The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Free Public Library of Elizabeth, NJ, was held remotely via Zoom on March 16, 2021. President Aaron Goldblatt called the meeting to order at 4:04pm. A quorum was established by roll call.

ROLL CALL


Also present were Mary Faith Chmiel, Library Director; Assistant Director, Robert Barbanell; and Celeste Layton, Office Manager, taking minutes.

Ms. Chmiel, Library Director, announced that adequate notice for this meeting was sent to The Star Ledger, and posted at City Hall.

Visitors: No visitors.

It was moved by Ms. Tidd, seconded by Mr. Weingast to accept the minutes from the previous meeting. Vote: Vote by Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

- Ms. Chmiel clarified there is $4.3 million from the City of Elizabeth and additional earnings from State Aid and outside funding. Ms. Chmiel reassured the Board that overspent budget lines will balance closer to the end of the year.

It was moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Ms. Tidd to accept the Treasurer’s Report. Vote: Ayes: Mr. Aaron Goldblatt, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Lisa Torres, and Mr. Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS AS OF MARCH 11, 2021:

- Ms. Tidd questioned Voucher #32380 to Evelyn Thompson in the amount of $1176.00. Ms. Chmiel explained Evelyn Thompson is a retired librarian who works per diem two days a week.
• Mr. Weingast questioned if Ms. Thompson is paid as a 1099 employee. Ms. Chmiel confirmed Evelyn Thompson is a contract hire.

• It was moved by Mr. Weingast, seconded by Ms. Tidd to accept the Bill List. Vote: Ayes: Mr. Ted Freedman, Mr. Aaron Goldblatt, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Lisa Torres and Mr. Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Consult your packet for the complete report. Highlights include:

• Ms. Chmiel informed the Board of Trustees that The Elizabeth Public Library is open to the public with an average of 50 visitors per day.

• Ms. Chmiel announced to the Board that Staff Teams A and B are soon to merge and the Library will open Monday through Saturday at 10am and close at 6pm Monday through Friday, 5pm on Saturday.

• Mr. Freedman inquired about a start date for the staff merging and the new hours of operation. Ms. Chmiel noted the goal was to have the Staff merged and the Library open six days a week by the first full week of April. Ms. Chmiel explained the schedules need to first be reviewed and approved by the Union.

• Mr. Weingast questioned Ms. Chmiel for the reaction of the Staff and the preparedness of the Library to merge the Teams and increase hours of operation. Ms. Chmiel summarized that Staff is excited to return, especially for Saturday hours. She explained how there is no evidence of staff to staff transmission. Ms. Chmiel expressed confidence in the safety measures established, including daily temperature checks and regular announcements to encourage proper mask wearing. Ms. Chmiel mentioned the availability of masks and other personal protective equipment for the Staff.

• Mr. Freedman asked if Ms. Chmiel is aware of the number of vaccinated employees. Ms. Chmiel confirmed that The Elizabeth Public Library is not mandating, but strongly encouraging vaccination for Staff and confirmation of vaccination is included in personnel files.
• Ms. Tidd questioned if the number of patrons allowed inside the building is still limited. Ms. Chmiel noted that maximum occupancy remains at 25, but that number has not been reached.

• Ms. Tidd highlighted the significant number of employees that have retired, resigned and are on medical leave. Ms. Chmiel informed the Board that she is interviewing for two full time positions and is looking to make offers in the upcoming week. Ms. Chmiel encouraged the Board of Trustees to recommend candidates for part time employment.

• Ms. Chmiel noted that the installation of gates in the parking lot will eliminate overnight parking. Ms. Chmiel explained that the new gates will allow for a pedestrian walkway on both the Broad Street and Rahway Avenue entrances.

• Ms. Chmiel updated the Board of Trustees on the Local History Room renovations. She explained that while it has proven to be a challenge to properly remove the plaster, the exposed brick wall provides insight into the history of the building.

• Ms. Tidd questioned the level of interest of seniors in the laptop and hotspot loan program. Ms. Chmiel could not confirm that the program has begun. Ms. Chmiel expressed her interest in the start of this program and noted that in the absence of Allison Blumenfeld, Hebah Emara has continued to move the initiative forward.

• Ms. Chmiel updated the Board of Trustees on the Library Construction Bond Grant. Ms. Chmiel noted that Bridget Anderson, the City of Elizabeth’s Administrator, is looking into funding 50% as required for a municipal contribution.

• It was moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Ms. Tidd to accept the Director’s Report. Vote: Mr. Ted Freedman, Mr. Aaron Goldblatt, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Lisa Torres and Mr. Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

COMMUNICATIONS

• Ms. Chmiel highlighted the ALA press release explaining the potential increase in funding to public libraries through the American Rescue Plan Act. Ms. Chmiel noted her recommendation was to use the additional funding for infrastructural improvements.
• Ms. Chmiel noted the New Jersey Library Association update on vaccine priority for library workers. Ms. Chmiel acknowledged the difficulties in securing a vaccination appointment.

• Mr. Freedman questioned if the Elizabeth Public Library has seen any funds as a consequence of President Biden’s stimulus package. Ms. Chmiel was not aware of any additional funds and noted that she still anticipates reimbursement from FEMA.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

• Ms. Chmiel announced the Mayor is delighted in the reopening of the Library.

NEW BUSINESS

• Ms. Chmiel explained Maffey’s estimate does not recommend transitioning to a key card entry system. As key exits are not safe in the event of an emergency, Maffey’s Security Group did recommend upgrading the staff entrance, the Rahway Avenue, and the loading dock doors. Maffey’s Security Group also made recommendations for safety improvements for the Elmora Branch.

• Mr. Weingast concluded that these safety recommendations and upgrades should be closely and immediately considered. Ms. Chmiel agreed with Mr. Weingast and mentioned the smoke detectors should also be considered for updating. Mr. Freedman agreed with upgrading the smoke detectors given the content of the Library.

• Mr. Freedman questioned if the Bond Grant would be a funding source for safety upgrades. Ms. Chmiel agreed to look into this funding opportunity.

• Ms. Tidd confirmed that Mr. Eloy Delgado, Mr. Ted Freedman, Mr. Aaron Goldblatt, and Ms. Lorraine Tidd are the members of the Finance Committee.

• The Board of Trustees discussed the future funding of The Elizabeth Public Library and the impact of COVID.

CLOSED SESSION
It was moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Ms. Tidd to move to closed session. Vote: Vote in Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

- It was moved by Ms. Tidd, seconded by Ms. Smith to increase the annual salaries of Gladys Harrison, Security Supervisor, to $32,676.80 and Ana Maria Sanchez, Head of Cleaning to $31,200. Vote: Mr. Ted Freedman, Mr. Aaron Goldblatt, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Lisa Torres and Mr. Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

  It was moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Weingast to move out of closed session. Vote: Vote in Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

  It was moved by Ms. Tidd, seconded by Mr. Weingast to adjourn at 5:06pm. Vote: By Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

Submitted by Celeste Layton