APPROVED MINUTES
CLIFTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
JUNE 21, 2023

The monthly meeting of the Trustees of the Clifton Public Library was held at the Main Library, 292 Piaget Avenue, Clifton, NJ. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by President Patricia Vasilik. President Vasilik read an announcement which stated that pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of the meeting had been given in the annual meeting notice to the Record, the Herald News, the Clifton Journal, posted on the Clifton Public Library Website and in the Clifton Public Library and filed with the Clifton City Clerk.

ROLL CALL

Present: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, David White, and President Patricia Vasilik, Library Director Justine Tomczak. Tracy Sterni joined the meeting during review of the minutes. Absent: Library Counsel Michael A. Cerone.

MINUTES

The Board reviewed the minutes of the May, 17, 2023 meeting. On motion made by Trustee Semeraro seconded by Trustee Ruggiero, the minutes of the May 17, 2023 meeting were approved on roll call vote. Vote: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, David White, and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

The Board reviewed the minutes of the executive session meeting of May 17, 2023 meeting. On motion made by Trustee Ruggiero seconded by Trustee White, the minutes of the executive session of the May 17, 2023 meeting were approved on roll call vote. Vote: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White. No: None Vote: Abstained: Barbara Polk and President Patricia Vasilik.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one addressed the Board. On motion made by Trustee White and seconded by Trustee Ruggiero, to close the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Vote: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White, and President Patricia Vasilik. No: None Abstained: None.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Early voting took place at Main June 2-4. It went smoothly and was fairly quiet. We submitted our invoice for maintenance personnel coverage costs.

The week before voting, the voting machines were delivered and were brought in through the gallery doors as always. However, they made gashes in the parking lot right in front of the curb cut to the pathway. This area had been worked on the week prior by the contractor and should have been cured. The architect was notified and the contractor fixed it before the early voting sessions.

In the last report, I mentioned the issue with bricks being removed from the walkway by the Chelsea Park tennis courts and found near the back of the Allwood Branch. In another incident, Sr. Maintenance Worker David Vasilik found brick shards on the staff entrance walkway and in the grass near the building. He and Branch Manager Barbara Altilio watched video playback from Memorial Day Weekend and saw two young boys, not familiar to them, messing around in the back of the building, including going in to the gated area surrounding the air handlers. We reported this to DPW as well.

Allwood's phone lines were scheduled for upgrade in May. After this was done, there were problems with the phones. It turned out to be a combination of Verizon needing to make sure lines were properly trunked and TGS adjusting the phone system itself.

The upstairs coin box for the public copier at Main–the most-used of the three we have– needed to have a part replaced inside, which was done the week of June 12.

Regarding the old boiler: The insurance company is still after the manufacturer for a resolution to the situation. The insurance company contends that problems were due to improper welds/cracks on the upper tube sheet and our expenses in excess of $190,000 should be covered. They are still awaiting a copy of the lab report.

The city Qualified Purchasing Agent worked with us and Daiken on getting paperwork done on the chiller repair project (replacing a failed compressor). Daiken should be here the week of June 19 to do the work.

A library patron had complained to staff and then the city's ADA committee about the height of our bathroom toilets. Someone from the city building department went to both Allwood and Main to measure and discuss with us. Our bathrooms are compliant to the codes of the time they were constructed, though the codes have changed since then. He recommended trying a raised commercial toilet seat. We bought one so far to try at Allwood.

Staff and I have observed an increase in the number of non-staff people in and around areas that are not comfortable for us (see the brick incident report above), especially at Main in the back courtyard area that includes the staff entrance and maintenance doors. Maintenance Supervisor Nick Alectoridis and I have been discussing possible deterrents, and I have reached out to the DPW supervisor regarding a sign. Nick put "No trespassing" signs on the air handler fences at both buildings, and bought a lock for the gate around Allwood's (Main already has one).

Teen Librarian Khusboo Rana attended the Ideas Sharing Workshop put together by the PALS Plus Youth Services Committee on Wednesday, May17. Librarians from various PALS libraries were in attendance and different programming ideas were shared for children and teens of all ages in the two –hour workshop. Although many of the ideas were for younger ages, she was able to get

inspiration on how to modify some of the ideas for tweens and teens. She also appreciated the opportunity to meet and connect with other librarians. Children's Librarian Juliana Schicho also attended.

The Teen and Children's Departments and Mr. Brian Sledge (the instructor of the MAGIC courses) hosted the MAGIC Grand Finale on May22. It was a 2 hour event in which the families and friends of the students who participated in the 8-week graphic novel courses were able to view the graphic novels the students had created. The families and friends were proud of the students' hard work and enjoyed the event. During the event, many of the parents came up to the librarians and Mr. Sledge to thank them for having the program. Each child was given a certificate of completion.

The Teen and Children's Departments completed a 3-part dance series program on June 5. The dance instructor from the Kennedy Dancers, Inc., taught the kids the basic steps of Bachata and Merengue during the first two sessions of the program and put on a mini performance for the parents in the final class. The dance instructor also performed for the kids and parents to demonstrate another Latin-style dance. The kids were completely enthralled and wanted to know everything the dance instructor could tell them about her dance performance. The kids also had a wonderful time performing what they had learned. The program ended with a fun freeze dance game in which both the parents and kids participated.

Khusboo is continuing to prep for the Summer Reading Program. She contacted the Director of the Clifton Arts Center & Sculpture Park, Roxanne Cammilleri, to plan a Teen program off-site in the hopes that more teens might attend. A teen painting class will be scheduled to take place at the Arts Center in July and it will coincide with a sculpture exhibit the Arts Center will be having so that the teens will have the opportunity to appreciate the exhibit and outdoor sculpture park. We are also discussing other possible programs including a mini rocket ship exhibit and a presentation by a lecturer Roxanne knows to educate teens about rocket ships and space in August.

In March, Children's Supervisor Gloria Abero and Children's Librarian Heather Nilsen arranged for a reoccurring order of books for Allwood by Jewish publishers from a local bookstore, Z. Berman Books. Our second order of books just became available and word is getting around. Several Allwood patrons have told her how happy and excited they are to see these books on our shelves and one patron came in specifically looking for them, telling her she had been told that we recently purchased some. Heather has a list of these books saved for staff to reference. Heather is working with Juliana to create a brochure or booklist that can be updated regularly as we buy more books that we can hand to patrons.

Juliana has been working on a Book Menu for use in the Main Library by making her own templates as well as some premade Canva templates. We bought a special display unit with sturdy pages that flip like a book and hold 8.5 x 11" papers. The current lists within the book menu are either from her preexisting booklists or are read-alikes for popular series. It has already seen some use and patron interest within the Children's Room!

The 'hands on' children's book club featuring cook books mentioned last month was well received. You can see pictures of kids cooking their recipes on the Children's Dept. blog, https://cliftonplchildrens.blogspot.com. Kids asked to do this again. This time, we are highlighting craft books for the June session and have gotten some new kids signing up.

The outreach story time in collaboration with Laura Washington of the Northeast Regional Early Intervention Collaborative went well. Laura and the other coordinators from around the state were really appreciative. The program was recorded and sent out to everyone who registered.

Earlier in the year, Heather reached out to Field Station Dinosaur and was able to get the Clifton Library added to the Library Tour they hold each June. They will come to Main on June 20th to give a performance that teaches kids about dinosaurs in a fun way, then we will go outside and the kids will meet a 'real' dinosaur. They have a 15-foot T-Rex puppet that will interact with the kids.

In the past month, Juliana finished creating the Summer Reading 2023 Promotional video and posted it on June 6. By June 13, it already has 297 views (and follow-up phone calls from interested parents) thanks to Gloria sending it to Valerie Kropinack, the ELA K-8 Supervisor in Clifton, who posted it to Google Classroom. This is Juliana's third year making the Summer Reading video. It is posted on the Kids' Page and the Children's Blog. The YouTube channel is up to around 45 subscribers. She has been posting at least once a week on the Children's Blog with booklists, program photos, activities, and more. The blog gains around 160 views per month, with her monthly posts garnering the most interest.

On June 14, Juliana visited School 17. It was an excellent experience, and the kids were very interested in our summer programs (and prizes!). Trustee White will work with the school media specialists on doing more visits.

The monthly book displays for the Children's Room include a display for the Summer Reading theme, "All Together Now." The spinning display has one side for picture books and one side for chapter books that include themes of community, kindness, togetherness, and more that celebrate this theme. It is also Audio book Appreciation Month, so our Audio book collection is on display. These are present at both the Main and Allwood branches, with the booklists curated by Juliana.

In addition to gearing up for Summer Reading by entering program information on Event Keeper and making promotional material through Canva, she is purchasing new nonfiction books for the Main Library children's collection, as well as ebooks through Overdrive for juvenile and young adult nonfiction and fiction as part of her work in the PALS Plus Digital Services Committee.

On June 6, Library Assistants Monica Pineda, Jennifer Bello, Matt Agnoli and Megan Bilek attended the all-day NJ Association of Library Assistants Conference at Mercer County Community College, where they listened to key note speakers talk on a variety of topics, and chose topics of interest during the program sessions.

Barbara coordinated another successful tomato growing program presented by Master Gardener Kathy Sauerborn. It was planned to be outside to bring more foot traffic but due to the unsafe air quality* we chose to bring the program inside. One of the garden club members walked around the library to tell patrons about the program, which worked out well; many families stopped in the community room to see what was happening, received a tomato plant, and asked Kathy gardening questions. After the program Kathy asked if we would like to have the monarch butterfly program again this year in August, and Barbara of course said yes!

Library Assistant Marta Feduniewicz-Alborzi has made beautiful decorations for this year's summer reading theme: *All Together Now.* She'll be hanging them in the coming weeks.

On Wednesday, June 14 School 9 had a practice evacuation to the Allwood Branch. This is the first time they've had one in a few years. They only walked over to the parking lot, and police officers were present on the surrounding streets. The principal went inside to see the space (since that's where they'd really evacuate to), which is adequate for their needs.

The 2nd Annual Passaic County Book Festival was held in Weasel Brook Park June 10 from 11am – 4pm. Mayor Grabowski gave a speech, and a few employees attended or worked there. We were happy to provide some books from our donation stash for their used book sale. We also recently provided middle-school level books to the Passaic County Sheriff's Department to be used when they do school visits.

The same day, Library Assistant Devin Sogluizzo represented the library at a Family Fun Day event organized by the Pre-K of Clifton Public Schools. She estimated that more than100 people stopped by her table.

The city Recreation Department invited us to be a part of their Little Free Library committee. Barbara attended their first meeting on June 12. There are two in city parks, one created by a Boy Scout and the other a Girl Scout, in addition to LFLs citizens have on their front lawns. They are considering other locations. We again offered to provide materials if needed since we receive donations at a higher rate than we sell in the Book Nooks.

The Children's Dept. is preparing for a joint program with the Clifton Arts Center on June 28 at the Downtown Clifton Farmers Market on the corner of Clifton Ave. and First St. Angela Montague from Downtown Clifton is helping with the advertisement, and we will post flyers on our social media and email blast. Artist Marisol Rodriguez, hired by the Arts Center, will be there working with children. We will use that time to advertise library services.

We began registration for our Summer Reading Partners Program. We have around 25 volunteers. Most are willing to help more than one child each, so that we could help about 40 kids this summer.

Some of the other summer special programs being planned include:

- SoundStage4Kids, an interactive music show for kids to learn about music, generously sponsored by Trustee Thomas Charsky;
- Coding a Game, in which kids will learn how to create a simple game using a coding language on the computer. This program, which will be offered in both libraries, is generously sponsored by the FRIENDS of the Library.
- An Ice Cream Party after the Grand Finale on August15, generously sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Clifton.

Of note is that we are getting support from Downtown Clifton – they are gathering donations for prizes from different businesses in the city.

In the Reference Dept., Reference Supervisor Kathy Grimshaw had a successful launch of the seed library for our patrons. This has been written about and talked about in the library world, and Kathy reached out to a few libraries in the state that "loan" seeds for eager gardeners. She found a way for patrons to place orders for specific seed packets and have them packaged for pickup the

following day. She also got donations of seeds from vendors and other libraries in the state. In just a few weeks, 70 seed packets were distributed. We hope to receive seed donations from these patrons for next year to keep the program going.

Librarian Vivian Ungerleider has been busy with programming and bringing the public back to the library. Local beekeeper Brian Eromenok brought 20 patrons to a lecture and honey tasting. His information impressed the group. Erica, an instructor from Crunch Fitness, had 18 patrons come with their yoga mats to de-stress their lives with easy yoga. Attendees ranged in age from 8-80 and enjoyed every minute; we had immediate positive feedback and requests to do it again. Vivian's already working on scheduling more sessions. A lecture on "Social Security: Know Your Options" netted over 60 attendees. Trustee Ruggiero found it informative.

We seem to have more interest in programs for adults than we did pre-COVID (which other library directors have also observed), so we're working diligently on getting more scheduled. We have one local author confirmed for July 26 at 7:00 at the Allwood Branch: Herbert Grosinger, whose family owned Grossinger's Bakery in NYC, will discuss his book "Breaking Eggs in New York City." We're working with another local author to set a date, as well as a woman who can give a piano concert.

The circulation department reports constant circulation of the hotspots.

Some of the displays this month included gardening, bread, picnics and Spring tablescapes.

As I shared with you previously, we had a Clifton woman call, irate that we'd have books about different kinds of families in the Children's collection. It was so horrible and hateful, even though she claimed that love is a great thing and it's fine what people do in their own homes…just not in public, and she's sick of us "shoving it down her throat." Which, after the call, I realized was a weird thing to say when she said she uses the library with her kid yet had to ask if we had this material – clearly it's not been "in her face." But that's what we're dealing with. A library assistant answered the call and was shaken by it but handled it well before sending it on to me.

Right after that, online news source The Clifton Times requested a bibliography of books for Pride Month from us, which Pat, Gloria, Khusboo and I discussed and agreed we absolutely should do. The reporter did a great job writing about the significance of Pride Month and followed with the bibliographies we provided.

The City has been forming a Civil Rights Committee to help address areas of concern. One of the members reached out to see what the library does in terms of programs or displays to provide information for marginalized groups. We had a good conversation and left the door open for further discussion as one of their goals is to help educate the public.

We have another patron who has been questioning some titles over the past year and has gone so far as to actively bring them to the attention of the public. He's had conversations with staff members, including a sit-down meeting with me. He's been given our materials reconsideration form more than once but never returned one. He recently asked about our next board meeting so he might show up to comment.

Regarding the Construction Bond grant: Paperwork needs to be done every year that you still have the money. We just filled out and returned agreements and questionnaires. We originally

had until August 1st to turn in financial audit reports but this was changed to the end of December. The auditors were here already this year but they are still working on the reports.

I attended the PALS Plus membership meeting at the Paterson Public Library on May 25. A new funding formula was presented and discussed. It should work slightly in our favor as one of the goals was to relieve the outsized assessment burden on the larger libraries. They are taking feedback for consideration. Revisions, if any, will be presented at the first Fall membership meeting, and a vote for approval will be taken at the second. PALS Plus membership passed amendments to their by-laws, the most significant changes being the removal of levels of membership as that model does not fit our current needs, and the removal of the funding formula being tied in to by-laws.

I also attended the LibraryLink NJ semi-annual meeting on Zoom on June13. Delivery services will be continuing as-is and they are providing more opportunities for continuing education, training, and meetups/networking.

On June 7, I attended a Zoom session provided by the State Library on Library Services and Partnerships for Business Development. It had great ideas for outreach to local businesses and business groups and associations, as well as resources provided locally and federally.

Personnel notes:
Working papers for minors are now digital. Christine has been working to setup our online account and employer profile with the NJ Department of Labor.

The Saturday staff schedules were sent out. As we've been doing for years, Allwood is closed in the summer, and staff works at Main. Full time staff work at least two Saturdays, and part-timers are given the option to work their same schedule, or a reduced number of Saturdays and make up their Saturday hours during the week. Additionally, the last few years we've been having Allwood full-timers rotate spending time at Allwood instead of Main on those Saturdays cleaning up after the Friday rush and discharging and re-shelving materials left in the book bins after Friday closing.

Board Counsel Michael Cerone and I met with the CWA and staff representatives to present the proposed changes to the step scales for each staff title. They had a few initial questions and indicated that they will need some time to review them.

Full-time Library Assistant Eduard Jurado has resigned, earlier than the first two notices he gave us. His last day of work was May 26.

Part-time Library Assistant Christopher Peltyszyn has resigned to take on a full-time job in the Health Dept. His last day of work is June 17.

After reviewing applications and conducting interviews, Narita Maraj was selected to fill a vacant part-time Librarian1 position for 24 hours over a two-week rotation, at a rate of $30/hr. Her start date was June 5.

**Historical note: Late in the day on June 7, smoke from large wildfires in Canada were swept down into the New Jersey area. By June 8, the air was a solid sepia tone and the air quality was rated among the worst in the world. People were advised to stay indoors as much as possible.*

DONATIONS
Unrestricted:
$ 2.02 Canister

Restricted:
$ 1,000.00 From Adele Piela for books
In memory of Bertha Szewczyk and Hilda Piela

Restricted– DEPARTMENTAL:
$ 187.27 Interest earned on EW Fund for juvenile programs
$ 5.00 For Allwood from a patron

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for the board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FRIENDS LIAISON

The Director reported she worked with the FRIENDS on continuing our museum passes. We will renew our existing memberships at the Aviation Hall of Fame, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Montclair Art Museum, Intrepid, and Yogi Berra Museum, and add the Newark Museum of Art (because the Friends have added funds). Trustee Semeraro reported the membership drive closed with 67 members and $980. She extended thank you to all who helped with the drive; and reported the Friends have some new life-time members.

Trustee Ruggiero asked how the fund raiser faired for the Friends of the Clifton Library at UNO Pizzeria & Grill on June 5, 2023. Trustee Semeraro reported hearing there were some digital issues with online orders; so, an exact amount is not available, at this time.

PLANNING and POLICY

Communications regarding the current movement to censor and ban books, nationally and locally. In light of sharp increase in attempts to ban books both nationwide and locally, the committee discussed the need to make clear that the Board is against book bans. We have a long-standing collection development policy in place and a process for review of all types of materials (purchased and donated) which includes conversations with librarians and/or the director and a materials reconsideration form that asks for specifics (such as the exact title, author, version of a work; what exactly is being objected to; etc.) should questions arise. We drafted a Resolution Against Book Bans for Board approval, modeled after that of another New Jersey library.

President Vasilik added that she attended a program at the NJLA conference dealing with book bans. A Bill is pending in the State Legislature that would strip funding for banning books. A number of libraries have passed a resolution-do not subscribe to banning material. LGBTQ and minorities tend to suffer from banning the most. President Vasilik and the Director collaborated to be pro-active and have a resolution approved before any formal complaint. She thanked the committee for devoting attention to this on short notice.

FINANCE

The Board reviewed the Encumbrance List (2023 budget) dated June 1, 2023, and the Claims List (2023 Budget) dated June 21, 2023. On Motion made by Trustee Charsky and seconded by Trustee White, the Board, on roll call vote, approved Encumbrance List (2023 budget) dated June 1, 2023 in the amount of $26,849.46 and the Claims List (2023 Budget) dated June 21, 2023 in the amount of $79,879.41. Vote: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

UNFINISHED OLD BUSINESS

Crane progress on design and bid specs for Main HVAC upgrade project.

There was an error in previous minutes that needs revising. The July 2022 board packet included the full Design Fee Proposal from engineering Company Crane Associates for work in upgrading the Main Library HVAC system, with the fee broken down in several phases. However, the minutes only listed the initial design work cost when the contract includes further work, including bid and construction phase service. On a Motion by Trustees Charsky and seconded by Trustee White, the revised minutes should reflect approval of Crane Associates' Design Fee Proposal with the terms of $76,500 for the Design Phase and Time & Expense at rates noted in the contract for the Bid/Permit Phase and Construction Administration. Vote. Yes. Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

UNFINISHED NEW BUSINESS

Resolution against book ban

The Board reviewed the draft **Resolution Against Book Bans** and on a Motion made by Trustee Ruggiero and seconded by Trustee Charsky to approve the resolution as edited (revised copy inserted at end of Minutes). Vote: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

Review quotes to fix violation on Main elevator

The Board reviewed two quotes received to repair muffler on oil supply line leaking:

1) Jersey Elevator (current maintenance company) $ 2,956.00
2) EMCO (Elevator Maintenance Corp) $5,800.00

On a Motion made by Trustee Charsky and seconded by Trustee Ruggiero to approve the quote from Jersey Elevator to repair muffler on oil supply line from leaking. Vote: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

The Director reported the repair to be done in July.

Review change order for gallery doors project

The Board reviewed the change order to remove and replace door exit hardware (original push bars) to match existing (4) doors. The labor and materials to install the exit devices is **$3,566.25**. The contingent amount for this project was $5,000.00. Prior approved change orders totaled $2,126.18

leaving a balance of $2,873.82 with a shortage of $692.43 needed to complete this change order for the gallery doors project.

On a Motion made by Trustee White and second by Trustee Gozdz to approve the additional $692.43 to complete this change order for the gallery doors project. VOTE: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.
The Director reported the repair to be done in July.

Request to sell books

The Board reviewed a request from Gloria Abero, Children's Department, for permission to allow Mrs. Kopitnikoff to sell her book "You Must Be Joking: My First book of Jewish Jokes" at an author book reading on Thursday, July 13, 2023 at Allwood Branch. On a Motion made by Trustee Ruggiero and seconded .by Trustee White to approval this request for the author to sell her books during the event, July 13, 2023. VOTE: Yes: Thomas Charsky, Marianna Gozdz, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, David White and President Patricia Vasilik; No: None; Abstain: None.

The Director stated the current Community Room policy doesn't allow commercial sales. We've had more authors requesting to sell their books at their event in the Community Room and should amend the policy, but the Director has a few other revisions to suggest and would like to do everything at once.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

TRUSTEES COMMENTS

Condolences to Library Council Michael Cerone on the passing of his mother.

President Vasilik noted that Mrs. Cerone was an avid reader.

The Director reminded the Board, their July 19, 2023 Library Trustees meeting will be held at the Allwood Branch at 6:30 pm.

On motion made by Trustee Gozdz and seconded by Trustee White, the Board, with all present being in favor, voted to adjourn the meeting at **7:22 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Polk
Barbara Polk
Board Secretary