

The Warren County Library Commission met in Regular Session at the Richard D. Gardner Branch, 2 Shotwell Drive, Belvidere, New Jersey on February 25, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson 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 Warren County Library Attorney representative Joseph Bell IV and Library Assistant Director Jill Butcher. There were approximately 35 attendees in person, and 10 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. Pasquarelli, the minutes of Regular Session of January 28, 2025, were approved.

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

FINANCIAL RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION 2025-F-03

On motion by Ms. Kanyuck seconded by Ms. Gerhardt, the Resolution to pay bills in the amount of \$64,302.40 was approved.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda Items Only)

Kelley Nemeckay, from White Twp., questioned why Communications was no longer on the agenda as it is listed in the By-Laws. Attorney Bell stated that Communications has been mis-interpreted in the past. Communications would be those from the Commissioners. Correspondence would be to the Commission. Ms. Nemeckay then stated it is important to discuss what is communicated to the Commission regardless of what it's called.

Judy N., from Mountain Lake, followed up on the previous comment about Communications and Correspondence. She said it is very important to see the correspondence from the public to the Commissioners.

Sandy Roberts, from Blirstown, stated she supports what Ms. Nemeckay said. Communication from the public is important. She asked why decisions are being made without the public opinion being taken into consideration. Decision making should be transparent with open discussions. The public feels unheard and ignored, and there are better ways to interact and communicate with the community.

Maureen Bonner, from Mountain Lake, asked about the By-Laws on the website and the status in terms of being reviewed and updated.

Ms. Pasquarelli stated they will look into better ways of addressing Correspondence to the Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Library Commission By-Laws

On motion by Ms. Thomas, seconded by Ms. Gerhardt, the creation of a sub-committee to review and revise the Library Commission By-Laws was approved.

Members named to this subcommittee are Ms. Thomas and Ms. Pasquarelli.

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

b. Posting of Meeting Recordings

On motion by Ms. Pasquarelli, seconded by Ms. Koop, the posting of meeting recordings on the library website until the next meeting, was approved.

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

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Pasquarelli asked about adding New Business to the Agenda and requested a review of the Circulation Policy of periodicals.

RESOLUTIONS

None

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

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

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Thomas indicated they will need an Executive Session at the end of the regular meeting to discuss a Personnel matter.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tracey Heisler, from Washington Twp., commended the Librarians and Library staff for the awesome things they do. She also questioned the Library Commission application process and By-Laws of the Commission.

Teresa Esposito Jackson, from Washington Twp., stated that when she questioned Jason Sarnoski at the County Commission meeting about the Library Commission applications, he would not talk about it in public, but would talk to her after the meeting. At that time, he said he was the sole decision-making person and that Library Commissioners needed to share his values.

Ms. Esposito said the idea that some Commissioners don't want to admit to favoring book bans is semantics. Segregating books, labeling them, and moving them behind a counter is no different than banning.

Ms. Esposito further stated the Friends of the Library came across businesses that would not donate to the silent auction due to the questionable changes going on with the Commission.

Anna Babitsky, from Hackettstown, stated there should be no book bans or suppression of certain books. She said all of the Holocaust books included on Booklooks.org were listed as obscene or objectionable, and even Pulitzer Prize winning books are on this site. History cannot be changed and should not be classified as obscene or objectionable.

Kelley Nemeckay, from White Twp., commented she loves *Blind Date with a Book*. She couldn't believe that Booklooks.org was not removed from the posted flyer. It was conceived by parents and has no reputable reviews nor a search engine.

Judith Freger, from Hackettstown, stated that she was one of the 9 people that sent correspondence last month. She is a retired teacher and the movement started by Moms for Liberty caused the loss of a lot of teachers. Banning books in any way is un-American. Parents should monitor and be vigilant about their children's actions, and make decisions regarding their children. Keeping knowledge from children does not protect them.

Monica Scott, from Lopatcong Twp., submitted a Commission application and was told by Jason Sarnoski that he wanted like-minded people. She questioned why Booklooks.org would consider *Ablaze with Color* as objectionable.

Judy N., from Mountain Lake, said that posting Booklooks.org goes against the spirit of

the Freedom to Read Act signed into law by Gov. Murphy in December 2024.

Judy McDonnell, from Liberty Twp., said the Freedom to Read Act does not go into effect until December 2025.

Paul Eskola, from Allamuchy Twp., stated that all that is happening right now with the Commission instills fear in people. Anything that is taken out of context compounds the fear.

With no further public comment, an Executive Session was requested.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESOLUTION 2025-4

On motion by Ms. Pasquarelli, seconded by Ms. Gerhardt, a resolution authorizing an Executive Session of the Warren County Library Commission providing for a meeting not open to the public in accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 at 6:45 p.m.

On motion by Ms. Thomas, seconded by Ms. Pasquarelli, the board adjourned Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 7:40 p.m.

On motion by Ms. Cathleen Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Kanyuk, recommending to the County Commission to hire Jill Butcher for the position of Library Director was approved.

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

MINUTES

Warren County Library Commission

FEBRUARY 25, 2025

On a motion of Ms. Pasquarelli, seconded by Ms. Thomas, the recommendation to approve the hiring at this time of a replacement Assistant Director was approved.

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

ADJOURNMENT

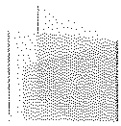
On motion by Ms. Gerhardt, seconded by Ms. Koop, and there being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

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

Deborah A. Pasquarelli 4/22/25

Deborah Pasquarelli
Recording Secretary

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WARREN COUNTY LIBRARY

Director's Report March 2025

Our membership to join MAIN was officially approved on March 28. Over the next year we will be adding new services in coordination with MAIN. The first big change is our migration to the new integrated library system (ILS), Koha. Our go-live date for Koha is May 5. From the evening of May 2 through the morning of May 5, the public catalog and staff modules will be unavailable. Staff will use an offline circulation module that weekend. In preparation for this migration, we are implementing a holds embargo. No holds will be able to be placed by the public from April 14 to May 7. Also, patrons that opted to record their loan histories in our current ILS, will not have those histories transferred to Koha. We are working on a procedure where patrons can contact us for copy of their loan histories before we make the big switch.

Work on the Catherine Dickson Hofman Branch is moving along quickly. Shelving and furniture are currently being installed. The materials stored at the Southwest Branch are scheduled to be moved back to CDH mid-April. Our staff will begin processing CDH's items, which are integrated into the branches' collections, next week. We have scheduled extra staff at CDH for late April to help re-shelve those 12,500 items. Moving our equipment is also scheduled for that time period. The temporary location in Hope will close on April 30 and the official re-opening of CDH will be by May 10. An open house for the public is being planned for that Saturday.

Makers Day, held last Saturday, was again a very successful event for us. Almost 900 people visited the library. I dropped by all three branches and spoke with many happy patrons who love this event. Each year our staff comes up with new and exciting, hands-on STEM projects. I want to congratulate and thank our staff, especially our library associates, who spend months planning for Makers Day. Additionally, I want to thank the many volunteers who set up stations on robotics, hydrogen powered cars, using compasses, building birdhouses, spin art, weaving, buoyancy, and gardening.

The Librarian 1 position has been filled. Courtney Butrymowicz, a CDH senior library assistant with us for the past 3 years, has accepted the position. Her main tasks will focus on marketing, staff training, and local history research. In addition to these tasks, she will continue to help with coverage at the CDH and Northeast Branches until we hire more staff. Part-time library assistant positions have been posted for all four branches.

On March 14, President Trump signed an Executive Order reducing the functions of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which provides federal funding for libraries through state grants. The New Jersey State Library (NJSL) received approximately \$4.5 million from the IMLS last year. The NJSL services we use the most are statewide interlibrary loan, statewide databases and e-resources, and technology services and infrastructure. At this time, the NJSL is not speculating about the potential impact this reduction or elimination in funding could have. However, they are reviewing their funding sources and priorities and are working through various scenarios in preparation.

Respectfully submitted,
Jill E. Butcher
Director