

Board of Trustees Minutes – NOV 19, 2024

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 November 19, 2024. Ms. Pearl Serratelli called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm. **A quorum was established by roll call.**

- **ROLL CALL:** Present: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Absent: Ms. Lorraine Tidd, Mr. Eloy Delgado. Also present were Mary Faith Chmiel, Library Director, and Helen Speros, Office Manager.

Announcement of Compliance with The Sunshine Law: Ms. Pearl Serratelli states we are in compliance.

Welcome to Visitors: There are no visitors.

Comments from the Public: None.

READING OF THE MINUTES (October 15, 2024) (Action Item): It was motioned by Ms. Earnestine Smith to accept the October 2024 Minutes from the previous meeting and seconded by Ms. Lisa Torres. AYES: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

TREASURER’S REPORT (November 17, 2024, FY 24-25) (Action Item):

Mary Faith is working on the budget. The city is giving us five million dollars but is taking out the 50,000 which is towards the HVAC system. The budget will be five million less 50,000 = \$4,950,000. We also received \$75,578.00 in per capita State Aid, making the total budget for the year \$5,025,578. We overspent building Maintenance because of the contracts for the system. No heat earlier in the season because the system was supposed to have been bled and was not. That has now been done. Edwin needed tools and money was spent on these. 74% of the budget left for Admin. 69% remaining for B&M and so on leaving 59% of budget remaining as of November 15.

It was motioned by Ms. Julia Krisanits to accept the November 2024 Treasurer report and seconded by Ms. Chynice Roman. AYES: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF BILLS (NOVEMBER 2024) (Action Item):

The Bills List is reviewed by the Trustees. Mary Faith states Aimee has a separate line item from the sale of the Gazette, for some special projects. LHR Funds of \$38,000 went to complete the digitization of the Elizabeth Daily Journal; the restoration of the Lady Elizabeth Portrait is up next. Additional funds will be used for the purchase of 2 scanners. Martin Weingast asks about the payment to the Trustees of the Public Library check 10053 for \$111,925.05. Mary Faith said this was the reimbursement of expenses for the Elmora parking lot. Mary Faith discusses Roel’s loss and departure to the Philippines.

It was motioned by Ms. Pearl Serratelli to accept the Bills Lists, and seconded by Dr. Dorothy McMullen. AYES: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES:

Ms. Pearl Serratelli reads the officer nominations for 2025: Ms. Lorraine Tidd for President. Lisa Torres for Vice President. TBD for Treasurer and Ms. Julia Krisanits for Secretary. Trustees will vote at the December meeting.

REPORTS OF AD HOC COMMITTEES:

SEARCH COMMITTEE: Mr. Martin Weingast and Ms. Pearl Serratelli are on the Search Committee and interviewing for the Director position. They interviewed five people with another three to interview next Monday 11/25/24. Ms. Pearl Serratelli said we have to have a special Executive meeting for the top candidates. All candidates will need to have time to give notice.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Consult your packet for the complete report.

Mary Faith discusses the following:

- Well, we thought the bank migration was complete, but turns out there is approximately a 6-8 week turnaround to transfer payroll direct deposit from PNC to Chase. We worked with staff at PNC, to negotiate refund of certain fees, and have closed all but the Payroll account with PNC. Meanwhile Chase is working to expedite the migration with ADP. On the bright side, a new check scanner has been received.
- MFC has begun the renewal of our FCC radio license.
- Skyline Environmental, along with Bill Malone, have provided the Library with a rather large document, the COE Dept of Public Works City Yard Emergency Action Plan, that needs to be edited to address the Library's plan.
- A Takeover Agreement has been issued by First Indemnity of American Insurance Company regarding the Elmora roof. (The agreement was sent to COE, not the Library.) Work on the project will be assumed by Northeast Roof Maintenance, but before she signs MFC needs the Agreement to be amended to reflect that this is a Library, not a COE, project.
- We have received LCBG reimbursements from both COE and NJSL.
- Three new vending machines are finally in place, and apparently working correctly. The old machines are gone.
- LaCorte holds a book sale from November 18-22.
- Toilet paper has been stolen from the bathrooms to LaCorte, which the City Rec department has addressed.
- With the receipt of the promised \$50K from City Hall for the HVAC upgrades, 20 new computers for the public have been ordered, as well as 5 new ones for staff. The IT department needs to configure them.
- A proposal has been issued for an Elizabeth Maritime Museum, with the Library listed as one of the participants. The Library should be presented with MOU before any commitments are made.
- The suggestion box at Elmora has yielded many positive comments, including praise for the excellent service provided by the friendly staff; the various free fitness classes; and the wonderful collection of materials.
- At Eport, patrons are requesting board games, arts & crafts, movies, computer classes.
- We are grateful that Oki from the Elmora Farmers Market once again donated pumpkins, apples and bananas to the branch for various programs. Pumpkins were also sent to Main for decoration by adults, teens and children.
- New chairs for Circ II were ordered and have been received.
- While five refurbished radios have been received, the office is still receiving complaints about poor reception.
- Election Day at Elmora went without a hitch, though there was a line outside the building and parking was in short supply.
- Brian Pretel, who worked for the Library for several months earlier this year, passed away at the age of 22 on Nov 7.

Building Issues

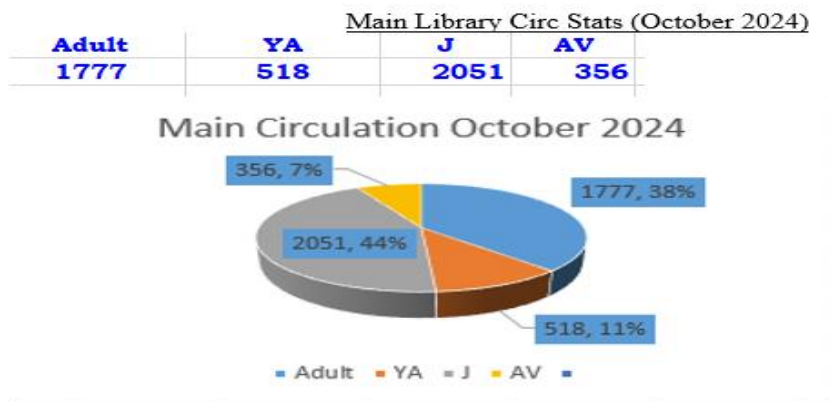
- Edwin has replaced two very old faucets in the staff bathrooms.
- While Anthony gave the General Contractor the go-ahead to begin demo at the Main roof on the 3rd and stipulated that documentation must be provided for every step of the process and approval received from the architect before moving forward, the work did not go as planned. No surprise, more bricks were removed than authorized and additional work needed to be done to support part of the building.
- We have obtained quotes on replacing the sidewalks at the front of the Elmora Branch (to be funded by the Library Construction Bond Grant). The cost for replacing the parking lot gates and the railing along the sidewalk to the front entrance proved prohibitive, so we are reassessing the work that will be done.
- HVAC issues: It's the heat now, and the fact that the three heat pumps in the boiler room are cool enough to touch. Our maintenance vendor has been contacted, and will need to bleed the system to remove air in the lines.
- Still no sign of the Elizabeth Destination Marketing electronic kiosk.

- Usha has met with staff from GWE to discuss possible landscaping plans for Elmora. This could include one or two benches, maybe a white picket fence.
- Edwin and a vendor for scrap removed the old, very heavy boiler from Elmora. The vendor then took a pass on claiming the boiler for scrap and the City eventually removed it from the Elmora parking lot.
- Maintenance will begin machine polishing the terrazzo at the Rahway entrance and on the stair landings.

Children's

Alex reports: October was an exciting and activity-packed month for the children's department! A big Shout-out to Martha for arranging a generous donation of pumpkins from the Elmora's Farmers Market, which the kids loved painting during our pumpkin painting session. In Cooking Club, the kids got hands on and made their own grilled cheese sandwiches, it was a hit! As part of our Artist Explorers program, they learned about Edvard Munch and created their own versions of *The Scream*, showcasing their creativity. The Credit Union partnered up with us to for Bluey to come to our story-times. The highlight of the month was our Halloween Party, complete with games, a touch-and-feel station, photos, puppets, candy, and goodie bag giveaways. It was such a success! A huge thank you to the maintenance department for their incredible support with setup and cleanup!

Circulation - Robert supplied this report.



IAS Jeff reports: Layla is really gathering a following with many of her programs, and has a consistent audience regularly. Her movies are more successful than they've been for some time, under the management of other staff. She and Britanie, along with Alex L., have been doing a great job on the social media front, with them just about to hit 1,000 followers on TikTok. Jazlyn and Kelly continue to make great strides cleaning up the collection, weeding out outdated books and are preparing to standardize the shelves. Their displays continue to garner praise from patrons and staff. Clifford made a great connection with an organization in Montclair that helps people receive credit for their foreign university degrees. Nancy helped Clifford try to track down local agencies/clinics that provide free TB vaccines/testing for adults. Jeff, along with other dedicated volunteers in NJLA, helped to pass the Freedom to Read Act.

Local History & Special Collection Department

Aimee notes that the issue with Newsbank stats have been corrected, and have been updated in her statistical report. Aimee oversaw activities related to Frank Brindley's photography exhibit and the County-wide 4 Centuries in a Weekend, as well as the program on quilting offered by Liberty Hall. The conservator evaluating the Lady Elizabeth Carteret portrait was here on October 16, for over 2 hours. A quote and recommended work report will be sent in late November / early December. Other LHR staff continue transcribing the Police Blotters, as well as assisting with research requests. Lynn Lampariello continues original cataloging of materials. The Star-Ledger's decision to cease print publication in early 2025 could affect some research work.

Teens

- Alex reports: The Teens Department had a jam-packed October filled with Halloween fun! Our spooky food programs were a hit, with full attendance for both sessions. The teens made delicious dirt cups, thanks to Alex

A., who prepared all the whipped cream and pudding. Our other food program was apple cider drinks paired with creative cheese-and-pretzel "broomsticks." Our Halloween crafts were equally popular. They made little ghost frames out of egg cartons. The teens voted for spooky movies back in September so they were happy to be able to watch the ones they voted for. After being postponed last year, we finally ran our haunted escape room! The auditorium was transformed into a haunted library attic, and while some puzzles were a bit challenging, the teens had a blast solving them. Thanks to Martha and the generous pumpkin donation from the Elmora Farmers Market, the teens also got to join in on pumpkin painting fun. Lastly, October saw a spike in Nerd. Tote requests, giving a nice boost to our circulation. It was a busy month but we made it spooky and fun for the teens.

Ms. Mary Faith Chmiel asks for a motion for approval of the Director's Report. It was motioned by Ms. Pearl Serratelli and seconded by Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. AYES: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

READING OF THE COMMUNICATIONS:

PERS Board of Trustees Election Notice- Mr. Martin Weingast asks if staff members have applied; lots of work is involved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS:

Proposed Holiday Closings 2025

It was motioned by Mr. Martin Weingast and seconded by Ms. Chynice Roman to accept the 2025 Holiday Schedule. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

Proposed Trustee Meeting Dates

It was motioned by Ms. Lisa Torres and seconded by Dr. Dorothy McMullen to accept the 2025 Trustee Meeting dates. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

Proposed Staff Holiday Lunch December 20, 2024. 230pm-530pm. Rev. Grayson will have a training on reversing Opioid overdosing. The library will be closed at 2pm.

Updated Salary Ranges- minimum and maximum amounts. PT minimum rates should state NJ min wage (15.13 and then 15.49 effective Jan 2025. Mr. Martin Weingast is looking for the range of the actual salaries for the positions.

It was motioned by Mr. Martin Weingast and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to accept the updated salary ranges. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

Update of Bank Signatories: A decision on who will be the bank signatures is needed; possibly Martin Weingast and Lorraine Tidd. Mary Faith needs a clean copies to order stamps. In the meantime, checks need to be signed in person.

CLOSED SESSION:

It was motioned by Ms. Julia Krisanits and seconded by Ms. Chynice Roman to go into closed session. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

OUT OF CLOSED SESSION:

Dr. Dorothy McMullen motioned to come out of closed session; Ms. Pearl Serratelli seconded. Approved by acclamation. The following items were up for vote:

Sonia Mascarenhas to be promoted Principal Library Assistant, or equivalent, on 1/1/2025 45K; and Martha Cardenas salary adjustment as of 1/1/2025 to 45K.

It was motioned by Ms. Chynice Roman and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to accept salary changes. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman, Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:10pm. It was motioned by Ms. Pearl Serratelli and seconded by Ms. Earnestine Smith to adjourn. AYES by Acclamation: Dr. Dorothy McMullen, Ms. Earnestine Smith, Ms. Lisa Torres, Ms. Pearl Serratelli, Mr. Martin Weingast, Ms. Chynice Roman. Ms. Julia Krisanits-Lehman. Absent: Mr. Eloy Delgado, Ms. Lorraine Tidd.

Final Minutes by Ms. Mary Faith Chmiel