BERGENFIELD LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Minutes
September 3, 2026

Present

Thomas Neats, President
Laurie Phipps, Vice President, arrived at 7:49pm
Jamie Orlando, Treasurer
Marcela Deauna
Fanny Cruz-Betesh
Allison Ballo, Director
Darlene Swistock, Interim Recorder of Minutes

President Neats called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm.

Notification of Public Meeting

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

Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Orlando, seconded by Ms. Deauna, to accept the June 11, 2026 meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Bills

A motion was made by Mr. Orlando, seconded by Ms. Deauna, to approve the July and August 2026 bill list. All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Ms. Phipps, seconded by Ms. Cruz-Betesh, to approve the September 3, 2026 bill list. All in favor. Motion carried.

Public Portion

None

Correspondence

None

President's Report

President Neats reported he and his granddaughter attended a Mr. Corbitt program which was very entertaining. He reminded the board that they should take advantage of the library programs and try to attend at least 1 program a year.

He reminded everyone that the board previously passed a resolution that the board meetings from October-March would be virtual.

Committee Reports

BCCLS and Friends

Ms. Ballo noted that Executive Director Dave Hanson will be leaving BCCLS. They will hire a consulting firm to hire an Interim Executive Director and a new Executive Director. The town wide Garage Sale on Saturday, September 26-Sunday, September 27 is a fundraiser benefiting the Friends of the Bergenfield Library.

Building & Grounds
Ms. Ballo reported that the HVAC unit was repaired yesterday and the bill will be paid out of the capital account.

Finance Committee
Because of the early timing of this month's meeting, a second batch of checks will be run next week and the bill list will be amended. The financial summary will be distributed then. The remaining funds in the bank account with NVE were transferred to Columbia Bank and the account with NVE was closed effective September 1, 2026.

Personnel
Ms. Ballo advised that she will be conducting the second round of interviews for the open full-time Children's Librarian position.

Policy
Ms. Ballo reported that she has drafted edits to policy and will forward them to the sub-committee for review:

- Notary
- Quiet Study
- Virtual Meetings

Director's Report
Ms. Ballo mentioned the Lucille Tendler Award Ceremony and The Kootz concert will take place on Sunday, October 4, 2026 in the Friends Room honoring Lora Schade.

Ms. Ballo also mentioned that there have been many patron requests for the library to go fine-free during the last few years. She noted that fines for overdue items have decreased over the years as a result of automatic renewals and borrowing from neighboring libraries that are fine-free. The library can go fine-free mid-year or go fine-free in select areas. This year, fines from overdue items totaled about $16,000. She asked the board for their thoughts as she prepares the budget for next year. The board members were surprised the revenue from overdue fines was so significant. President Neats asked Ms. Ballo to consider how the loss of $16,000 might impact the budget going forward.

Trustee Education
Darlene Swistock, BCCLS Office Liaison to the BCCLS Trustee Development Committee, gave an update on trustee CE requirements. The NJ State Library had changed the CE requirement to 2 hours per year per trustee in the spring to be effective in 2026, but then postponed the change until 2027. She mentioned that BCCLS Executive Director Dave Hanson had given several presentations in May and June on the Value of BCCLS and the BCCLS Bill. She shared the handouts that were distributed to the attendees. She also mentioned that the BCCLS Trustee Development Committee supports trustees through professional development programs, trustee roundtables, trustee mentorship program and quarterly trustee newsletter. If anyone would like to join the trustee email group to receive news about upcoming trustee events and the quarterly newsletters, please let Ms. Ballo know and she will pass the information to Ms. Swistock. Lastly she mentioned that the TDC is hosting 2 programs: Technology: What Trustees Need to Know on September 30 and AI: What Trustees Need to Know on October 8 along with 2 trustee roundtables: Budgeting & Financial Planning on October 28 and the Wide World of Trustee Development on December 3. All will be virtual and earn CE credit.

Old Business
None

New Business

The Library received a request to host a permanent exhibit for Colonel Floyd James Thompson, a Bergenfield Vietnam War hero and the longest-held POW. He was awarded 29 military medals for his service. The town will provide a lockable display case so there would be no cost to the library. The goal is to have them ready to be displayed in time for Veteran's Day in November. Ms. Phipps suggested having a document that explains the significance of the display. A ribbon cutting will be planned for November.

Motion to create a permanent display on the first floor, with the cost of the display case covered by outside funding, was made by Ms. Phipps, seconded by Ms. Cruz-Betesh. All in favor. Motion carried.

As mentioned at the June Board meeting, Ms. Ballo is requesting a 2% salary/wage adjustment for all current staff, excluding the Library Director, as the Library has been unable to fill a full time Youth Services Librarian position for several years due to the current wage scale. Ms. Cruz-Betesh asked to see the salaries at other libraries for comparison and Ms. Ballo will share them.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-10 to approve a 2% salary/wage adjustment for all current staff, excluding the Library Director, retroactive to July 1, 2026 was made by Ms. Phipps, seconded by Mr. Orlando. All in favor. Motion carried.

The Library will need to issue of a Request for Qualifications for Legal Services as the library's current attorney will be retiring in October. It will be advertised as a Public Notice in The Record and on the library's website, and notices will also be sent to firms used by other libraries. Ms. Phipps and Ms. Cruz-Betesh volunteered to serve on the sub-committee to review the RFQs.

Motion to issue a Request for Qualifications for Legal Services was made by Ms. Phipps, seconded by Ms. Cruz-Betesh. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Orlando proposed changing the time of the board meetings from 7:30 pm to 7:00 pm for both in-person and remote meetings.

Motion to change the time of the in-person and remote board meetings from 7:30 pm to 7:00 pm effective January 2027 was made by Mr. Orlando, seconded by Ms. Cruz-Betesh. All in favor. Motion carried.

President Neats reminded everyone about the Lucille Tendler Award Ceremony and The Kootz concert in the Friends Room on Sunday, October 4. The next board meeting will take place on Thursday, October 8 at 7:30 pm. It will be virtual.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Cruz-Betesh, seconded by Ms. Deauna, to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sorah Shaffren

Darlene Swistock, Interim Recorder for
Sorah Shaffren, Recording Secretary