MINUTES OF THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

September 15, 2025

The Board of Trustees of the Millburn Free Public Library held their regular monthly meeting on Monday September 15th 2025 at 7:30 p.m. Present were Ms. Sherman, who presided, Mrs. Eisner, Mrs. Binder, Mrs. Kelly, Ms. Chenofsky Singer, Mr. Cohen, Ms. Panarelli, and Mr. Banick.

Ms. Sherman opened the meeting and read the Sunshine Law Announcement.

MINUTES:

Ms. Sherman asked the Board to review the minutes.

Ms. Sherman asked for a motion to accept the minutes of June 16th, 2025, as submitted. Mrs. Eisner so moved. Mr. Cohen seconded. All were in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mrs. Eisner and Mr. Banick compared vouchers to proposed expenditures prior to the meeting.

Vouchers #7598 - #7651 and payrolls for July 2025 as directed by the Township amounting to $609,735.11 and charged to the library's appropriation were approved for payment or ratified for payment.

Vouchers #7652 - #7754 and payrolls for August 2025 as directed by the Township amounting to $293,476.01 and charged to the library's appropriation were approved for payment or ratified for payment.

Vouchers #7757 - #7799 and payrolls for September 2025 as directed by the Township amounting to $792,877.36 and charged to the library's appropriation were approved for payment or ratified for payment.

Ms. Sherman asked for a motion that the Bill Lists for April be approved. Mrs. Kelly made a motion to approve the Bill Lists as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Panarelli. All were in favor.

The Bill Lists were approved as presented.

Mr. Cohen stated that the Budget vs. Actual Monthly Report is still not showing things as they should be. He will work with Mr. Banick to create a report in January 2026 that will represent large items in the budget without distorting things.

The Board asked who the vendor Blue Diamond Entertainment is. They are the petting zoo for the Community Picnic on September 27th.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Sherman asked if there were any Public Comments. Mrs. Kelly reported for the Friends.

The Friends held their first Board Meeting since the summer break on Tuesday September 9th. The annual 2025-2026 operating budget was voted on and approved.

The Friends were happy once again to sponsor the Summer Reading prizes for 2025.

Friends will begin discussing programming for 2026.

The Chess Camp saw a drop in attendance this summer. The camp needed to be held at the Casa Colombo Civic Association due to the ongoing second floor renovation. The Friends anticipated this may occur. Chess class attendance has also been down. They are currently being held in the teen area of the library due to the renovation.

The Friends handed out 700 Native Seed packets.

The Littler Free Library at the pool remained stacked all summer and was once again a great success. The Friends extend a thank you to the Township for allowing them to offer this service to the community every summer season.

The Friends participated in Rocktoberfest. They had a lot of good fun and signed up four new members.

The Friends fall program schedule has been finalized.

The Fireside Book Club will meet virtually on Monday October 6th. The book will be "Dictionary of Lost Words" by Pip Williams. The moderator will be Michelle Brubaker.

Museum Night will be on Thursday November 13th.

In person program for 2026 will be tied to the 250th celebration in the United States.

The Chess Tournament will be held on Saturday December 6th with Saturday December 20th as the snow date.

The Annual Book Sale will be held in May 2026.

Mrs. Kelly reported that the Friends bank account has a balance of $38,000.00. Two CDs have a combined balance of $62,000.00. This is down $22,000.00 from 2024. Having no book sale in 2025 and the loss of some big donors was a contributing factor.

In closing Mrs. Kelly reported that membership for 2025 is down.

Ms. Sherman thanked Mrs. Kelly for forwarding her report.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Banick reported on the Second Floor Renovation. Ceiling tile installation is going on now. Flooring installation will begin soon.

Mr. Banick reported on Personnel. Library Assistant Lucianna Duarte resigned effective Wednesday September 24th. She is due with her first child. Everyone wishes her well and is very excited for her. Part Time Library Assistant Hadley Groft will begin on Monday October 6th as Mrs. Durate's replacement. Part time Sunday Library Assistant Deanette Burell began work on Sunday September 7th. Librarian 1 Mary Moore will begin her maternity leave in October. Her last full day will be Friday October 17th. Mr. Cohen asked who will take over her work during the leave. She was hired for her unique marketing skills. Mr. Banick said that her workload will be distributed to the other Librarians on staff. Mrs. Kelly said that it might be beneficial to hire a part-time replacement while she is out. With the renovation and re-opening of the second floor there will be a lot of publicity that needs to be done. This will also take up a lot of time, and the other librarians have their own work to do. Mr. Banick said that he feels it can be done without a substitute and with the renovation delayed the library can put off a grand reopening gathering. The Board feels that Mr. Banick would like to delay this until Mrs. Moore returns from maternity leave. They will revisit the grand re-opening gathering going forward.

Mr. Banick reported that the library has partnered with RevolutionNJ for the 250th Anniversary celebrations. The Historical Society and the Township have partnered with them as well.

Mr. Banick reported on the Summer Reading Program. Adult participation was up for 2025. Children participation was down in 2025. Mr. Banick thanked the Friends for their very generous support in purchasing the prizes.

Mr. Banick reported on Statistics. Visitation is down for August. YTD visitation is down ½%. Circulation is up 1% YTD.

Mr. Banick reported on Programming. Programming is doing well at YTD.

The Board then held a discussion regarding the renovation with Mr. Banick. Mrs. Binder asked where the library stands regarding the completion of the renovation. It was scheduled to be completed by Labor Day weekend which has passed. Mr. Banick said that everything is three weeks out of completion. Mrs. Binder asked what the original due date was. Mr. Banick said Labor Day. The Board then asked if the deadline has been fulfilled as to the contract that the library signed with the contractor. Mr. Banick said no it has not but that he is against pursuing litigation for damages.

The Board went on to say that the renovation is now five weeks past Labor Day and that perhaps they should hold the contractor to the contract. Ms. Chenofsky Signer said that the Board has a fiduciary obligation. This obligation alone is enough to warrant pursuing damages and that the Board should ask the attorney who drew up the contract to look at it.

Mrs. Eisner asked if the delays were attributed to materials. The Board stated that it doesn't matter. The library has a contract and that wiggle room for such delays were built in. Mrs. Kelly added that the contract is a public record that must be produced if someone asks to see it.

In closing the Board said that the library has a signed contract with the architect and contractor and that the library is a business. They do not want to see patrons go elsewhere due to the delays either. They instructed Mr. Banick to contact the attorney and report back to them.

Mrs. Binder asked why the pods are still on the Glen Avenue entrance and by the loading dock. Mr. Banick said that furniture is being stored by the loading dock, and he may need the Glen Avenue ones to store flooring as it comes in.

Patrons and the community have begun to ask when the entrance on Glen Avenue will be available again. The summer is over, school is in session, and the entrance being blocked has become a safety issue. The Board instructed Mr. Banick to remove the pods in October and reopen the entrance.

Ms. Sherman thanked Mr. Banick for his report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

There were no Committee Reports.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Board held a discussion on the elevator. The upgrades were finished in June. However, when the oil was tested to begin its operations, it came back contaminated. The elevator will now need new pistons that drive the elevator. The Board asked if insurance would cover the new parts. It is thought not because the equipment is over 50 years old. They then asked if the Township could help with the expenses. Mr. Cohen asked if Mr. Banick looked at any grants or ADA grants that would offset the cost. He has not.

Mr. Banick will need to inquire and report back to the Board.

Mr. Banick told the Board that the elevator company doing the project, OTIS Elevators, will give a 7% price reduction to bring the repairs to $60,636.00. The Board asked how much money had already been put into the elevator. Mr. Banick said over $100,000.00. The added money needed puts the total over $160,000.00.

The Board asked what a brand-new elevator would cost. Mr. Banick did not know. He did not ask for a bid for a brand new one, he only asked for prices for the upgrades.

The Board asked how long the repair will take. Will it be until "year's end?" Mr. Banick said nine to ten weeks. It will take seven weeks to source the parts. Then the library will have to wait for a crew to be scheduled to do the work on site.

The Board mentioned how unfortunate it will be for patrons not to be able to attend programming on the second floor because they need the elevator.

This led to a discussion by the Board on future programming that is scheduled to be held on the second floor. They included the November elections, The Friends Museum Night and The Friends sponsored Chess Tournament.

The Board again questioned whether it would have been more prudent to purchase a brand-new elevator. If everything had been purchased all at once rather than component by component would the library have spent less "money?" They question at this point whether they can even get a brand-new elevator ordered and installed in seven weeks.

The Board asked what the warranty on the work already done is. Mr. Banick said one year. The Board was surprised it wasn't more like 3 years.

The Board feels that this issue most likely could have been brought to their attention sooner. They will, however, pass the change order request with a caveat. The caveat is

that if OTIS Elevator says a brand-new elevator can be purchased and installed in less time the Board will convene a special meeting to discuss and decide how to move forward.

Mrs. Sherman asked for a motion to approve the change order of $60,636.00 to replace the jack system on the existing elevator with the aforementioned caveat in place. Mrs. Kelly so moved. Mrs. Binder seconded. All were in favor.

The Board discussed the 2025 Operating Budget. Mrs. Binder asked if Sunday Salaries are charged as overtime pay. They are for Full Time staff that work on Sundays. Part Time staff are paid at the regular hourly rate. Mrs. Kelly asked how staff are paid for after-hour programming. Librarians and Library Assistants adjust their work week schedules. Maintenance is paid overtime.

Mr. Cohen stated that he wants to report on the best way to look at the budget figures and the fund balance. He is also concerned that there not be a claw back by the Township with the renovation. The surplus looks to be over 30% now and is most likely headed in that direction for 2026 and 2027. By law the library must transfer any budget surplus over 20% of its operating expenditure for the previous year. Mr. Banick said that the bequest the library received is exempt from the calculation. Mr. Cohen said that the Board will need to look at this and possible new capital projects. He also said that they will have to keep their eye on the interest the library is receiving, this will fluctuate.

Mr. Cohen asked if health insurance rates are going up. Mr. Banick said they are going up 16% for 2026.

Mrs. Binder asked how the BCCLS dues for each member library are calculated. Mr. Banick said there is a formula used that considers the member libraries items, patrons count, population of the township, 1/3 MIL calculation, and electronic resources.

Mrs. Sherman asked if there were any more questions or concerns regarding the 2025 Operating Budget. Seeing none, she asked for a motion to approve the adoption of the library's 2025 Operating Budget. Mrs. Eisner so moved. Mr. Cohen seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Cohen said that there is a discussion being held by the township regarding Mrs. Sherman's residency as it relates to her membership on the Flood Mitigation Committee and her tenure as a Library Board Trustee. Mrs. Sherman is no longer a resident of Millburn & Short Hills Township.

There was no Executive Session.

Ms. Sherman asked if there was any further business before the Board before adjournment.

Seeing none, Ms. Sherman requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Kelly "so moved." Mrs. Binder seconded. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Giambattista