



**BERGENFIELD LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
Conducted virtually via Zoom

**Minutes**  
**December 21, 2023**

**Present**

Thomas Neats, President (arrived at 7:40pm)  
Laurie Phipps, Vice President  
Fanny Cruz-Betesh, Recording Secretary  
Marcela Deauna, Treasurer  
Sarah Shaffren  
Christopher Langschultz, Alternate for Superintendent of Schools  
Thomas Lodato, Council Liaison (joined at 8:07 pm)  
Allison Ballo, Director  
Jennifer Murray, Administrative Assistant

Vice President Phipps called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

**Notification of Public Meeting**

President Neats read the report on public notification of this meeting.

**Minutes**

**Motion by Ms. Cruz-Betesh to accept the November 9, 2023 meeting minutes.**  
**Ms. Phipps seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes  
Councilman Lodato – Absent at time of vote  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

**Bills**

**Motion by Ms. Deauna to accept the December 21, 2023 bill list.**  
**Mr. Langschultz seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes



Councilman Lodato – Absent at time of vote  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

### **Public Portion**

No public comments.

### **Correspondence**

President Neats read a thank you letter to the Board from Mr. Gerald Naylis for his Lucille Tendler award recognition.

For the Love of Words, a non-profit writers group that has been meeting at the Library since 2006, again requested use of meeting space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday evenings

**Motion by Ms. Phipps to approve the request by Love of Words to use meeting space the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday for 2024.**

**Ms. Deauna seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes

Ms. Deauna – Yes

Mr. Neats – Yes

Ms. Phipps – Yes

Ms. Shaffren – Yes

Councilman Lodato – Absent at time of vote

Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

### **President's Report**

President Neats thanked the Library staff who participated in Holiday on the Pond, saying he felt they did an excellent jobs and the books they distributed were well received. President Neats reported that he met with the personnel committee and visited the library on several occasions to chat with the staff.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **BCCLS and Friends**

Ms. Ballo reported that the Friends are currently on hiatus but the annual appeal mailing was sent out.

Ms. Ballo shared that the South Orange Library is the 78<sup>th</sup> library to be added to BCCLS.

#### **Building & Grounds**

Ms. Ballo reported on the cleaning contract bid currently in process. The building walk through was on 12/6 and approximately 8 vendors came in. Bids are due by Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup> and the subcommittee will then meet to formally open all the bids with the goal being to award the bid at the January board meeting.

#### **Finance Committee**

The financial summary was distributed and discussed.



Ms. Ballo shared that donations were received from the Elks Club and Clinton Avenue Reformed Church and deposited into the Special Gifts account, both to go towards items for the Children's Room.

#### **Personnel**

To be discussed in closed session.

#### **Policy**

No report.

#### **Director's Report**

Ms. Ballo reminded the Board of the staff develop session on Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Ballo shared that the social work graduate student from FDU will be starting her internship on Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Ballo reported that the decision date for the grant with the NJ State Library for capital funds had been pushed back to December 27<sup>th</sup>. President Neats asked if the Borough would be continuing to use the Library facilities to host meetings. Ms. Ballo reported they are currently scheduled to use our meeting rooms through February.

#### **Trustee Education**

Ms. Cruz-Betesh asked about credit for training programs. Ms. Ballo will follow up with BCCLS.

#### **Old Business**

No report.

#### **New Business**

Ms. Ballo recapped the 2023 budgetary situation and reiterated that the Library was only able to avoid a reduction of service hours and staff layoff by not filling an unanticipated full time professional vacancy in addition to cutting multiple operating expense lines. Discussion followed about the consequences that occurred as a result of the 2023 budget shortfall, including increased staff turnover, low morale and productivity and reduction of various juvenile programs and events for Bergenfield families. Several board members indicated that they have received complaints from residents about the reduced services.

The 2024 proposed Operating budget was distributed by mail and discussed. This proposed budget reflects a 7.2 % increase which takes into account mandatory minimum wage increases and restores the staffing to pre-pandemic levels. The increase would lead to a full resumption of onsite juvenile and young adult programming as well as expanded passport service. Discussion followed as to the consequences of not being funded at the requested appropriation level.

#### **Motion by Ms. Phipps recommending Ms. Ballo submit the proposed 2024 Operating Budget to the Borough.**

**Ms. Cruz-Betesh seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes

Ms. Deauna – Yes

Mr. Neats – Yes

Ms. Phipps – Yes

Ms. Shaffren – Yes

Councilman Lodato – Yes

Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.



**Motion by Mr. Langschultz to go into closed session to discuss personnel matters.  
Ms. Deauna seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes  
Councilman Lodato – Yes  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried. The Board went to closed session at 8:30 pm.

The Board returned to open session at 8:38 pm.

**Motion by Ms. Phipps to promote Devon Allan to Librarian I with a salary of \$56,000 as a result of obtaining their graduate degree.  
Ms. Cruz-Betesh seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes  
Councilman Lodato – Yes  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

**Motion by Mr. Langschultz to increase the Administrative Assistant’s vacation time to align with full time professional vacation days effective 1/1/2024.  
Ms. Cruz-Betesh seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes  
Councilman Lodato – Yes  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

## **Adjournment**

**Motion by Ms. Deauna to adjourn the meeting.**



**Ms. Phipps seconded the motion.**

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Ms. Cruz-Betesh - Yes  
Ms. Deauna – Yes  
Mr. Neats – Yes  
Ms. Phipps – Yes  
Ms. Shaffren – Yes  
Councilman Lodato – Yes  
Mr. Langschultz - Yes

The motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Fanny Cruz-Betesh*

Jennifer Murray, Recorder for  
Fanny Cruz-Betesh, Recording Secretary