

**THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
5 WASHINGTON STREET
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING -
SEPTEMBER 22, 2021, 5:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Lauren Wells	President/Chair
Domingo Morel	Vice-President
Timothy Crist	Treasurer
Anasa Maat	Trustee
Antoinette Richardson	Trustee
Rosemary Steinbaum	Secretary
Nicole Johnson	Trustee

STAFF:

Joslyn Bowling Dixon	Director
Ingrid Betancourt	Assistant Director, Special Services
Anna Coats	Assistant Director, Public Services
Leslie Colson	Human Resources
Kirsten Giardi	Assistant Director, Development
Rod Jefferson	Assistant Director, Finance
Jacqueline Jones	Security
Zuhare Meri	Superintendent
Nadine Sergejeff	Supervising Librarian, Philip Roth Library and Special Collections
George Williams	Assistant Director, Facilities and Capital Planning
Diego Quintero	IT

ABSENT:

Hassan Abdus-Sabur	Trustee
Miguel Rodriguez	Trustee

Minutes prepared by Cassidy Civiero from Minutes Solutions Inc. from an audio recording.

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and the Trustees having been given adequate and proper notice of the meeting, L. Wells called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by A. Maat, it was resolved to approve the Public Session minutes dated July 28, 2021, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

3. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

L. Wells provided the President’s Report. She thanked those involved in setting up the technology to allow the in-person meeting to be recorded and streamed virtually. She also thanked staff for their work on all the events that took place over the summer.

4. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

J. Dixon provided the Director’s Report. She is working with the Collection Development Committee to forge a relationship with the Source of Knowledge Book Store to support this local business by purchasing their books. In addition, the NPL hosted the Deputy Director and State Librarian for the New Jersey State Library for a tour and luncheon on August 3, 2021.

The NPL has partnered with Audible and other downtown entities to revitalize some spaces, including the NPL’s three spaces. A mural artist was selected on August 23, 2021, and work began in the courtyard. The Library Board of Trustees Facilities Committee travelled to Boston to learn from other entities and meet with the architect who designed the NPL’s master plan.

N. Sergejeff provided highlights from the Special Collections Department for the Summer of 2021. There was a partnership with Rutgers for five summer research interns, and the NPL will receive \$12,500 for supporting these interns. The Keeping It Real Series provided by the NPL touches on topics such as violence against Asian Americans and “calling people in instead of calling them out” about cancel culture.

J. Dixon previously distributed the statistics for July and August 2021 for Board review. L. Wells asked that the library program numbers be broken out to denote in-person and virtual.

T. Crist thanked I. Betancourt and her team for all they have done with the Latino Heritage Celebrations. He thanked those who have represented the library to answer complicated questions from the community. Finally, he thanked B. Zak-Cohen, who recently provided complete and sensitive service to a homeless man putting together a claim to the city.

5. TREASURER’S REPORT

T. Crist stated that there were two cash activity reports to review and approve:

Bill Sheet 1314, July 2021

The below invoices for books, binding, incidentals, and payroll, were certified as correct by the Library Director and presented for examination and approval:

Gross Payroll Activity	
July 9th	\$ 258,714.48
March 19 th	\$ 234,434.53
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 477,269.05
Grant Account	\$ 15,720.06
Endowment Account	\$ 3,961.38
Capital Account	\$ 0.00
Total Disbursement for July 2021	\$ 990,099.50

Bill Sheet 1315, August 2021

The following invoices for books, binding, incidentals, and payroll, were certified as correct by the Library Director and presented for examination and approval:

Gross Payroll Activity	
August 6th	\$ 231,848.46
August 20th	\$ 234,640.24
Disbursement Activity	
Operating Account	\$ 373,984.39
Grant Account	\$ 8,317.10
Endowment Account	\$ 6,277.88
Capital Account	\$ 156,095.00
Total Disbursement for April 2021	\$ 1,011,163.07

On a motion made by T. Crist, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve Bill Sheet 1314 and 1315 for July and August 2021, respectively. Motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Development Committee: R. Steinbaum presented the update. The Development Committee met on September 9, 2021. A \$100,000 grant was received from the New Jersey Historical Commission for history-based activities. An additional \$9,600 was subsequently received from the same organization for a historical exhibition on the 150th anniversary of the Newark Industrial Exhibition of 1872. The Carnegie Corporation issued a \$10,000 grant for a Conflict Depicting Race and Ethnicity in Fiction Symposium on November 16, 2021.

PNC Foundation awarded \$50,000, and they are supporting a non-profit organization advancing rotational savings in urban communities. Finally, the NPL was awarded a \$25,000 Spoke grant for career preparedness for digital literacy. R. Steinbaum noted that some grant opportunities are being lost because the NPL is behind on its audit.

The Audible project is underway. Audible is sharing the service building repairs costs in preparation for a mural. The Ambassadors Program was launched on August 11, 2021. A small reception was held on September 9, 2021 to welcome select supporters back to the library. The Gala does not yet have a corporate sponsor, but a little over \$10,000 in small sponsorships has been received. The Keeping It Real Series is a stunning initiative, and N. Sergejeff was praised for her work. November 4, 2021, is the Philip Roth lecture from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Facilities Committee: T. Crist presented the update. The Facilities Committee went to Boston to meet with architects, planners, and librarians who have undertaken multi-use branch library construction. He thanked Z. Meri and his staff for the cleanliness of the library. The library's air quality has been improved through AtmosAir, which will be using the NPL as a case study about proper ventilation. Credentials provided a significant contribution of furniture such as high-quality workstations, office chairs, and highchairs to be distributed around the library as needed.

The termite damage at the Clinton Avenue branch is beyond repair. A consultation process has begun with the city and community members on the next steps related to this branch.

Finance Committee: D. Morel presented the update. The Finance Committee met on August 17, 2021, and September 21, 2021. The Committee reviewed the various financial reports; spending and revenue are on track. Discussions have begun to discuss operations post-PPP, as PPP helped the NPL out of a difficult financial situation. The Committee would like to discuss how the city of Newark can more support the NPL for funding as expenses continue to rise, especially with employees who represent 70% of the budget.

D. Morel asked for an update on the audit. J. Bowling-Dixon noted that there was no audit from 2017 onward, and new accounting and consulting firms are now being used. The 2017 audit is underway; the 2018 and 2019 audits should follow swiftly after. The consulting firm is also reviewing the 2016 financials. It is hoped that the audits will be completed within the next year.

Personnel and Policy Committee: N. Johnson presented the update. The Personnel and Policy Committee met on September 22, 2021, to review resolutions and discuss the 2021 NPL organizational chart. The Committee also discussed communication protocols around library protocols and procedures, such as Townhall meetings and the Employee Assistance Program. There was a disbursement of a 2% raise for 2021 following union negotiations.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Policy Resolution – Large Bag Policy: J. Bowling-Dixon presented the revised Large Bag Policy, noting that the trial run went well. A. Richardson revised the policy to include that “limited provisions will be made for checking or holding.” Items that exceed the size limit are currently held at the security desk. R. Steinbaum asked that it be amended to denote a “box measuring” instead of a “measuring box.” Peer libraries have such policies in place. L. Wells noted that it would be good to determine the frequency of bag checking if there is a capacity issue.

On a motion made by A. Richardson, seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve the Large Bag Policy for the NPL, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Updated Organization Chart: J. Bowling-Dixon presented the updated 2021 NPL Organizational Chart. The items in yellow represent vacancies in each area.

A. Richardson asked if the number of staff at each branch is specifically related to the location. J. Bowling-Dixon responded that, at minimum, there must be five to six staff members per branch. A Staffing Plan is being drafted in line with the Bridge Plan. A. Richardson noted that it should be investigated why particular branches have more staff than others and how usage from the community is factored into this decision.

L. Wells noted that the Clinton Branch is not on the organizational chart. J. Bowling-Dixon replied that all employees from the Clinton Branch had been transferred for the time being, but the branch can be added back to the chart. L. Wells noted that it would be helpful to understand how A. Coats works with the totality of public services and how often she meets with them.

A. Maat asked who makes decisions regarding staffing. J. Bowling-Dixon responded that she works with the leadership team when vacancies arise.

R. Steinbaum noted that the diagram looks lopsided and asked about J. Bowling-Dixon's interaction with the department of A. Coat's. J. Bowling-Dixon responded that she has open office hours, runs a town hall, and holds a standard union meeting monthly.

N. Johnson noted that the Personnel and Policy Committee recommends that the functionality of all job titles is made more transparent and that more liaison opportunities between J. Bowling-Dixon and staff be created. L. Wells noted that technology can open further connection.

T. Crist noted that the special collections division should have its own line on the chart and asked about the special collections' vacancy. J. Bowling-Dixon responded that this position would be repurposed and filled shortly. T. Crist noted the four vacancies in the reference area, representing a significant portion of overall reference activity.

Bridge Plan Next Steps: J. Bowling-Dixon presented the updated Bridge Plan. The resolution was passed in August 2021, and the leadership team has since determined the plan's action items and first-year goals. L. Wells asked whether the goals will be reviewed in Committee. The Board agreed to have the Personnel and Policy Committee perform a review. T. Crist requested that the document be paginated from now on for ease of review.

Clinton Branch Discussion: In addition to the termites at the Clinton Branch, the HVAC system has exceeded its life, the roof has trees and grass growing from it, the stairs are damaged, and the building is not accessible. Total remediation of the damage to the branch would cost six to seven figures. Swing space is being considered in the meantime while solutions are sought. A statement will be drafted to the community, as they will be involved in any decisions on the branch. The branch has been closed indefinitely while opportunities for replacement are explored. The NPL must coordinate with the city on solutions.

L. Wells notes that the caliber of the branches surveyed in Boston will be sought for this branch. However, short-term solutions to meet the community's needs must be implemented before long-term improvements can be implemented.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

9. MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion made by D. Morel, seconded by T. Crist, it was resolved that The Newark Public Library Board of Trustees move into Executive Session at 6:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

10. PASSAGE OF RESOLUTIONS DISCUSSED DURING EXECUTIVE SESSION

Personnel Resolutions

Per the By-laws, Article VII, Section 1, J. Dixon recommended ratification of the following appointments and personnel actions:

Susana Rivas	Promotion	August 2, 2021
Tatiana Nazario	New Hire	August 2, 2021

Davis Bermudez	New Hire	August 16, 2021
Nicole Marconi	Salary Increase	August 30, 2021
Michelle Rosario	New Hire	August 30, 2021
Kaitlin Tighe	New Hire	August 30, 2021
Ana Herrera	Resignation	September 3, 2021
Leala Arnold	Resignation	September 4, 2021
Jacqueline Hertz	Termination	September 7, 2021
Emmanuel Thomas-Guerrero	Promotion	September 7, 2021
Kevin Chung	New Hire	September 13, 2021
Rubayya Hoque	New Hire	September 13, 2021
Alexander Haynes	New Hire	September 13, 2021
Lena Gluck	Resignation	September 13, 2021
Steve Lorenz	New Hire	September 20, 2021
Samantha Evaristo	New Hire	September 20, 2021
Maytee Castro	New Hire	September 27, 2021
Damoni Rackley	New Hire	September 27, 2021
Evelyn Fabian	New Hire	September 29, 2021

On a motion made by D. Morel seconded by R. Steinbaum, it was resolved to approve the Personnel Resolutions for September 22, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

11. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by A. Maat seconded by T. Crist, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting of the Board of Trustees. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Lauren Wells, President

Joslyn Bowling Dixon, Director

Date

Date