APPROVED MINUTES
CLIFTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
APRIL 16, 2025

The monthly meeting of the Trustees of the Clifton Public Library was held on April 16, 2025, at the Main Library, 292 Piaget Avenue, Clifton, NJ. The meeting was called to order at 6:32 P.M. by President Patricia Vasilik. Library Counsel 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, Barbara Polk, Richard Ruggiero, Vivian Semeraro, Suzanne Sia, Karen Sommers, Tracy Sterni, President Patricia Vasilik, Library Director Justine Tomczak, and Library Counsel Michael A. Cerone, Jr. Rosmunda Kenning arrived at 6:43 pm during the Director's report.

MINUTES

The Board reviewed the minutes of the March 19, 2025 meeting. On a motion made by Trustee Semeraro, and seconded by Trustee Ruggiero, the Board on roll call vote approved the minutes of the March 19, 2025 meeting. Vote: Yes: Charsky, Polk, Ruggiero, Semeraro, Sia, Sommers, Sterni and Vasilik; No: None; Absent: Kenning.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one addressed the Board. On motion made by Trustee Sommers and seconded by Trustee Charsky, the Board, with all present being in favor, closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director reported to the Board on her participation in the City of Clifton Department Head meeting earlier that day with the interim City Manager, Gary DeMarzo.

The Director informed the Board that the Main Library HVAC project is progressing. The air handlers for the community room/gallery were delivered, with tradesmen working daily on demolition and installation. A brief WiFi outage on April 8 was resolved quickly.

The State Aid report was filed with the state on March 17.

New timeclocks were installed in both buildings. Clocking in/out has been much smoother.

Administrative Clerk Christine Althawabta is looking into credit card payment options for the public printers/copiers.

Chris attended several webinars recently on topics such as what to know about P-Cards, understanding competitive contracting, and cumulative sick leave payouts, vacation carryover and related issues.

The DPW came to pull out the sea grass in front of the Main Library, as it was very overgrown. The Garden Club has been at both Main and Allwood to do clean-ups and begin preparing garden beds for planting.

Librarian 2 Khusboo Rana conducted a college preparation workshop on April 9. She is working to schedule college admissions planning webinars as well as workshop seminars and presentations focused on career and workforce preparedness for pre-teens and teens.

She attended the PALS Reference Committee meeting on March 13 which was focused on the Adult Summer Reading Program. It also helped in developing ideas for the Teen Summer Reading Program.

Allwood Branch Manager Barbara Altilio reports that Allwood continues to receive donations that are in excellent condition, including brand-new items. The new books and DVDs are sent to technical service department to be added into the collection.

Allwood was the first to benefit from having new tech support. A catalog computer out of service for a couple months was fixed in a day.

Sr. Library Assistant Marta Feduniewicz-Alborzi decorated Allwood for spring, with handmade paper flowers hung throughout the library.

Supervising Library Assistant Cheryl Conselyea has been focusing on preparation for National Library Week and National Volunteer Week. Staff enjoyed lunch for Library Workers Day and expressed their “thank you.”

Sr. Library Assistant Matt Agnoli continues to visit our patrons who signed up for homebound services.

Book clubs in both branches are going well. In addition, librarians in each building obtain books for outside clubs as well.

Free comic book day is Saturday, May 3rd and copies will be available to hand out to patrons.

The library will have a table at an upcoming event that City Green is hosting. Take home craft kits will be available, so that kids visiting the table can go home with a craft to do later.

Supervising Library Assistant Melissa Carrasco has been working with Children's Supervisor Gloria Abero to provide library cards to students doing school visits. Melissa worked with the Director to coordinate the return of student volunteers from the North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency. Melissa reports working with staff to refresh on various Clifton and PALS Plus policies and procedures.

In March and April, the Children's Department wrapped up their winter session of programs. Librarian 1 Kaitlin Koch had her first family story time on Monday, March 17th which was very successful. She enjoys having access to the smart screen and internet and thinks it is a great addition to her story times.

Kaitlin attended a Summer Reading Club Virtual Workshop on March 26 that was very informative and helpful.

Librarian Heather Nilsen was able to step in and run a program at the last minute when the speaker was involved in a minor accident on the way to the library. She reports that the March Sensory Story Time and K-2nd grade Book Club programs went well. The Children's Department is collaborating with the Clifton Rec department for the May Star Wars program.

On Tuesday, April 22nd Heather will be attending the Morris Arts performer showcase at Drew University. Several new performers were discovered at previous years' showcases.

Gloria reports that school visits are ongoing. On April 9 and 10, the Library welcomed pre-school students from the Center for Family Resources, providing story time and craft activities, a tour of the library, and free reading time in the children's room. On April 23, a group of preschoolers from Bright Star Academy will visit.

Story Time outreach in the City's Botany Village Satellite Office continues.

Special spring programs in development:

Officer Christensen from the Passaic County Sheriff's Office will read his book "To Be a Police Officer," co-written with Officer Sullivan from the same division. He will also interact with the children and distribute giveaways. Additionally, we will provide coloring pages related to the book's theme for the kids to enjoy.

Money Adventure: Financial Literacy for Children: Nutley High School students Arlind Sinani and Sergio Takemoto will lead this program.

Gloria, Heather, and Kaitlin have been meeting multiple times to finalize the children's summer schedule which will start at the end of June and end the second week of August. This year it has been decided to focus on the most popular programs and offer them daily instead of once or twice per week. Every morning and early afternoon will have playtime and craft hours for babies and children of all ages. In the mid-afternoon, there will be a variety of activities, including collaborations with 4-H and ShopRite, therapy dogs, and this year, Habitat for Humanity. This

year, we will also have multisensory reading sessions for children with special needs, art classes, and coding workshops, and we are negotiating with science workshops. Heather negotiated with Eyes on the Wild, an exotic animal rescue, and Period Productions, whose presentations bring history to life and hired them for our Summer Reading Kickoff and Finale respectively.

Gloria and the Director discussed Planetwalk clubs with Liz Loden. The aim is to amplify children's and youth's voices by raising awareness of kindness and environmental stewardship. The Library can begin with self-led "citizen science" activities to assess local interest and the required time and effort before expanding.

Librarian 2 Vivian Ungerleider scheduled a “Know Your Rights” immigration presentation by attorney Arti K. Desai. Feedback from attendees was very positive, and Ms. Desai gave the library handouts on the topic to use.

Librarian Kathy Grimshaw has the Seed Library operational for spring planting. She adjusted the sign-up process based on last year's usage, resulting in a smoother operation this time.

In March, federal funding for six Health Department staff was cut off. The City Council voted to fund these positions for the year. These cuts would have affected the Library, as those staff provide essential social services.

The New Jersey State Library has been informed that over $4.5 million in federal grant funding has been cut due to the dissolution of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). State Librarian Jennifer Nelson communicated this information via email and attended the PALS Plus membership meeting virtually in March. Currently, it is unclear which services will be affected, as the State Library must determine how to continue providing mandated services and because some funds are distributed indirectly, impacting budget decisions elsewhere.

The Director attended the PALS Plus membership meeting on March 27. Topics discussed included some policy revisions, increased digital usage, and e-rate filings.

The Director attended the Unhoused Task Force meeting on March 27. Statistics showed the warming center was open more often, with increased guest numbers. Success stories highlighted helping beyond providing shelter. Police and Health Department efforts in Botany and Downtown Clifton have reduced quality of life complaints. Many social service organizations reported that cuts to federal funding will negatively impact their operations.

Personnel:
Civil Service’s Open Competitive Announcement for Assistant Library Director was posted on April 1 with a closing date of April 21. Qualified candidates internally and externally may apply. Once a list is generated, we can begin the interview process.

DONATIONS

Unrestricted:
$ 0.70 Canister

Restricted – DEPARTMENTAL:
$ 184.73 Interest earned on EW Fund for juvenile programs

FRIENDS REPORT

Trustee Semeraro reported on recent fundraisers by the Friends of the Library

Stop & Shop $614.00
Chipolte $114.00
Smash Burger $109.21
Panera Bread $81.56

She reminded the Board that the Friends' Semiannual meeting is on April 30, 6-8pm at Allwood Library.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Board reviewed the Encumbrance and Claims Lists. On Motion made by Trustee Charsky and seconded by Trustee Ruggiero, the Board, on roll call vote, approved the Encumbrance List (2025 Budget) dated April 1, 2025 in the amount of $65,058.86 and the Claims List (2025 Budget) dated April 19, 2025 in the amount of $265,158.86. Vote: Yes: Charsky, Kenning, Polk, Ruggiero, Semeraro, Sia, Sommers, Sterni and Vasilik; No: None. Absent: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS

President Vasilik reminded the Trustees that they must file their Financial Disclosure Statement by April 30. She encouraged Trustees to attend the Friends' meeting on April 30.

On motion made by Trustee Polk and seconded by Trustee Sia the Board, with all present being in favor, adjourned the meeting at 7:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael A. Cerone, Jr.
MICHAEL A. CERONE, JR.
Library Counsel