



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES July 17, 2024

In Attendance

Trustees: Holley Barreto, Kushanava Choudhury, Robert Ginsberg, Jeffrey Liao, Eve Niedergang, Stephanie Oster, Keisha Smith-Carrington (on phone), Sebnem Tuzun, Chris Van Buren

Library Staff: Erica Bess, Laura Bishop, Becky Bowers, Susan Chernik, Kaylie Keesling, Jennifer Podolsky, Sonja Vloeberghs

Others: Nicholas Garrison, Robert Hillier, Janet Simon

At 6:03 p.m. Mr. Ginsberg called the meeting to order and announced that pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting was provided as part of the annual schedule of meetings to the municipal clerk, Princeton Packet, Town Topics and Trenton Times on Jan. 24, 2024. The notice was posted in the library, on the library's and municipality's websites and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the library's Administration Office.

Approval of Consent Agenda – Ms. Oster motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Van Buren seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

- June 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Final June Bills
- Preliminary July Bills
- Resolution 2024-20: 2Q 2024 Restricted Gifts

Board Materials – There was no discussion on the included materials in the Board packet: Monthly Director's Report, Monthly Statistics - June, Quotes for Products and Services – 2Q 2024, Budget vs Actual - 2Q 2024.

Public Comment – Janet Simon shared with the trustees, the most recent 5G design the library received from the municipality. In it, she explained where on the library roof the proposed 5G equipment will be located. Mr. Garrison and Mr. Hillier introduced themselves and noted they are the architects of the library building.

Mr. Garrison and Mr. Hillier voiced their opposition for the locations that were proposed in the drawings sent by the municipality. They cited several reasons the proposed locations would not work. Both architects articulated how the proposed design would negatively impact the aesthetics of the library building. Councilwoman Niedergang voiced her concern that perhaps the 5G antennas could not be placed in just any location on the roof, due to transmission concerns from the vendor. There was a lively discussion regarding several equipment location possibilities.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the trustees empowered the 5G committee to take part in discussions and negotiate potential alternative library roof equipment locations before the next board meeting. The committee agreed to report back at the next meeting.

President's Report – Mr. Ginsberg congratulated Mr. Van Buren on his July 1 retirement. Mr. Ginsberg mentioned The New York Times article, “New York’s First Black Librarians Changed the Way We Read.” He suggested the article be shared with staff and trustees. Mr. Ginsberg noted that he attended two great tech workshops at the library.

Friends and Foundation Report – Ms. Keesling provided the Friends and Foundation report:

- Beyond Words will be celebrated on two evenings in October, with an Author Talk and Reception on Oct. 15 and Gala on Oct. 19.
- The author talk is a collaboration with the PPL program team. John Grisham and Jim McCloskey will speak about their new book. The author talk portion of the evening will be available to the public free of charge.
- The Friends and Foundation are looking for help reaching out to businesses that might be interested in corporate sponsorship. They’re also looking for donations of auction items. Please reach out to Ms. Keesling if you have any leads.

Employee Appreciation Committee Report – Ms. Tuzun noted the committee will provide treats for the Children’s Book Festival in October; she will ask trustees for donations.

Finance Committee Report – Mr. Liao noted that the finance committee met on July 15 and reviewed the 2Q24 Budget vs Actual reports. The annual appeal is trending at 42% of the annual goal, as compared with prior years which by mid-year is approximately 25%. Expense categories that are above 50% of the budget are due to timing of payments. Insurance premiums and the audit are paid in full for the year.

Work has started to gather information for the 2025 budget. One area of concern is notice from the State that health benefits will increase another 16% in 2025, equating to approximately \$100k.

Nominating Committee Report - Ms. Niedergang noted that members will meet in September.

Policy Committee Report – Ms. Oster noted the committee met to perform the annual review of the bylaws. She noted that the committee is proposing that the employee appreciation committee and the evaluation committee be standing committees.

Fundraising Report – Ms. Keesling noted that the development office has been transitioning to a new fundraising database which will allow a new giving form on the library’s website, in hopes of strengthening the year end annual appeal outreach.

The development office received a \$20,000 gift in support of strategic plan initiatives and a \$50,000 pledge for the STEAM Studio. They will reach out to a small group of donors with potential interest in this project and hope to raise an additional \$100,000 by the end of this year.

Ms. Keesling noted the annual appeal support is still trending ahead and the development office is optimistic about their progress this year. She is working on goal setting for their office and with the Friends and Foundation for our 2025 fundraising efforts.

Director's Report – Ms. Podolsky mentioned the July 10 ICE operation in Princeton and informed the board that she sent an all staff email providing guidance if a similar situation were to occur. She also noted that she has been in contact with the library's attorney to discuss an immigration enforcement policy.

Ms. Podolsky noted that Adult Summer Reading is going exceptionally well. There are currently 239 adults registered for the program; this surpasses last year's number of registrants (177). She noted the Youth Services department has been busy with nine school outreach events reaching 2415 students; four tours for 185 kindergarteners at which 180 library cards were assigned.

Strategic Plan Update - English Language Learning - Ms. Bess noted the library has been partnering with LiteracyNJ and currently offers a 12-week Citizenship Test Prep Course for English language learners. In September, the library and LiteracyNJ will offer a 14-week English language learning course in September. LiteracyNJ will be implementing the curriculum using resources provided by the library and will supply the trained and skilled volunteer teacher at no cost to the library, thus, making the structure of the partnership sustainable. The library hopes to be able to offer a second part to the same students in the Spring of 2025. The library is the only location in Princeton that offers an English language learning course that is free and open to the public.

The library hopes to expand its offerings to include formal courses geared towards individuals at other levels of English language learning, including early beginner, which is of particular need for the community.

The five English Conversation groups at the library, with current representation from 18 countries, will continue to supplement formal English language learning. The library is exploring a variety of partnerships, including Princeton University's Program in Teacher Preparation, to increase the number of ELL groups.

Ms. Bishop noted that committees met to discuss a digital media lab/podcasting studio, a discovery layer evaluation (BiblioCommons vs Vega), PPL as a community science library with an official "citizen science" designation and the pursuit of Sustainable Libraries Initiative.

Correspondence - Mr. Ginsberg read the following note from Roxbury Public Library:

Dear Princeton Library, Jennifer Podolsky and Board of Directors/Trustees,

We would like to extend our gratitude for your generous furniture donation. The support from one library to another means a lot to us. Your contribution will undoubtedly have a positive impact on our library. We truly appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity and want you to know that your support is deeply valued.

Cancellation of August Board Meeting - Ms. Smith-Carrington motioned to approve the cancellation of the August board of trustees meeting. Mr. Choudhury seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Closed Session - At 7:46 p.m., Ms. Oster moved to enter into closed session to discuss the executive director's evaluation; Ms. Niedergang seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

The board of trustees met to discuss the executive director's mid-year review.

Open Session - At 8:50 p.m., Mr. Liao moved to exit the closed session and return to open session; Ms. Oster seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously. No action was taken as a result of the closed session. The matter discussed will be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Meeting Schedule/Adjournment – Ms. Smith-Carrington motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ginsberg seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Sept. 18, 2024.

Minutes recorded by Sebem Tuzun, Board Secretary.