



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES February 17, 2021

In Attendance

Trustees	Barak Bar-Cohen, Robert Ginsberg, Edward Felten, Edwina Hawes, Jennifer Jang, Ruth Miller, Eve Niedergang, Yamile Slebi, Pam Wakefield
Library Staff	Erica Bess, Becky Bowers, Susan Chernik, Susan Conlon, Kristin Friberg, Lisa Ham, Andre Levie, Jennifer Podolsky, Karen Rackley, Bonnie Sprouls, Morgan Taylor, Sonja Vloeberghs
Others	Andrea Bradley (Friends), David Hill (Foundation), Chiara Goldenstern (Teen Rep), Elizabeth Leonard (Teen Rep), Eleni Staikos (Teen Rep), two members of the public

At 6:04 p.m. Ms. Miller called the meeting to order and announced that in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and State regulations governing remote public meetings, adequate and electronic notice of this meeting were provided on Feb. 9, to the Municipal Clerk, Princeton Packet, Town Topics and Trenton Times, posted in the library, on the library's and municipality's websites, on the door of the library's main public entrance, and distributed to the standard distribution list. She stated that because of the state of emergency in NJ regarding COVID-19, the meeting was being held via Zoom and indicated where on the library's website the public could find the meeting agenda, the instructions for accessing the meeting and for making public comment prior to and during the meeting. Ms. Miller explained the audio muting function for those providing public comment via computer, mobile device and telephone. She included standards of conduct to be followed by members of the public making comments and indicated a three-minute time limit allowed per comment.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Ms. Wakefield moved approval of the Consent Agenda; Mr. Felten seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Jan. 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Final January Bills
- Preliminary February Bills
- Resolution 2020-22: Cancellation of Unexpended 2020 Appropriation Balances
- Resolution 2020-23: Operating Budget Amendment
- Resolution 2021-09: Adopting Remote Meeting Procedures
- Resolution 2021-10: Approval to use Fund Balances

Board Materials

There was no discussion on the included materials: Monthly Report, Statistics – 2020 Q4, Quarterly and Yearly or Budget vs Actual – Year End 2020

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Friends Report

Andrea Bradley, Friends President, noted the Friends budgeted amount for the library is \$75,000. Typically given as gifts in small amounts over the year, the Friends have accelerated their giving and will gift the library \$45,000 to align with the spending on collections. She noted the Friends are planning for Beyond Words and the Book Lovers Luncheon; bookstore sales are going well with donations now being accepted by appointment, and are looking at ways to expand online sales.

Ms. Bradley and Mr. David Hill, Foundation President, noted they have been in discussion about the possibility of merging the Friends organization and the Foundation. Both noted that there is much to discuss and final word will require approval by the Trustees. The Trustees, Friends President and Foundation President briefly discussed potential issues and considerations and agreed to proceed with continuing the merger conversation.

Foundation Report

Mr. Hill noted the current assets of the endowment are approximately \$17 million. He noted that the Foundation works closely with Susan Chernik, Finance Director, on a formula for distribution. Mr. Hill noted the Foundation Board of Directors met on Feb. 16 for their first meeting of the year which included appointing committee chairs, and approving the Mary Wisnovsky Restricted Fund. He noted the Investment Committee will meet to discuss rebalancing the portfolio.

Teen Representatives

Ms. Leonard noted that the Teen Advisory Board is planning for "I Read This Book" in March or April, as well as spotlighting Black authors and books on Instagram in February for Black History Month. TAB will begin a literary trivia event on Thursdays.

Ms. Goldenstern noted that TAB continues to expand their outreach through Instagram. They are starting a TAB member "Day in the Life" and will be introducing TAB members.

Ms. Staikos noted that TAB continues to run its podcast "Keeping Tabs" on Spotify. There is an episode under review and several in progress and they are reaching out to new guests for future episodes. She noted TAB reflects and reviews their programs to ensure they are up-to-date on what is currently happening in the world.

President's Report

This is the first occasion that we have had to observe the first anniversary of Jennifer's arrival to become Executive Director of the Princeton Public Library. In normal times, I would have brought a cake, maybe even a bottle of wine, to toast Jennifer and to say how much we appreciate her and the amazing job she has done under the most difficult circumstances. She had barely arrived when the library closed down and she has not been able to enjoy the delights of what our library used to be like pre-Covid. We would have had events, receptions for her to meet the community, and occasions for her to interact with the other non-profit organizations in town. Fortunately, she has had a superb, probably the best staff and they have helped her to keep this library going through this past awful year. They have taken initiative when needed, been creative when needed and generally been champions of staying tough during tough times. I drink a virtual toast to Jennifer, to celebrate her one-year anniversary, and to her phenomenal staff.

I also want to say that we will shortly be starting on forming the teams which will work on preparing our new Strategic Plan. I have asked Jennifer Jang to chair the Trustees' portion of this work which will take

place over the coming months. I am eager for it to begin and to start to shape a vision for the next few years of the Princeton Public Library. We will all need to be engaged in this exercise and I know it will be a rewarding experience.

Finally, I hope we will be able to return to a practice that we began a few years ago, whereby a staff person was invited to make a presentation at our meetings so that we would come to know them and to appreciate what they did in their job. I hope that Jennifer will select someone for our next meeting, or if that isn't possible, for our April meeting at the latest. It's a nice way to recognize staff and to recognize staff for what they do.

For now, be well and know that spring is but a few weeks away!

Finance Committee/Treasurer's Report

Susan Chernik noted the Finance Committee met on Monday to discuss the year end (pre-audit) budget which was included in the Board packet. In 2020, there was successful fundraising on behalf of the development office, including successful annual giving, intense cost savings among staff and staff turnover to allow the library to end the year positive.

Director's Report

Ms. Podolsky thanked the Board for the well wishes on her anniversary and noted that prior to the closure of the library, the one program she did attend was "I Read This Book" which she thought was wonderful.

Ms. Podolsky noted the library shut down on Jan. 26 due to COVID with two staff members reporting testing positive for COVID. This prompted the library to enact its emergency procedures in regard to COVID, which included a deep cleaning of the library, contact tracing whenever possible and notifying all staff. A snowstorm during the shutdown caused a minor leak on the third floor causing damage to several ceiling tiles and a small portion of the collection; this was quickly mitigated by the building staff. The library resumed contactless hold pickup service on Feb. 8 which allowed staff time to process all returned items, and the building reopened today. Ms. Podolsky noted that during closure, internal staff procedures were reviewed, to ensure the library was doing everything possible to keep everyone safe; making only a few minor changes. Ms. Podolsky noted the staff reevaluate the situation and seek to expand services and hours to the public.

Ms. Podolsky noted she engaged with a few consultants regarding strategic planning for the library and she looks forward to working with community stakeholders, the Foundation, Friends and Trustees.

Ms. Podolsky noted she received a proposal from Verizon regarding the 5G antenna on the library's roof; she will set up a meeting to discuss further.

Ms. Bess spoke on behalf of the Adult Services, Adult Programming and Youth Services staff and the work they've done to support Black History Month. Besides the programs hosted monthly by the library that center black lives and black voices and engage in the critical discussions on racial equality, Ms. Bess noted the following programs held between the last week in January through the first week of March:

- **Sing a Song** - a StoryWalk of the pages of "Sing A Song: How 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' Inspired Generations" by Kelly Starling Lyons were exhibited on the windows of the library, visible from the outside and a **guest reading** of the book by Dawn Henderson, the school librarian at Johnson Park, was posted on the library's YouTube page to support the Princeton Community's 2021 African American Read-In.

- **Lift Every Voice Grant Programming** - The library received Library of America's Lift Every Voice grant in 2020 (with efforts by Janie Hermann and Hannah Schmidl). The library offered a series of events beginning in November 2020 supporting Lift Every Voice - a nationwide celebration of 250 years of African American Poetry. The highlight event in December 2020 featured Tracey K. Smith in conversation with Kevin Young, the editor of the anthology "African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song," (archived and available for viewing on demand on the library's YouTube channel). Several book discussions and programs followed, ending with a program on March 4 featuring poet Gail Mitchell leading a discussion focused on the themes of Family and Community in the context of Kevin Young's anthology.
- **What's in a Name?: A Student Discussion About Renaming Buildings** - For this year's Frederick Douglass Day, which happens annually on Feb. 14, the library hosted, "What's In a Name: A Student Discussion About Renaming Buildings", which reflected on the decisions to rename the former Woodrow Wilson School on PU Campus, and the former John Witherspoon Middle School, currently referred to as Princeton Unified Middle School. The program, arranged by Kim Dorman, gave voice to student perspectives and concerns, and provided attendees with a chance to reflect on the racial justice advocacy that has taken place in the past nine months within the local Princeton community.
- **Black History Month Reading Challenge** - Beanstack, which is an online platform that engages children in activities that encourage exploration and a love of reading, and it can be done via a browser or through the Beanstack app on a mobile device. This month's challenge, designed by the library's Youth Services Department, focuses on activism, art, music, notable figures, and local history as they relate to black history. Completing the challenges earns participants reading badges.
- **Storytime Shorts** - The library's Youth Services Department celebrated black authors and illustrators throughout the month for February's StoryTime Shorts. The storytimes, which are high-quality productions of about ten-minutes in length that include all the elements of a traditional in-person storytime, are posted twice each week on the PPL Youtube Channel for on-demand viewing.
- **Museums in Motion** - On February 19, the library hosted an event programmed by Youth Services in partnership with Museums in Motion, which is a traveling African American history museum based in Princeton, to present a dynamic play exploring the life and accomplishments of Madam C. J. Walker, an entrepreneur and philanthropist, who was the first female self-made millionaire in America and who earned her fortune by marketing and selling the first line of hair care for black hair.

Fundraising Update

Ms. Ham provided an end of year report for 2020 report as she was unable to attend the January meeting. Ms. Ham noted that the Development Office had a successful year fundraising through efforts such as the Annual Appeal, the Madeleine Albright event funded by the Foundation's Phyllis Marchand Leadership Fund, the Mary Wisnovsky Fund for New Acquisitions, and Library Giving Day.

September Board meeting – change of date

Ms. Miller noted the current date of the September Board meeting is on Yom Kippur. Mr. Ginsberg moved to change the September Board meeting from Sept. 17 to Sept. 22 with the start time remaining at 6 p.m.; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Amend Resolution 2020-13: Acceptance of Gifts

Ms. Chernik noted that the gift amount on the original resolution (\$5,218) was transposed; the actual gift amount was (\$5,128). Mr. Ginsberg moved to amend Resolution 2020-13 with the correct gift amount of \$5,128; Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Closed Session – Executive Director Evaluation Adjournment

At 7:02 p.m. Mr. Ginsberg moved to enter into closed session that will be limited only to consideration of an item or items with respect to which the public may be excluded pursuant to section 7B of the Open Public Meetings Act. The general nature of the subject to be discussed in said session is as follows: Personnel: Executive Director Performance Review. The matter discussed will be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board discussed the annual review of the Executive Director in closed session.

At 7:47 p.m. Mr. Ginsberg moved to reconvene in open session. Ms. Slebi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Open Session

The Board reconvened in open session. No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment

Ms. Wakefield motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Slebi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2021.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES CLOSED SESSION MINUTES February 17, 2021

At 7:02 p.m., from the Open Public Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Princeton Public Library on Feb. 17, 2021, that was properly noticed on Feb. 9, to the Municipal Clerk, Princeton Packet, Town Topics and Trenton Times, posted in the library, on the library's and municipality's websites, on the door of the library's main public entrance, and distributed to the standard distribution list,

Mr. Ginsberg moved to enter closed session to discuss certain matters relating to the item or items authorized by N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b(8).

The Board convened in closed session that was limited only to consideration of an item or items with respect to which the public may be excluded pursuant to section 7B of the Open Public Meetings Act. The general nature of the subject discussed was:

Personnel: Executive Director Performance Review

Ms. Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The following were present in the closed session meeting: Mr. Bar-Cohen, Mr. Felten, Mr. Ginsberg, Ms. Hawes, Ms. Jang, Ms. Miller, Ms. Niedergang, Ms. Slebi, Ms. Wakefield.

The matter discussed will be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Mr. Ginsberg moved to reconvene in open session at 7:47 p.m. Ms. Slebi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board reconvened in open session. No action was taken as a result of the closed session.

Ms. Wakefield motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Slebi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.