

Board of Trustees Minutes – MAY 20, 2025

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** 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 MAY 20, 2025. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, President called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. **A quorum was established by roll call.**
2. **ROLL CALL:** Present: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Mr. Patrick Mahon, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Christian Veliz, and Dr. Dorothy McMullen, on zoom. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Lisa Torres. Also present were Eleni Glykis, Alexandria Laudisi and Helen Speros. Ms. Lisa Torres arrives 5:45pm on zoom.
3. **Announcement of Compliance with The Sunshine Law:** Ms. Julia Krisanits states we are in compliance
4. **WELCOME TO VISITORS:** Instructions on when to address the Board.
5. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** N/A
6. **READING OF THE MINUTES (APRIL 2025):** It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Dr. Dorothy McMullen to accept the April 2025 minutes. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon. Abstain: Mr. Christian Veliz. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Lisa Torres is on zoom but no response.
7. **REPORTS OF OFFICERS:**

REPORT OF BOARD PRESIDENT: Over the past month I had a pleasure attending events and meetings reflecting ongoing vitality and collaborative spirit of our library system.

- We had three committee meetings.
- I attended the Paint & Sip event- It was well attended. They are looking for Senior citizens, paid through Medicaid.
- Little Buddies – the same people participate weekly as the staff continues to foster all ages.
- I continue to collaborate with our Civil service representatives who are planned to visit end of July.

8. **TREASURER'S REPORT (Action Item):**

Mr. Martin Weingast states the Budget Comparison report shows we are short \$527k and Eleni states the bank balance is \$113k. We had a Budget Committee meeting prior to the Board meeting discussing getting to the year's end 6/30/2025 we projected a \$127k shortfall. This month looks ok and Mr. Martin Weingast is fine with the numbers up through 5/16/2025 based on actuals. The Revenue report is close to 5.1 million budget.

9. It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to accept the Treasurer's Report. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Lisa Torres is in zoom meeting but driving.

10. **PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF BILLS (MAY 2025) (Action Item):**

It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman to accept the Bills Report. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Lisa Torres is in zoom meeting but no response.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES:

a. Finance Committee: 2025/2026 Working Budget

Martin Weingast states the Finance Committee met before this meeting. The budget has a shortfall until 6/30/2025. We can utilize the Capital Reserve funds for the short-fall. There is a Resolution 25-05 to allow use of funds before fiscal year end.

Utilize summer hours in effect now through end of summer was discussed and there is a Resolution 25-08.

Fund raising: Establish an FOL or Foundation group. We must open a 501 C3 - \$1,000 fee to IRS. There is \$4000 in the Mayors fund/ Friends funds we can use for fees. Julia says we will need more time to get more information. Patrick says the FOL can be used for library activities and some have raised over \$1,000,000 through FOL. Either way the first step is to establish a 501 C3: Julia moves this to New Business.

Eleni, Alex and Roel worked on the budget. They wanted to meet their deadline and based it on one third million plus an additional \$500,000 preliminary budget. Handout-Request to the city. The budget makes us short by \$500,000 in hopes the city will provide more funding. Julia brings up establishing the Friends of the Library to bring in extra funds. No motion is needed at this time.

Policy Committee: Eleni updated the policies and will review the changes from old policy to new policy at the June Board meeting.

Personnel Committee: Chairperson Chynice Roman was not able to attend however the committee recommends the internal promotions; see Resolutions 25-02, 25-03, 25-04 with the approvals of Civil Service.

11. REPORTS OF AD HOC COMMITTEES:

12. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR: Consult your packet for the complete report.

The Elmora roof project is complete. The bills were sent to the City Finance Office. Sheri Shafer is working with me to complete the New Jersey State Library re-imbursements for the three projects. Two of three handlers are broken and will cost 19,000 to replace at Elmora however we are exploring the Community Energy Plan Grant for a new HVAC system and upgrading of the lighting.

Alex and Eleni made ice-cream for employees at all branches for National Library Week and Library Workers Day to thank staff for their dedication and celebrate the essential role libraries play in our community.

We are moving forward with a full migration to Google Workspace through the Stella consortiums, saving the library \$690/month.

The library secured a 2 year \$500,000 Community Library Adult literacy & Career Pathway (CLALCP) Grant from NJDoL for Literacy and Education. The Library's direct financial gain will be \$60,000/ year. EPL was awarded \$6,000 Rev250 Grant to support programming in celebration of NJ 250th anniversary for historical programs and events that foster civic pride and strengthen community connections. The Library submitted an additional \$600,000 through Digital Literacy Equity through NJDoL.

We reached out to Wildan for EPL's 2nd incentive payment for work done to Main's HVAC system.

Head of adult Services, Jeffrey Cupo has taken a Director position at Garfield Public Library. We are proud and bittersweet. Layla Abdallah will assume this leadership role. In addition, a proposal is being made this meeting to appoint Tabitha Spina as Head of Children's Services and Jennifer Gheller as Head of Teen Services which will allow Alex Laudisi to dedicate efforts to the Assistant Director role.

Financially, we will have a \$170,000 shortfall projected by 06/30/2025. We will be bringing the budget in-line ensuring fiscal responsibility with cost saving measures and responsible fiscal planning, proposing reduction of Branch summer Saturday hours (9am-2pm), delaying hires, budgeting expenditures, reducing part-time hours, increasing copy fees, securing grant funding, and exploring additional revenue opportunities such as Passport services and establishing a Friends of the Library 501 C3. To cover the shortfall, we propose to borrow from the Capital Reserve funds.

We met with Bill Malone and Skyline Environmental in an effort to update our emergency Response Plan to meet PEOSH requirements. We have a Workman's Comp audit coming up and Bill filled us in on the requirements needed. Bill also recommended we review our flood policies as we may be over-insured.

13. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:

Alex worked closely with Eleni to finalize the 2025/2026 Budget.

To improve staff schedule Alex created a new template creating a more balanced schedule with greater efficiency.

Alex and Eleni visited all the branches with ice-cream to celebrate National Library Worker's Week.

Alex and Eleni met with Groundworks Elizabeth to collaborate in the Elmora Garden project

John Tello from the Jewish Family service's citizenship classes were re-established after their funding was cut.

Alex and Eleni submitted next year's grant application for \$500,000 for our collaboration with NJ Literacy.

Alex continued to co-manage and oversee the Children's and Teen's Departments.

Alex maintains one-on-one meetings with department heads to discuss goals, challenges and support needs.

It was motioned by Mr. Martin Weingast and seconded by Mr. Patrick Mahon to accept the Director's Report. AYES by Acclamation: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

14. READING OF THE COMMUNICATIONS: N/A

15. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: N/A

16. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Resolution 25-02** Appoint Layla Abdallah as Head of Adult Services subject to Civil Service approval.
- b. **Resolution 25-03** Appoint Tabitha Spina as Head of Children's Services subject to Civil Service approval.
- c. **Resolution 25-04** Appoint Jennifer Gheller as Head of Teen's Services subject to Civil Service approval.
- d. **Resolution 25-05** Borrow with a clear financial pay-back plan the Capital Reserve funds to \$170,000.
- e. **Resolution 25-06** Change of Copy Fees effective 6/1/2025 with immediate signage.
- f. **Resolution 25-07** Change of Elmora Hours (Tabled until the next meeting)
- g. **Resolution 25-08** Change to Summer Hours 7/1/25-9/2/25.

It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to accept Resolution 25-02 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Mr. Martin Weingast to accept Resolution 25-03 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Mr. Christian Veliz to accept Resolution 25-04 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

It was motioned by Mr. Martin Weingast and seconded by Mr. Patrick Mahon to accept this Resolution 25-05 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

It was motioned by Ms. Earnestine Smith and seconded by Mr. Patrick Mahon to accept this Resolution 25-06 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

It was motioned by Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman to table until the next meeting Resolution 25-07.

It was motioned by Ms. Lorraine Tidd and seconded by Ms. Lisa Torres to accept Resolution 25-08 with additions and corrections. AYES: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman.

17. CLOSED MEETING: It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Mr. Martin Weingast to go into closed session. AYES by Acclamation: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

18. OPEN MEETING: It was motioned by Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman and seconded by Mr. Martin Weingast to go out of closed session. AYES by Acclamation: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Ms. Lisa Torres, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.

19. ADJOURNMENT: 8:00pm. It was motioned by Mr. Patrick Mahon and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to adjourn at 8pm. AYES by Acclamation: Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Ms. Lisa Torres, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Mr. Patrick Mahon and Mr. Christian Veliz. Abstain: N/A. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Ms. Chynice Roman, Dr. Dorothy McMullen.