

East Brunswick Public Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 7, 2023

Attendees:

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| Otu Amankwah | John Arthur, Library Director |
| Dr. Joyce Boley | Maria Carmelo, Exec. Admin. Assistant |
| Wayne Christie (arr. 7:35) | |
| Dr. Kenneth Freedman | Eliana Zhang, Teen Representative |
| Lisa Gurevich | Myer Kodsky, Teen Representative |
| Joseph Palombit | |
| Patricia Palumbo | |
| Colleen Talbot | |
| Ashish Verma (arr. 8:07) | |

Mr. Amankwah called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm. A roll call was made and a quorum was present. Mr. Amankwah stated that the meeting was advertised and the Open Public Meeting Act requirements were met.

All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes of November 21, 2023:

Dr. Freedman made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2023 meeting. Dr. Boley seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Dr. Freedman and Mr. Palombit. Voting no: None. Abstaining: Ms. Gurevich, Ms. Palumbo and Ms. Talbot.

Dr. Freedman made a motion to approve the closed session minutes of the November 21, 2023 meeting. Mr. Palombit seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Dr. Freedman and Mr. Palombit. Voting no: None. Abstaining: Ms. Gurevich, Ms. Palumbo and Ms. Talbot.

Public Participation:

Eliana Zhang and Myer Kodsky stepped away from their monthly TAG meeting taking place in the meeting room next door for a few moments to present the November Teen Report. The November TAG meeting had 41 teen volunteers in attendance. The TAG Executive Board discussed new volunteer opportunities and the Teens hosted a Halloween candy swap and a Girls Who Code program for ages 6-12.

There was no Friends Report.

The Foundation did not meet in November. The Foundation has awarded a general operating grant in the amount of \$3,000.00 to the library. Mr. Arthur will be speaking with Foundation members regarding collaboration on meeting fundraising and defined financial goals as well as designating a Foundation member as a liaison to attend monthly Board of Trustees meetings.

There was no Township Report, however the Board welcomed a new member, Ms. Colleen Talbot, who will be serving as the Mayor's Alternate.

There was no School District Report.

Dr. Boley presented the School District Report. Dr. Boley expressed her appreciation to the Library's Paul Kibala, Martha Hess and Karen Parry for sharing their resources to approximately 200 ESL night school students. It is concert season, please look out for flyers or check the school district's website for more information. Teachers of the year were announced last week. Finally, the School District is hiring, please visit the website to view and apply for available positions.

There were no public comments.

Treasurers Report:

In the Financial Report, Mr. Arthur gave credit to staff for keeping everything afloat while he was on leave and reported no major changes financially. Mr. Arthur expects to review the reserve fund report in the next month or so and discuss potential allocations towards the teen room renovations.

Passport revenue was down a bit from this time last year. This may be due to the influx of customers that applied last year as the rate of travel increased following the pandemic.

Ms. Palumbo made a motion to approve the November 22, 2023 bill list. Mr. Christie seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

Correspondence:

Mr. Arthur shared a message that was received via email from a retired librarian that had previously worked at the East Brunswick Library and for many years at another library that was mentioned in the November NJLA News Alert as one of six New Jersey libraries that have declared themselves to be book sanctuary libraries. She was curious to know when she could expect to see the East Brunswick Library on that list and with the enormous rise of requests for removing books, and those requests being accommodated, she would like our state and our library make a stand in the support of the freedom to read.

Mr. Arthur explained to the Board that becoming a book sanctuary library would require a pledge to be made and a resolution to be signed by the board and that he will follow up and share more information at a later date.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees:

The Library Branch Committee held a meeting via Zoom on November 28th with Mr. Arthur and further discussed the possibility of opening a library branch. A letter was composed and will be presented to Mayor Cohen at their next meeting in December. The letter consists of some

questions and concerns they would like Mayor Cohen to address before making the final decision of moving forward with the library branch.

Dr. Freedman made a motion to approve the letter to Mayor Cohen regarding the library branch as the view point of all Library Board members. Dr. Boley seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

The Board also discussed forming a new committee that will meet with Mr. Arthur on a quarterly basis to review the Library Director's goals. Committee members will be chosen at the January 2024 meeting.

Director's Report:

In the Director's Report, Mr. Arthur reported increased door counts compared to last year. Library staff has been focusing on collection development, including graphic novels and wonder books as well as adding several new vendors. Library staff are also preparing for an all-day Lunar New Year event on Saturday, February 3rd.

Mr. Christie made a motion to approve the December 2023 Director's Report. Mr. Verma seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

Old Business:

Mr. Arthur presented the updated Salary & Wage table to the Board showing the 2024 increase to minimum wage and explained that any other updates will be made after the union contract is finalized.

Mr. Christie made a motion to approve the updated Salary & Wage Table. Mr. Palombit seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

Resolution #10,847

Library Director Merit Pay

WHEREAS, the East Brunswick Public Library Board Personnel Committee has determined that, in accordance with the Employment Agreement previously agreed upon and effective July 19, 2022 through December 31, 2023, the Library Director, John Arthur, has performed at a level which merits a non-pensionable, merit-based bonus described in that agreement in the amount of \$5,000.00,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Library Board of Trustees of the East Brunswick Public Library approves the merit-based bonus payment of \$5,000.00 to be paid in the final pay period of 2023 by the Township Payroll department.

Mr. Palombit made a motion to approve Resolution #10,847. Mr. Christie seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: Ms. Palumbo and Ms. Talbot.

New Business:

Mr. Arthur presented the Library's Capital Request for 2024 through 2028. Requests for the following were listed in order of priority: New HVAC system, Branch Library start-up costs, Bookmobile start-up costs (if no branch), core routers (in 2025) and a used cargo van (in 2026).

The Library Director's Goals for 2024 were presented by Mr. Arthur and are listed below:

1. Complete the renovation of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system.
2. Determine whether the library is pursuing a branch library, bookmobile or both.
3. Assess circulation trends and determine appropriate budgets for library collections.
4. Develop and enact a plan for increased services in non-English languages.
5. Complete public purchasing classes from Rutgers.
6. Identify two grants that have not previously been awarded and apply.
7. Work with staff to increase large-scale events.

Closed Session:

Dr. Freedman made a motion to enter executive session at 8:34 pm. Mr. Palombit seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

The Board returned to open session at 9:15 pm.

Information Items:

The Board voted to reschedule the January 2024 meeting from Tuesday, January 16th at 7:30 pm to Tuesday, January 30th at 7:00 pm and to begin all meetings from this point forward at 7:00 pm instead of 7:30 pm.

Mr. Christie made a motion to reschedule the January 2024 Board of Trustees meeting to January 30th at 7:00 pm and to begin all meetings from this point forward at 7:00 pm. Dr. Freedman seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Dr. Boley, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Gurevich, Mr. Palombit, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Talbot and Mr. Verma. Voting no: None. Abstaining: None.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Palombit made a motion to adjourn at 9:31 pm. Ms. Gurevich seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Wayne Christie, Secretary