Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes  
September 19, 2023  
Eastern Branch

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

**Absent:** Barbara Lovell

**Guests:** County Counsel Meghan Bennett

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairperson Brian Boms opened the meeting of Tuesday, September 19, 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 September 19, 2023 Agenda was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

**Minutes**

Chairperson Brian Boms gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from June 20, 2023. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions.

A Motion to approve the Open Public Meeting minutes of June 20, 2023 was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

**Library Commission Remarks**

Chairperson Boms hopes that everyone had a good summer. He noted that there have been strenuous times figuring out the logistics of the renovation project, and wished to extend his kudos to Director Tolchin and Assistant Director Amici for pulling it together and making it all work.

**Headquarters Renovation Report**

Director Tolchin shared that the New Jersey State Library has approved the Substantial Change for the project. This was required since the bid award exceeded 10% of the project cost of $3,900,000.00 that was submitted with the grant proposal. All necessary reports were submitted on a timely basis to the New Jersey State Library, as required under the grant agreement. Still required is the audit report, which is due by 12/31/23. It will be submitted once it becomes available from County Finance.
Now that contracts have been fully executed, the Library will apply for the first reimbursement in the amount of 25% of the $1,950,000.00 that the grant allows for, that payment will be in the amount of $487,500.00.

Two meetings were held with the renovation team; including the contractor, architect, County Engineer, Buildings & Grounds, and Library staff. The project is progressing as planned, with an estimated start date after all materials are procured. The duration of the project is estimated to be within a 6-month time frame, with a projected completion prior to the primary election in June 2024.

Several product changes were necessitated due to the delayed start of the project. As a result, there were a number of discontinued products. The architects and their interior designer offered substitutions. Director Tolchin displayed samples of the new finishes and design elements including transition flooring, ceiling tiles, bathroom tiles, and sinks. Also included was an accent wall covering for the quiet study, a selection of teal for the walls to match the wall covering and furnishings and new lighting for the room.

Commissioner Ross Licitra arrived at 10:08 am

County Counsel Meghan Bennett arrived at 10:11 am

**Library Liaison Report**
County Commissioner Ross Licitra did not have any comments at the time of the meeting.

**Financial Report**
**August Financials - Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, Capital Budgets, and Grant Budgets**
Director Tolchin submitted the August 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 $5,963,006.90 posted to the Approved Budget of $17,885,000.00; this total includes encumbered amounts. The Reserve Budget, with remaining 2022 funds reflects $3,002,403.57 remaining in unencumbered funds. The Capital Account for the renovation is $1,630,422.75 remaining unencumbered as of August 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.

A Motion to approve the August 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 Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

**Headquarters Property Damage Report**
On August 24, 2023 the fire suppression system in the Extension part of the Headquarters location failed. This caused water to spray over several rows of books, including Dewey numbers 960-980 (history). The water also went through the steel floor and onto a portion of the fiction section. The history section is an area which is seldom weeded, as the works closely follow the
actual historical event. Many of the affected items are out of print and may not be able to be replaced.

A claim was submitted to county insurance. Since they are a self-insured program there is a $500,000.00 deductible, which far exceeds the loss that was sustained. Claire Morales from the county insurance department informed Director Tolchin that there was money available in a county line item, which would allow for replacement or substitution of the lost items.

Assistant Director Amici stated that 542 items were discarded so far, totaling about $13,000 (value at the time of purchase). A final assessment of the damage is ongoing as additional damages may result from books exposed to water damage creating a mold hazard.

Commissioner Licitra proposed the possibility of setting up an Amazon Wishlist for those items which may not be able to be replaced though the library’s vendors.

Assistant Director Amici wanted to extend her thanks Tracy Pitts and her Building & Grounds crew. She also wished to thank the Extension staff; Member Services, Acquisitions and Technical Processing for springing into action.

She also mentioned that Greg from The Monmouth County Clerk’s Archives Division was very helpful in sharing his knowledge on water emergencies and preserving books and documents.

Chairperson Boms suggested an inspection of the fire suppression system, as an alert was not sent out when it was activated. Commissioner Licitra echoed that, stating that with a new security system being installed, that a comprehensive audit of all alarm systems be performed.

**Headquarters Children’s Reading Room Remodel Project**

Director Tolchin shared a quote from a vendor on state contract in the amount of $121,886.78 to replace the carpeting in the Headquarters Children’s Room. Approval will be sought to use funding from the Operating Budget.

Carpet samples were shared. The plan is to include carpeting with bright, primary colors in the design to give that area of the library a refreshed look with the completion of the renovation project.

A Motion to approve the Headquarters Children’s Reading Room Remodel Project in the amount of $121,886.78 was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

**Capital Projects – County Library Facilities**

Director Tolchin inquired to Commissioner Licitra as to the status of the security system installation at Headquarters and Eastern Branch. She stated that a request was put forward to the County Administrator and CFO, which includes the quotes and recommended areas of camera placement, and is awaiting approval. She noted that she is happy to assist in any way once the project is approved.
Director Tolchin added that the canopy project at the Eastern Branch is still in the planning and design stages at this time. Commissioner Frank Wells mentioned that the canopy is needed to protect the outside steps from ice and rain. Director Tolchin agreed that the addition of the canopy is an important safety measure.

**Projector Proposal/Ocean Township**
Director Tolchin stated that a need for a new projector has been identified at the Ocean Township branch, at a cost of $12,292.37. Ocean Township is one of the larger, busier branches in the library system and the projector is needed for programming purposes (movies, PowerPoint presentations, etc.)

Commissioner McMorrow inquired how long the procurement and installation might take. Director Tolchin stated that the chosen vendor has worked with other County departments and has set clear and agreeable terms, so it should not be a long process.

**A Motion to approve the purchase of a projector for the Ocean Township library in the amount of $12,292.37 was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.**

**Code of Conduct Policy**
Director Tolchin stated that a need has arisen to fine-tune the existing Code of Conduct Policy in light of recent events at several Monmouth County Library locations. She has done research into Code of Conduct Policies from other library systems to develop language, which would address these concerns. The proposed additions to the existing Code of Conduct Policy are the following:

Prohibited activities:
“Leaving property unattended. Patrons must keep possession of their personal property at all times while in the library or on library property. The library is not responsible for unattended or abandoned property and reserves the right to remove or discard it.”

“Neglecting to wear shoes, shirt, pants, or to remain fully clothed. Upper and lower body must be appropriately covered and footwear must be worn at all times.”

“Sleeping in the Library or on library property is prohibited.”

County Counsel reviewed the revised policy and found its terms acceptable for adoption.

**A Motion to approve the Library Administration’s suggested revision to the Library Code of Conduct was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.**

**Teacher and Paid Borrower Library Card Fees and Privileges**
Director Tolchin and Assistant Director Amici have been reviewing teacher use of library services. The intent of Teacher Cards was to allow educators in our member municipalities the opportunity to borrow books and utilize resources to be used in the classroom and for students.
They have found, however, that many users with teacher cards have been using their borrowing privileges for e-books for personal use.

Director Tolchin stated that Library Administration recommends the following change to Teacher Card procedures. Eliminating individual, personal e-book use and streaming video from teacher privileges. It is felt that these services are available to teachers at their home libraries. If approved, teachers could continue to circulate physical items such as books, CDs, DVDs, and audio books. They may also continue to use Monmouth County Library databases. This change would be effective January 1st, 2024 or at renewal. Teachers residing in non-member municipalities are eligible for the same privileges as Paid Borrowers, with annual Paid Borrower fees waived.

Director Tolchin also mentioned a recent inquiry from a patron suggesting a senior citizen discount on Paid Borrower memberships. Unfortunately, this would not be feasible as a discount is not offered on taxation to senior citizens residing in member municipalities that support MCL.

A Motion to approve the Library Administration’s suggested changes to teacher card procedures was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.

Branch Library Updates
Director Tolchin shared that the Atlantic Highlands location has a new Branch Librarian, Lauren Garcia. She will be working under the hybrid title of Branch Manager and Children’s Librarian, as recommended by Commissioner Licitra and approved by County Administration. In addition, as of September 18th, 2023 hours at the Atlantic Highlands branch have been restored back to their pre-pandemic schedule, providing an extra day of service.

The Allentown branch may have a temporary closure of approximately one week for repairs. If the building does need to be closed for safety reasons, door-side service will be offered. Staff will continue to report to the Allentown location, as long as it is safe to do so.

Director Tolchin stated that the Holmdel Library was recognized in the Holmdel Monthly Newsletter. In addition, she extends her thanks to new Holmdel Branch Manager, Trish Shrodo.

Holiday Closure Update
Director Tolchin shared that following discussions with County Administration, it was determined that the library shall remain closed on Veterans Day Saturday, November 11th 2023 in addition to Friday, November 10th, the observed date by the County of Monmouth. The library will reopen on Sunday, November 12th 2023. Any possible future changes to holiday observances will be discussed with the Union.

Director’s Report
Director Tolchin mentioned that the County has developed a budget app. They have asked for budgets to be submitted by October 12th 2023, which is much earlier than in years past. Director Tolchin stated that she has a draft of the budget prepared, however given the unknown variables such as the upcoming renovation project it may be premature to submit a finalized budget. It was
determined on the recommendation of Chairperson Boms and County Counsel to hold off on the budget submission until next month’s meeting.

Director Tolchin noted a 1% difference in the budget from this year to next. This increase is mostly due to an increase in additional labor charges which are contractually negotiated. This will be dependent on filling vacancies. Recruitment and hiring is an ongoing effort.

Director Tolchin thanked Barbara McMorrow for visiting Applewood Estates to share information about the Monmouth County Library with residents.

Commissioner McMorrow presented a sample of the gift bag, which was shared with the 20 attendees. She spoke about her experience addressing residents of Applewood Estates about the many programs and services offered. Commissioner McMorrow mentioned that September is Senior Center Month. She made a suggestion that next year, the library could reach out to neighboring senior centers to make them aware of all the services that are offered.

Assistant Director’s Report
Assistant Director Heidi Amici shared that the Library has purchased *When I Work* software to streamline scheduling. Staff is still learning about and how to use the software, but it will help to provide a more global overview of staffing and coverage needs.

Freehold Regional Highschool District has provided the information for 2,500 freshmen to be added to the Student Database Project, which partners the Library with the schools.

The installation of projectors has been completed in the Wall, Marlboro and Howell branches and programming has resumed.

Assistant Director Amici wished to thank the County Commissions for the Day of Remembrance on September 11th, 2023. She attended the memorial service held at Mount Mitchell where Commissioner Licitra delivered moving opening remarks. It served as an important reminder of the days’ events and the lives that were lost in Monmouth County.

Commissioner Comments
There were no additional Commission comments at the time of the meeting.

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

Next Meeting
The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at the Monmouth County Library Headquarters 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, October 17th, 2023 was made by Marcy McMullen and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.

**Closed Executive Session**
A Motion to enter into Closed Executive Session at 11:23 am to discuss personnel-related matters as permitted by the Open Public Meetings Act was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

The Open Public Meeting resumed at 11:33 am.

**Adjournment**
A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Marcy McMullen. Unanimously approved.

The public meeting concluded at 11:35 am.

Submitted by Katie Kenny