

## MINUTES

### GARFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Board of Trustees Special Meeting Wednesday,

August 28, 2024

The special meeting of August 28, 2024 was called to order at 7:05 PM by President Raymond Rivas.

1. President Raymond Rivas asked for the Roll Call:

Present:

President, Raymond Rivas

Vice President, Thomas Derr (via phone)

Secretary, Michael Kupec, Jr.

Treasurer, Suny Mellawa

Trustee, Berti Shenderasi

Alternate for Acting Superintendent Richard Tomko, Marie Marx

Alternate for Mayor Richard Rigoglioso, Christopher Braitsch (via phone)

Director, Mary Jo Jennings

Absent:

Acting Superintendent of Schools, Richard Tomko

Mayor, Richard Rigoglioso

2. President, Raymond Rivas read the following statement:

- Pursuant to the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter 231, Laws of 1976, adequate written notice of this meeting, together with the agenda of this meeting is to be:
- permanently posted on the Board's officially designated public bulletin board, located in the Garfield Public Library lobby, 500 Midland Avenue, in the City of Garfield delivered to the Passaic Herald News, and the Community News, newspapers circulating in the City of Garfield,
- filed with the City Clerk of the City of Garfield; and
- mailed to all persons, if any, who have requested said notice, pursuant
- Section 14 of Chapter 231, Laws of 1976.

### 3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Motion made by Marie Marx to accept the minutes and seconded by Christopher Braitsch.  
Motion passed.

### 4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Personnel Committee

- a.) Suny Mellawa noted that a conference call is scheduled with a seasoned library director for tomorrow night. He will guide us through next steps in filling the director vacancy.
- b.) Suny noted that a resolution is formatted to address monies owed Mary Jo Jennings and that we are waiting on the analysis of our outside CPA firm as relates to health benefit deductions. The City's CFO is still waiting for PERC letter from MaryJo Jennings. (Mary Jo reported she had issues logging into the system that would trigger the process leading to the generation of said letter.) Suny asked MaryJo to provide whatever documentation she had from City Hall that addressed health care deductions.
- c.) Suny noted that we were delighted to meet with and interview Christopher Shupenko for the director role. We will iron out a few things with the attorney before we can make Christopher an offer.
- d.) The committee surveyed the hours of more than ten (10) local libraries and discovered Garfield offered the least number of hours. A resolution was proposed to increase the number of hours effective September 3, 2024: Monday-Wednesday 9:00AM-8:00PM, Thursday-Saturday 9:00AM-5:00PM and Sunday: Noon-4:00PM. The resolution however was tabled until next month due to staffing and union contract issues. We will need to review staff levels needed. Our hours must better accommodate the meets of the community.
- e.) Suny noted there is a need to hire additional staff.

#### 5. Strategic Planning Committee

- a.) Michael presented the names of three firms that strategic planning specifications can be sent to for RFPs. (Berti will draft specifications using AI.) Michael also demonstrated, with print-outs, the volume of material covered in the 7.5 hours of workshops over 5 sessions hosted by the Office of the State Librarian. Michael will email the electronic files of said print-outs to the board. Berti volunteered to use AI to summarize these print-outs. Michael will try to enter all workshop files into one pdf. Michael suggested we establish a board Google Drive for various documents.

#### 6. Capital Planning Committee

- a.) We need to revisit this subject. Specifications drafted by Berti will be sent to the five (5) architectural firms provided by Michael.

## 7. Communications

- a.) Mary Jo read a few letters from patrons thanking Christopher and the staff for the summer programming for youngsters and seniors.
- b.) Mary Jo noted a 4.6 Google review.

## 8. Grants

- a.) Michael questioned what grant websites we (or BCCLS) had access to via paid subscriptions. Mary Jo thought there weren't any. Marie indicated that she knew someone who might be able to assist us. Ray committed to contacting City Hall to learn more about the grant writer they use. Perhaps they can help the library.
- b.) Michael suggested collaboration amongst the Board of Trustees, the Friends and the Foundation to jointly work on grants.
- c.) Berti urged us to find someone to help with grants.
- d.) Michael and Christopher will put some feelers out to learn more.

## 9. Friends

- a.) Next meeting Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup> 10:00am
- b.) BookSale scheduled for Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>
- c.) Side Note: Gardening Club established by Sal Lagatutta on September 3<sup>rd</sup>

## 10. Personnel / Staff Issues

a.) Mary Jo noted a resolution is needed to pay our retiring bookkeeper Christiana Morello 79.5 hours of unused vacation time. Suny asked MaryJo how we track PTO and how it gets reported to City Hall. Mary Jo noted that we will be taking payroll back from the city effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

b.) Motion made by Marie Marx and seconded by Christopher Braitsch to pay Christiana Morello a final payout for unused PTO.

WHEREAS Christiana Morello's is retiring and her last day is September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

WHEREAS she is owed a final payout of 20 hours at \$24.19 (\$483.80) and 79.5 hours at \$24.19 (\$1,923.11) equaling a gross total of \$2,406.91.

BE IT RESOLVED that she be issued such payment (subject to payroll tax and benefit deductions).

Resolution passes.

c.) Motion made by Suny seconded by Berti to allow the Director, Mary Jo Jennings to hire a part-time bookkeeper through Robert Half, a reputable recruiting firm, to handle bookkeeping, payroll and accounts payable. Motion passed.

d.) Motion made by Suny and seconded Berti by for all library applicants (part-time and full-time) to be brought before the Personnel Committee for approval before being hired. Motion passed.

e.) Motion made by Suny Mellawa and seconded by Christopher Braitsch to hire Jennifer Macchiarella as a librarian assistant starting at \$34,000 per year effective September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Motion passes. (One abstention.)

Board of Trustees moved into closed session to discuss the Director's position.

Board of Trustees opened the meeting to the public.

#### 11. Foundation Report

No Report

#### 12. Treasurer's Report

No questions

#### 13. Tree Lighting Event

Scheduled for the first Thursday after Thanksgiving

#### 14. Privacy Pod

Mary Jo reminded the board to decide on the Privacy Pod. A lengthy, detailed discussion followed. Perhaps ask the Foundation, who gave birth to this idea, if they might be open to other uses of the \$17,000.) Maybe a local contractor could build it for fewer dollars. A need for private/quiet space is certainly of value. Another idea was to use some of those dollars on a piano. Ray suggested the Board meet with representative of the Friends and the Foundation to discuss the Privacy Pod and alternatives.

#### 15. Acknowledgement of Mary Jo's Contributions

Board members and visitors alike noted Mary Jo's efforts over her time with us.

#### 16. Board Member Training

Mary Jo encouraged the board to continue to sign-up for training/workshops.

#### 17. Visitor Sign-In Sheet

Ray suggested we have a Visitor Sign-In Sheet. Michael volunteered to create one.

#### 18. Insurance Bill from the City

Ray noted that Erin Delany, City Manager agreed to reduce the amount of our insurance bill by \$20,000.

#### 19. Bookkeeper Search

Berti will use AI to generate a job posting. Once finalized, Nik will post online.

#### 20. Staffing Issues

Nikola Skuretski voiced his concerns about staffing/coverage/obstacles to keeping the library open.

#### 21. Guests Were Welcomed

Christopher Shupenko, Debbie Lisovsky, Donna Miller, Alicia Johnson and Nikola Skuretski. Christopher expressed his concerns around our go "forward plan" regarding staffing.

#### 22. Retirement Party

Perhaps the Board can work with the Friends to have a little retirement party for Mary Jo.

#### 23. Adjournment

Motion made by Michael Kupec, Jr. and seconded by Suny Mellawa to adjourn.  
BE IT RESOLVED, that the Meeting of the Garfield Free Public Library Board of Trustees was adjourned at 9:30 PM. Resolution was unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Kupec, Jr.

Trustee / Secretary