Judith Tolchin regarding Human Resources and staffing. The table of organization, as of February 25, 2023, will have 89 full-time staff and 44 part-time staff for a total of 133 permanent staff. Staff provide service at 13 branch locations and 12 member locations. While staff are overextended, they work hard to continue to bring creative ideas and programs to the communities. Effective March 1 and including the upcoming retirements, there are currently 41 staffing vacancies and the library continues to work with County Human Resources to review applications and conduct interviews. In 2022, there were 78 personnel actions and the library currently has 6 temporary seasonal employees and 14 monitors.
It was recommended that the Library Commission create a sub-committee to assist in creating staffing vacancy solutions.

The final presentation was made by Heidi Amici, Assistant Director highlighting Technology & Member Services. Thank you to all Extension staff. The department orders for all branches, installs and maintains hardware and software, offers help desk service for all computers, and researches innovative services to keep the library current. The library has wonderful database options and has worked to create student database access cards. The library holds 500,000 electronic items through Overdrive. Since the pandemic, electronic book usage has increased. There is a high cost impact to maintaining an electric collection as items need to be re-purchased every two years or after every twenty-six checkouts, depending on publisher. The library is now offering email notifications for items on hold and working toward offering text message notifications in the future. The clerk driving staff work hard to sort and deliver to the whole system every week and thank you for approving the purchase of the new van. The department supplies laptops and OWLs for in person and virtual hybrid programs. Additionally, the library purchased folding, nesting table to make it easier to set up programs. Patrons need study space, power access, and high-speed internet access and the library is the place that offers all of that to the community.

**Library Commission Remarks**
Chairperson Brian Boms stated, on behalf of the Library Commission, thank you to Beth Henderson, Joan Moss, Diana Zambrano, and Jo Fiore for their years of dedicated service. Thank you to the department heads for their hard work and informative presentations. The Library Commission appreciates all of the staff and hopes to work with the library to alleviate staffing concerns.

**Library Liaison Report**
County Commissioner Ross Licitra recognized James (Jim) Truncer who after 58 years of service to the County of Monmouth as leader of the Monmouth County Parks System unfortunately passed away. It was Mr. Truncer’s leadership and vision for the future that made the County Park System successful.

**Revised Bylaws**
Changes are noted regarding the Scheduling of the Meeting reflecting the third Tuesday of each month:

“The regular monthly meeting of the library commission of the Monmouth County Library shall be held on the third Tuesday of each month January through June and September through December. July and August meetings are at the discretion of the library commission.”

A clause was added permitting for electronic attendance of Library Commissioners. Please note that this provision does not include the electronic participation of the public though individual meetings can be noticed with remote public attendance if there is an emergency order or emergency provisions issued for the public:

“Electronic Attendance. Library Commissioners shall make every effort to physically attend each meeting of the Library Commission. In the event that a Library
Commissioner cannot physically attend a meeting for a legitimate cause, a Library Commissioner may attend a meeting via electronic means such as, but not limited to, telephone, Zoom, etc.; however, a Library Commissioner may not attend a meeting via email, text messaging or the like. In order to be able to participate and vote at a meeting, a Library Commissioner attending via electronic means must have the ability to review all documents and presentations which are being considered at the meeting as well as the opportunity for simultaneous aural communications among all participating Library Commissioners.”

The Library Commission will hold approval until review by County Counsel.
It was suggested that going forward the department head presentations be scheduled as their own meeting.

A Motion to table was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

To reflect the change in the monthly meeting schedule, the balance of the Library Commission Meeting dates for 2023 have been updated to the following:
- March 21, 2023 at the Eastern Branch at 9:30 am
- April 18, 2023 at the Headquarters library at 9:30 am
- May 16, 2023 at the Holmdel branch at 9:30 am
- June 20, 2023 at the Headquarters library at 9:30 am
- September 19, 2023 at the Eastern Branch at 9:30 am
- October 17, 2023 at the Headquarters library at 9:30 am
- November 21, 2023 at the Howell branch at 9:30 am
- December 19, 2023 at the Headquarters library at 9:30 am

A Motion to Approve the revised meeting schedule and to provide notice in the authorized news sources designated by the Board of County Commissioners was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report
January Financials - Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets
Director Tolchin submitted the January 2023 Financial Report to the Commission, including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets wherein the 2023 Detail Budget Account charged year to date is $794,625.68 posted to the Temporary Budget of $4,694,812.00; this total includes encumbered amounts. The Reserve Budget, with remaining 2022 funds, reflects $3,459,515.94 remaining in unencumbered funds. $400,000.00 from 2022 Detail Budget is in the Reserve Budget and it has been allocated for matching funds applied to the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act for the Headquarters renovation. These funds are not currently encumbered, but will be. The Capital Account for the renovation is $1,578,252.16 remaining unencumbered as of January 31, 2023. These funds are reserved for the completion of the adult library and the lobby. Lobby furniture is now allocated within the Operating Budget. The Grant Detail Budget Account Status includes all Grant Funds associated with the library reflecting $2,014,244.18; $1,950,000 of that total is the amount
associated with the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act and $64,244.18 is the amount associated with all other grant accounts.

A Motion to approve the January 2023 Financial Report including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

**Action on Bills**

**Projector Systems Revised Quotes**
The projector costs are significantly more than previous estimates due to prevailing wage and only one vendor has been identified. The library requests approval of this expense for projection equipment in Howell at a cost of $14,505.34, Wall at a cost of $14,505.34, and Marlboro at a cost of $16,665.34 for a total cost of $45,676.02.

A Motion to approve the procurement of projection equipment through the county purchasing acquisition process at a total cost of $45,676.02 and further authorizes the Library Director to sign the voucher was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara Lovell. Unanimously approved.

**Aspire Quotes for Managed Internet**
The Cisco Meraki System three-year license renewal for November 30, 2022 through November 29, 2025 has a cost of $18,204.00. The pricing and items needed were identified and negotiated through County Information Technology Services

A Motion to approve the renewal in the amount of $18,204.00 was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

**Headquarters Renovation Update**
Meetings are regularly held with the team, including County Deputy Administrator Christopher Marion, County Engineering, Settembrino Architects, and Library Administration. The renovation plan currently includes a closure of the Headquarters Library for a period of approximately four months. Once plan revisions are complete, the project will go out for bid. Parking lot surveys are also being conducted to facilitate the upgraded electrical infrastructure necessary for the building generator.

**Trustee Training Opportunity**
Library Commissioners can earn training hours through the New Jersey State Library and New Jersey Library Trustee Association in an opportunity forwarded by Director Tolchin via email. There is an annual seven-hour trustee training requirement. Any Commissioner that registers for training and completes the training is requested to notify Director Tolchin so she can record it for the 2023 Per Capita State Library Aid data.

**Director’s Report**
National Library Week is April 23 through April 29, 2023. The Library Commission would like to coordinate visiting branches during that week.
The annual State Aid Report is due by March 15, 2023. Information and statistics will be gathered to complete the report.

Director Tolchin has requested a credit card from the County of Monmouth that can be used for purchases that can only be facilitated with the use of a credit card, such as the library’s chat services.

A request to use the library as a filming location after operating hours was received from a student for a Masters/Graduate project from the School of Visual Arts. The request has been submitted to County Counsel for review. The request will also require approval from the Board of County Commissioners.

The Commission paused to take a photograph to be used for the Annual Report.

Commissioner Mary Ann Musich exited the meeting at 2:09 pm.

**Assistant Director’s Report**

Assistant Director Heidi Amici did not provide an additional report at the time of the meeting.

**Commissioner Comments**

The Commission expressed concern regarding the ongoing and increasing costs of e-books and e-audiobooks. The New Jersey State Library, as well as The American Library Association are involved on the State and National levels in advocating for how the rising costs effect libraries. Commissioner Licitra recommended that a change be made through legislation and contact with NJ Assembly Members and State Senators.

**Public Comments**

A Motion to open the meeting to public comment was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara Lovell. Unanimously approved.

Theresa Jones from Neptune offered comment to the Commission regarding fees and that they have an impact on marginalized communities. Additionally, she encouraged the Commission to be proactive regarding the roofing issues at the Eastern branch to reduce the risk of issues relating to water infiltration.

A Motion to close the meeting to public comment was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at the Monmouth County Library Eastern Branch at 9:30 am.

**Scheduling of Closed Executive Session at Next Meeting**

A Motion to schedule a Closed Executive Session at the next meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.
Closed Executive Session
A Closed Executive Session was not held during the course of the meeting.

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

The meeting concluded at 2:14 pm.

Submitted by Kimberly Conover