

**Metuchen Public Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, May 11, 2021, at 7 p.m.**

Samina Ali opened the meeting in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act at 7:06 p.m. In attendance were Hsi Hsi Chung (library director), Samina Ali (president), Caitlin Mollison (treasurer), Kellie Davideit (secretary), Linda Koskoski (council liaison), Maureen Cozine (member) and Liz Waldron (member). Brian Hajjar (member) and Sharon Taylor of the Friends of the Metuchen Library joined later. Spencer Dreher (vice president) and Carol Gaffney (superintendent's representative) were absent from the meeting.

Caitlin Mollison was the secretary for this meeting.

This meeting was held by Zoom video conferencing with a dial-in option for the public.

Public Session

Samina invited comments from the public. No members of the public were present on the call.

Approval of the Agenda

Samina indicated an adjustment to the agenda will occur to first discuss the Library Construction Bond Act and the resolution for the Library Construction Bond Act.

Samina made a motion to approve the agenda.

Maureen seconded.

All approved.

Approval of April Meeting Minutes

No comments were made.

Liz made a motion to approve the minutes.

Samina seconded.

All approved.

New Business

Library Construction Bond Act

Liz discussed cost changes to the architect's proposal. The Building and Grounds Committee has been looking to elevate the library's application to be more engaging and appeal around accessibility in a broader way, including the basement and main level. The plan now includes replacing the elevator. The pandemic has also raised questions around having not just more space but unique spaces, so a pavilion was also added to the project. The overall changes and the addition of the elevator and pavilion to the plan, raises the cost from \$2.4 million to \$3.2 million. Because the grant pays half, the borough and the library must come up with the other half of the additional outlay, which would be about \$400,000. Hsi Hsi has reached out to the borough about this. The question is, can we commit to this larger-scale project, because of the additional cost? We can't do it without the borough, and they need time to review this.

Linda said that the borough would need to pass another resolution for the additional cost.

Hsi Hsi asked whether the borough or council need the library to present the plan. The library has received a preliminary approval from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. We do not have to move a lot of trees for this project and can preserve a lot of open space. The parking lot might not need to be that deep. So discussion is needed right now. She asked whether the Friends of the Metuchen Library might be able to also help out.

Liz mentioned that the original plan had been that it would be a 3-to-1 match, in terms of the borough and library contributions, respectively. The question is can we sustain that match, now that the plan has been expanded and become costlier? The library was originally responsible for about \$300,000 but would now be responsible for about \$400,000, while the borough would be responsible for about \$1.2 million. So, the Finance Committee would discuss the matter offline.

Discussion ensued about whether the work should be done in phases. There was agreement around the idea that it is now or never for this important project.

Sharon said the Friends might be able to give some money toward the project. The Friends will discuss this.

Linda said she would bring back the higher contribution amount for the borough to the full council for discussion.

Samina said the decision about whether to ask the borough to contribute a greater share should be taken offline for discussion with the Building & Grounds and Finance committees.

Liz said that a change in what the library is contributing or asking for would likely require an emergency session meeting of the full board.

Sharon asked to get more details on cost breakdowns to report back to the Friends.

Staffing Issues

Discussed the resolution to hire an adult services librarian and reviewed the offer letter.

Samina made a motion to approve Eunkyong Ju for the position of full-time adult services librarian, with a starting salary of \$54,000, starting May 19, 2021.

Liz seconded.

All approved.

Discussed the offer letter to hire a part-time library assistant.

Liz made a motion to approve Carolyn Kath for the position of part-time library assistant at an hourly rate of \$13 per hour starting May 11, 2021.

Brian seconded.

All approved.

Financial Updates and Approval of Bills

Updated voucher list was presented. Total has risen from about \$15,000 to more than \$23,000.

P&L

At the end of May 2021, the library will receive another installment of municipal funding from the borough.

Samina made a motion to approve the voucher list and payments.

Brian seconded.

All approved.

Director's Report

Staffing issues are something we might need to discuss offline. We had two candidates for the principal librarian position, but one turned it down, so we are looking for more candidates.

Hsi Hsi mentioned raising the part-time salaries, so that these employees aren't always making the minimum wage.

The library also lost our bookkeeper to a job with the borough. Hsi Hsi is hoping to find someone local to fill that position.

Hsi Hsi said the library's reopening for the Browse & Go received positive feedback.

Hsi Hsi said that the library is getting ready for the summer reading program, which kicks off on June 24, with a live music program, which will take place virtually if the weather doesn't cooperate. The children's department is planning different types of programming, including art programs. There will also be adult art classes at the end of May and throughout the summer.

Hsi Hsi mentioned the Girl Scouts working on their silver award with the Garden Club.

She also highlighted the Spring into an Organized Home virtual program on April 15, which was a success.

There were no further questions about the director's report.

Friends Report

Sharon left this meeting early, so there was no report.

Hsi Hsi said the Friends are looking for ideas on how to allocate their money to the library. She mentioned to them that there are small programs that need support

In terms of the museum passes program, the Friends have agreed to make this available to all Metuchen Library card holders, and not just those who are members of the Friends.

Committee Reports

B&G

No additional updates.

Finance

The committee did meet.

Caitlin said the committee discussed salaries for the different positions, including principal librarians and gave guidance on where to start with salaries.

It also discussed getting in front of the minimum wage increases over the next few years.

PPPP

The committee did meet.

Liz said the committee discussed the positions that need to be filled.

Old Business

Covid-19 Update

Samina noted that all the Metuchen public schools are allowing students to attend full time if they wish, though the hybrid and full-remote options are still available.

Samina mentioned that the Pfizer vaccine option for 12-to-15-year-olds is coming soon.

Anyone who is still having trouble getting vaccine appointments can visit the Team Vaccine link on the borough's site or reach out to Samina.

Library Closure and Reopening

Library has been open since May 7, 2021. Hsi Hsi wants to expand the hours but is waiting until there is more full-time staff and is thinking about expanding them to 8 p.m. on weekdays and also extending Saturday hours, with reduced seating. Other libraries report slow traffic in the evening, however. She may try extended hours during the summer, though summer tends to be slow on the weekends. This would not be an issue in terms of the budget. So the question is, should we have regular or summer hours after school ends and wait until September? The library will definitely bring back regular hours once school starts in the fall.

Samina said this can be revisited over the coming days and weeks, once the staffing situation starts to be resolved.

Hsi Hsi also wants to bring back public computer use soon and is considering bringing back newspaper subscriptions.

Other New Business

Part-Time Library Assistant Job Description

There were a couple of tweaks made to this, including adding primary responsibilities.

Samina made a motion to approve the changes.

Caitlin seconded.

All approved.

Staff Development

Samina discussed bringing in Libraries Thrive Consulting, for staff development and guidance on rebuilding and reopening, including for Hsi Hsi to meet her goals. A coach with a wealth of experience has been identified.

Brian asked if the coach could also offer the library board members guidance. Samina said she will offer the board feedback and guidance.

Samina said the board can decide in six months whether to extend or expand the coaching services contract.

Liz made a motion to enter into a contract for the coaching services to be provided by Libraries Thrive Consulting for up to \$3,000.

Brian seconded.

All approved.

Other Comments

Hsi Hsi said she hopes the PPPP committee can meet soon to discuss the job posts, which Samina said will happen.

Samina said the finance committee meeting should meet to discuss the salary and ranges for the principal librarian position.

Samina made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 p.m.

Liz seconded.
All approved.

Submitted by Caitlin Mollison on June 2, 2021.