

MINUTES

Warren County Library Commission

JANUARY 28, 2025

The Warren County Library Commission met in Regular Session at the Richard D. Gardner Branch, 2 Shotwell Drive, Belvidere, New Jersey on January 28, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Liza Thomas and upon roll call, the following members were present: Chairperson Liza Thomas, Vice Chairperson Cathleen Gerhardt, Recording Secretary Deborah Pasquarelli, Ruth Kanyuck, and Tammy Koop. Also attending were County Commission Liaison Jason Sarnoski and Library Assistant Director Jill Butcher. There were approximately 15 attendees in person, and 8 attendees via zoom.

After leading the flag salute, Ms. Thomas confirmed that notice of this meeting was in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

APPROVAL of MINUTES

On motion by Ms. Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Thomas, the minutes of Regular Session of November 21, 2024 were approved.

Recorded Vote: Ms. Gerhardt, yes; Ms. Kanyuck, abstain; Ms. Koop, abstain; Ms. Pasquarelli, abstain; Ms. Thomas, yes.

On motion by Ms. Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Pasquarelli, the minutes of Reorganization Meeting of January 2, 2025 were approved.

Recorded Vote: Ms. Gerhardt, yes; Ms. Kanyuck, yes; Ms. Koop, abstain; Ms. Pasquarelli, yes; Ms. Thomas, yes.

FINANCIAL RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION 2025-F-02

On motion by Ms. Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Pasquarelli, the Resolution to pay bills in the amount of \$118,779.90 was approved.

Recorded Vote: Ms. Gerhardt, yes; Ms. Kanyuck, yes; Ms. Koop, yes; Ms. Pasquarelli, yes; Ms. Thomas, yes.

COMMUNICATIONS TO COMMISSION

The commission received six (6) communications. They were asked if there were any questions or comments regarding any of these items. There were none.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda Items Only)

There were no public comments on Agenda Items.

OLD BUSINESS

Assistant Director, Jill Butcher, had an informational sheet included with the member packets, and formally requested the Warren County Library ask to join the Unified NW NJ Regional Library Shared Services Network (MAIN). Philip Berg from MAIN was in attendance and was introduced to field any questions.

On motion by Ms. Pasquarelli, seconded by Ms. Kanyuck, the Warren County Library system requesting to join MAIN was approved.

Recorded Vote: Ms. Gerhardt, yes; Ms. Kanyuck, yes; Ms. Koop, yes; Ms. Pasquarelli, yes; Ms. Thomas, yes.

NEW BUSINESS

In response to a request that was made to post recordings of the WCLC meetings online, there were some questions and discussion. The matter was Tabled until their questions were answered.

RESOLUTIONS

None

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

See attached Assistant Director's Report submitted by Jill Butcher.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Thomas indicated they had received three applications for the Library Director position and was creating a sub-committee, which would include herself and one other member to review and interview. Ms. Pasquarelli volunteered to be on this subcommittee.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS

Anna Babitsky, from Hackettstown, said she sent a letter to the Commission yesterday bringing up the Holocaust since it is was Remembrance Day, stating that the Holocaust books included on booklooks.org site were listed as obscene or objectionable. This is history and should not be classified this way.

Sarah Hare, from Hope Township, brought up the letter to the editor of Tap Into – Phillipsburg. Warren County citizens are alarmed about what is happening, the lack of transparency, the public posting of booklooks.org, a Library Commission member being put on the commission knowing her outspoken biases, and the lack of consideration to resident attendees.

George Kotz, via Zoom, following up on Anna Babitsky's statement, said booklooks.org is contrary to the purpose of a library; it's a slanted view of reality.

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Judy McDonnell, from Liberty Township, asked how much is the State Aid we apply for through the NJ State Library. Also wanted to know what was the location of the book review and content list.

Kelly Nemed, from White Township, stated she was alarmed to see booklooks.org on the book review and content list as that site is discriminatory against the LGBTQ community.

Sandy Roberts, from Blairstown Township, said the Library is a community hub, and the public is not feeling heard. The community is gaining distrust in this group and there is no transparency. She said the public treasures their freedoms and the First Amendment is being ignored.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Ms. Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Koop, and there being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of the Warren County Library Commission minutes of the date above mentioned.



Deborah Pasquarelli
Recording Secretary

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Assistant Director's Report January 2025

Library patrons can now subscribe to Wowbrary, which is a weekly email newsletter listing the new materials purchased for our collections. The newsletter breaks down the materials by format and subject and gives a brief summary for each item. Patrons can place holds on items directly from the newsletter. We had been using a different service, New Book Alerts, but the links to our catalog weren't working properly and their categorization of materials by subject was frequently incorrect. Since sending out the Wowbrary newsletters, we have begun seeing an increase on the number of holds patrons are placing on new items.

In terms of marketing, we have once again started emailing out a monthly newsletter. The newsletter currently highlights library services and events. I want to thank Courtney Butrymowicz, one of our senior library assistants, for taking on this responsibility. Courtney has many wonderful ideas for transforming the monthly newsletter. I encourage you to be on the lookout for our expanded and improved version. She is also heading up a committee to make our social media posts more engaging and fun for the community.

The remodeling project of the Catherine Dickson Hofman Branch continues to go well according to the project manager. We are anticipating the construction phase will be completed in approximately two months. I want to thank the Catherine Dickson Hofman Trustee Association for purchasing over \$27,000 worth of equipment for the MakerSpace. The Trustees operate in a manner similar to the Friends of the Library in that they serve as an advocacy and fundraising group.

As I mentioned in November, the vendor we used to manage and circulate our museum passes went out of business. The most reasonable alternative we have found is MuseumKey from OCLC, but the cost is more than twice as much as the previous product. At this time, we decided to circulate the physical museum passes until they expire in the summer. We will then look at the circulation numbers and costs to determine if we want to pursue using MuseumKey.

Unfortunately, we have not had any luck in hiring a branch manager for the Richard D. Gardner Branch. We had an excellent potential candidate, but once again, what we offer salary-wise was not competitive. So our offer for the position was turned down. County Personnel will keep the position listed until we can hopefully fill it. On the positive side, we just began advertising a Librarian 1 position and have received 3 good resumes so far. As soon as we fill one of these librarian positions, we will meet the minimum requirement for state aid of 6 professional librarians.

Finally, on behalf of the library staff, I want to thank Henry Newbold for his 9 years of service to the Library. Before moving to Warren County, Henry served on various library commissions in Morris County. He served New Jersey libraries for a total of 51 years, which is incredibly impressive. We wish Henry the best in his future pursuits.

Respectfully submitted,
Jill E. Butcher
Assistant Director