

**Mount Laurel Library
Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER: 6:08 P.M.

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION: Provided by Ms. Sawyer

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING LAW STATEMENT:

Ms. Sawyer stated that this meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of the meeting was provided by way of the Burlington County Times, the Courier Post, and the Mount Laurel Sun, and it was posted in the library and on its website.

ROLL CALL:

Gina Acerbo - present
Beth Demaio – *absent*
Noreen Duffey - *absent*
Susan Fortuna – present
Nick Moustakas – present
Fredda Sacharow – present
McKenna Samson - present
Stephanie Sawyer – present
Walter Stridick - present

ALSO PRESENT:

Zack Migeot, Esq.
Becky Boydston
Gayle McCormick

APPROVAL of MINUTES:

Approval of February 17, 2021 minutes of meeting:
Motion: Mr. Moustakas, 2nd Mr. Stridick
All in Favor

APPROVAL of BILL LIST and BILL LIST ADDENDUM:

Motion: Mr. Strick, 2nd Ms. Sacharow
Roll Call: 7 yes votes

REPORT FROM LIBRARY STAFF:

Reopening Plan

Ms. Boydston said appointments for select services and limited browsing in the library have been going well, for the most part. One notable negative experience occurred when a woman was annoyed after being asked several times to place a face mask on her young son. She became aggressive and was asked to leave immediately, which she did. Mr. Moustakas expressed his concern for the safety of staff members and inquired about how such incidents are handled. Ms. Boydston explained that the library has policies and procedures for handling such situations and that staff followed protocol. Mr. Moustakas said nobody should be subject to abusive behavior and he would encourage staff to call the police if a patron becomes aggressive in the future.

COVID-19 infection rates have decreased and Governor Murphy has increased indoor capacity limits beginning March 19th. Because of this news, coupled with the fact that about 2/3 of library staff members have received at least one vaccine dose, Ms. Boydston has decided to reopen the library on March 22nd using the same reduced-hour schedule that was in place before Thanksgiving. Patrons will be asked to limit their stay to an hour and face masks will be required at all times.

Dr. Seuss Books

Although the Dr. Seuss Institute has decided to stop publishing a select few books, the library will not be removing any of those titles, or any Dr. Seuss books, from circulation. This stance is in accordance with the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#).

OLD BUSINESS:

Nothing to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION 2021-017: Authorization to Sell Surplus on Discover Books

This is a continuation of periodic effort to remove outdated and otherwise unusable materials (books, DVDs) from the library's collection since the last approval.

Motion to approve: Mr. Moustakas

2nd: Mr. Stridick

Roll Call: 7 yes votes

Topic for Consideration and Future Discussion: Going Fine Free

Ms. Boydston said that she attended a workshop last year in which she learned more about a current trend in libraries to stop charging overdue fines. Such fines are thought to be a barrier to continued library use by the very people who most need library services. Fines are also regarded as more of a punitive measure than a helpful one in encouraging the return of borrowed materials. Several large city libraries, including those in Philadelphia, Denver and Baltimore, as well as the local Camden County library system, have decided to go fine free for overdue items. Interestingly, they found that the policy

change was successful in encouraging increased library use and the return of long- overdue materials. Under such programs, patrons are not allowed to keep items indefinitely, rather, they are charged the replacement cost of the item after a certain amount of time and issuance of warning notices, and they are barred from further borrowing until the item is paid for or returned.

Since revenue from fines represents about 1.7% of the library's overall budget and the fines collected had already been decreasing every year due to a combination of factors, Ms. Boydston is confident that she can balance a future budget without including revenue from overdue fines. The goal is to make the library accessible to as many members of the community as possible and not penalize those who would otherwise take advantage of much needed library resources if only they could afford to pay fines.

Ms. Acerbo expressed interest in such a policy but though excluding certain items, such as movies, from fine-free status would be beneficial because people might tend to keep them a day or two longer than permitted simply because they want to.

Mr. Moustakas said that he struggles with the fine-free concept because it is so different from library policies he has always known. In addition, he feels that the \$37,000 in fines revenue collected in 2019 is not an insignificant number. During this discussion, Mr. Moustakas quickly searched online for articles about the Philadelphia Library and said the program appears to be successful so he is willing to consider further discussion about it here.

Ms. Sawyer mentioned a New York Times article she read about the topic and her takeaway was that eliminating fines encourages the return of long overdue items. She also inquired about whether Mount Laurel Library's automatic item renewal policy had an effect on the downward trend of fines collected. Ms. Boydston said yes; at the time we upgraded our circulation system in 2019, an auto-renew feature was enabled to help patrons avoid overdue fines by automatically renewing items not returned on time as long as there were no holds on the item in question. This did reduce revenue from fines.

Ms. Boydston mentioned that some libraries still charge overdue fines on museum passes and items expressly marked as short-term loan, like our 7-Day Express selections, because those things tend to be quite popular and have waiting lists.

Ms. Sacharow is interested in learning whether smaller community libraries that have instituted fine-free programs have enjoyed the same successes as larger city libraries have. She also would like future discussion to include the possibility of instituting a fine-free policy on a temporary, experimental basis.

Museum Passes

Ms. Fortuna asked if museum passes would be available to borrow again soon. Ms. Boydston replied that there are some passes currently available, although the terms of use may be restricted e.g., hours of operation, number of persons allowed at one time, and length of stay for visits. The rate-limiting factor is each museum's current operating status since COVID restrictions forced them to close, but restrictions are being slowly lifted.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public in attendance.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn at 6:50 PM: Mr. Moustakas

2nd: Mr. Stridick

All in favor