

East Brunswick Public Library  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
March 21, 2023

Attendees:

Otu Amankwah (arr. 7:57 pm)  
Wayne Christie  
Ken Freedman  
Patricia Palumbo  
Nicole Tibbetts  
Ashish Verma (arr. 7:36 pm)  
Verne Whitlock

John Arthur, Library Director  
Michael Bobish, Assistant Library Director  
Maria Carmelo, Exec. Admin. Assistant  
Donna Forte, Co-President, Friends of the Library  
Debbie LeSeur, Co-President, Friends of the Library

Township Attendees:

Mayor Brad Cohen  
Township Administrator Joseph Criscuolo  
Township Director of Finance Angel Albanese

Ms. Palumbo called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm. A roll call was made and a quorum was present. Ms. Palumbo stated that the meeting was advertised and the Open Public Meeting Act requirements were met.

All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes of February 21, 2023:**

Mr. Whitlock made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2023 meeting.  
Ms. Tibbetts seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Tibbetts and Mr. Whitlock.  
Voting no: None. Abstaining: Ms. Palumbo.

**Public Participation:**

Donna Forte read the Friend's report, announcing that advertising for The Friend's Family Photoshoot began on Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup> and ten out of thirty reservations were filled within the first few hours.

The Friend's Handbag Bingo and Tricky Tray event has been rescheduled to Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> and The Friend's Defensive Driving course is scheduled for Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>.

The Friend's spring program will take place on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at the East Brunswick Community Arts Center. The East Brunswick Arts Commission, in conjunction with the Community Arts Center present a concert lecture by Prof. Diane Cypkin, PhD, entitled "While You're Away: Love Songs of World War II."

Also, The Friend's are excited to announce that their book sale will take place during the week of October 8<sup>th</sup> at the Brunswick Square Mall.

Mr. Arthur reported that the library is currently reviewing quotes on outdoor book lockers which will provide patrons the opportunity to place a hold on books and retrieve them by scanning their library cards.

Ms. Tibbetts, the Superintendent of Schools reported that the orchestra performed at Carnegie Hall this past weekend and announced that the East Brunswick Education Foundation sponsored event, "Night of Jazz" will take place on the evening of Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> at the The Jo Ann Magistro Performing Arts Center located in Hammarskjold Upper Elementary School.

Ms. Tibbetts also reported that the initial school budget was presented at the last meeting and the next meeting is scheduled to take place on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Schools will be closed for Spring Break the week of April 3<sup>rd</sup> and will be extended to Monday, April 10<sup>th</sup> as long as schools do not close for a snow day between now and March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Palumbo opened the meeting to the public, asking that comments are limited to five minutes or less.

Two members of the public were present at the meeting and one expressed appreciation to the library for providing access to online resources as well as waiving fines during the library closure that took place February 24<sup>th</sup> through March 14<sup>th</sup>. This public participant also complimented The Library's social media and website however concern for people with limited access to technology and Wifi during this time was also expressed.

The second public participant, a pediatric oncologist, spoke about the response by the township to the public regarding the closure of the library, stating that they attended the town council meeting and expected to hear news regarding the closure but did not, and stated that they did not agree with the tone regarding any questions asked.

### **Treasurers Report:**

Mr. Arthur reviewed the reserve reports, and reported that the revenue received from the library's passport service was the biggest driver in February despite the closure from February 24<sup>th</sup> through February 28<sup>th</sup> which should balance the expected decline in revenue for March due to the closure.

Anticipated costs for consulting and cleaning services due to the library's closure are about \$25,000 - \$30,000.

Mr. Arthur also reported that the library's budget is in the process of being finalized and expressed appreciation to the township for their generous funding.

Mr. Christie made a motion to approve the March 22, 2023 bill list. Mr. Whitlock seconded. Voting yes: Mr. Amankwah, Mr. Christie, Dr. Freedman, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Tibbetts, Mr. Verma and Mr. Whitlock. Voting no: None.

### **Correspondence:**

Mr. Arthur reported that a letter was received from library staff and will be added to the April Board of Trustees meeting agenda.

### **Reports of Standing and Special Committees:**

Mr. Arthur reported that the strategic planning survey is almost complete and ready to be put out however there was a minor delay in its release due to the library closure.

### **Director's Report:**

Mr. Arthur reported that he and Mr. Bobish were present in the building every day during the closure. Book drops were emptied every day and the circulation department completed all check ins within the first day of reopening.

Plans for the English Immersion Program was finalized on March 17<sup>th</sup> and the library is expected to receive a \$40,000 grant this year for the program, more than double the amount received last year.

The library's monthly statistics were reviewed and Mr. Arthur stated that a decline in statistics will be expected for the month of March, particularly in the circulation department, due to the closure.

Mr. Arthur acknowledged the hard work of library staff during the closure, and was especially appreciative of Martha Hess for her dedication in moving the AARP tax service to another location, allowing this important service to the community to continue while the library was closed.

### **Old Business:**

Dr. Freedman inquired about the status of the Rutgers survey results and Mr. Arthur explained that the results are in, will be combined with the results received from the strategic planning survey when complete, and that we are hoping for more participants. Mr. Arthur also reported that the survey will be posted on social media, with the township and as many sources available. There will also be a second survey for collecting data from patrons who have not been to the library or used any of the library's services in the past three years to get feedback on things the library could do to attract more patrons.

**New Business:**

No new business.

**Information Items:**

No information items were reported.

The Board moved into closed session at 8:06 pm.

The Board returned to open session at 8:48 pm.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business, Mr. Christie made a motion to adjourn at 8:49 pm. Mr. Amankwah seconded.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mr. Wayne Christie, Secretary