Board of Trustees Minutes – November 16, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Free Public Library of Elizabeth, NJ, was held in person and remotely via Zoom on November 16, 2021. Vice President Lorraine Tidd called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm. 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.

It was moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Ms. Serratelli to accept the minutes from the previous meeting with the correction on page 4 to note Ted Freedman’s compliment of Jeff Cupo’s report. Vote: Ayes: Ted Freedman, Pearl Serratelli, Earnestine Smith, Lorraine Tidd, and Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions:

TREASURER’S REPORT:

- Mr. Freedman inquired about the final budget amount. Ms. Chmiel confirmed the amount was not known. Ms. Chmiel noted The Elizabeth Public Library is already funded above the minimum.

- Mr. Freedman expressed his desire to have the approved budget by the December Board of Trustees meeting.

- Ms. Chmiel explained the money from Paramount Pictures would be used to purchase topcoating for the parking lot at Main.

It was moved by Mr. Freedman, seconded by Mr. Weingast to accept the Treasurer’s Report. Vote: Ayes: Ted Freedman, Pearl Serratelli, Earnestine Smith, Lorraine Tidd, and Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions:
PRESENTATION OF BILLS AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021:

- Ms. Chmiel explained Voucher # 32835 was payment for rent only, not Security.

It was moved by Mr. Weingast, seconded by Ms. Smith to accept the Bills List. Vote: Ayes: Ted Freedman, Pearl Serratelli, Earnestine Smith, Lorraine Tidd, and Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

AD HOC COMMITTEES:

- Ms. Serratelli stated that the nominating committee recommends Officers stay in position for 2022, with a vote in December and installation in January 2022.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Consult your packet for the complete report. Highlights include:

- Ms. Chmiel suggested a return to the procedure of the President (Mr. Goldblatt), Treasurer (Mr. Freedman), and Director (Ms. Chmiel) signing checks. The signature stamp would still be in use for checks under $2,000.00, Express Scripts’ payments, routine bills, and in situations deemed emergencies.

- Ms. Chmiel proposed a resolution to return to the practice of signing checks in person, effective December 1, 2021 on Thursdays and Fridays.

- Mr. Weingast inquired about advice or guidance from auditors regarding signatures. Ms. Chmiel noted his request and will ask the auditors in December.

- Mr. Weingast inquired about the location of signature stamps. Ms. Chmiel explained they are kept secure in the Vault located in the Administrative Office.

- Ms. Chmiel noted the increase in patron participation since the hourly closings ended.

- Ms. Chmiel recommended postponing adding Sunday hours until January 2022.
• Ms. Chmiel explained the hours of operation. Ms. Chmiel expressed her lack of confidence that a 9pm closing is warranted. She suggested surveying the Public regarding their optimal hours of operation for The Elizabeth Public Library’s Main location and all Branches.

• Ms. Chmiel extended gratitude to The City of Elizabeth for their assistance with the water leaks in the roof at Elmora.

• Ms. Chmiel expressed appreciation for the Police response and involvement at Elmora. Ms. Chmiel explained the conference with the Police and Mr. Weingast resulted in more foot patrols of the parking lot at night. Ms. Chmiel noted there have been no new complaints.

• Mr. Barbanell shared his experience with Paramount Pictures in the Main parking lot.

• The Board of Trustees discussed the rise in car vandalism and theft in the City of Elizabeth. Ms. Chmiel has advised the Staff to lock vehicles and is considering placing a security guard in the lot.

• The Board of Trustees discussed the Library’s hotspot and laptop program.

It was moved by Ms. Tidd, seconded by Ms. Serratelli to return to the practice of signing checks in person for amounts over $2,000. Vote: Ayes: Ted Freedman, Pearl Serratelli, Earnestine Smith, Lorraine Tidd, and Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstention: None.

It was moved by Ms. Serratelli, seconded by Ms. Smith to accept the Director’s Report. Vote: Ayes: Ted Freedman, Pearl Serratelli, Earnestine Smith, Lorraine Tidd, and Martin Weingast. Nays: None. Abstention: None.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Chmiel informed The Board of Trustees that Judy Blume has donated a total of $12,000.00 to be used for improvements to the Children’s Room. Members of The Board of Trustees spoke well of Ms. Blume and acknowledged her genuine connection to Elizabeth, New Jersey.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

• Ms. Chmiel informed The Board of Trustees of irregularities in the specs provided by the elevator consultant.
Ms. Chmiel informed the Board of Trustees that there have been no updates or feedback from Groundworks Elizabeth and that they have received the edits recommended by the Library.

Mr. Freedman questioned if the new sign in Elmora would be protected from graffiti and vandalism. Ms. Chmiel will ask the designer about maintenance of the sign.

Ms. Tidd inquired about the location of the sign. Ms. Chmiel explained it will be placed in the larger part of the lawn and lit by spotlights.

Ms. Chmiel continues to wait for confirmation from The City of Elizabeth to move forward with the HVAC installation.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- The Board of Trustees will postpone the renaming of the Elizabethtown Reading Room until a resolution is created.

- Ms. Chmiel read aloud the email where the owner of property adjacent to Elmora’s lot claims the Library’s property is causing a leak in their basement. Mr. Weingast noted his concerns with the language of the email. The Board of Trustees will take no further action until they are made aware of a response from The City of Elizabeth.

- Ms. Chmiel suggested The Elizabeth Public Library close from 9:15-12:30 on Friday, December 17, 2021 for the annual Holiday Meeting.

- Ms. Chmiel informed the Board of Trustees about the food drive and giving tree initiatives at The Elizabeth Public Library.

**CLOSED SESSION**

It was moved by Ms. Serratelli, 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. Serratelli to move out of closed sessions. Vote: Vote in Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.
ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Serratelli, seconded by Ms. Tidd to adjourn. Vote: By Acclamation. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

Submitted by Celeste Layton