



**The Trenton Free Public Library Board of Trustees**  
**Main Branch, 120 Academy Street, Trenton, NJ 08608**  
**January 12, 2023 at 6:00pm**

**Trustees:** Elizabeth Yull (President), Crystal Smith (Treasurer), Rick Kavin (Recording Secretary, Mayor's Delegate), Deniece Johnson, Lavern Rice, Patricia Smith, and *Superintendent James Earle*

(\**italics* indicate that the trustee was not present at this meeting)

**City Council Liaison:** (*vacant*)

**Library Personnel:** Rebecca FrancoMartin (Director)

**I. Call to Order**

A. Elizabeth Yull, Board President, called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm

**II. Announcement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Law**

A. Announced by Director Rebecca FrancoMartin

B. Statement is hereby made that adequate notice of this meeting was given by:

1. Posting written notice prominently at the Trenton Public Library main entrance, the Library website, and Facebook.
2. The mailing of said notice to the *Trentonian*.

**III. Roll Call for Quorum**

A. Present: Elizabeth Yull, Crystal Smith, Deniece Johnson, Patricia Smith, Lavern Rice, and Rick Kavin

B. Not Present: James Earle

**IV. Agenda Approval**

A. Patricia Smith made the motion to approve the January 2023 agenda

B. Deniece Johnson seconded the approval of the agenda

C. **Motion passes 6-0**

**V. Approval of Minutes**

A. Deniece Johnson made the motion to approve the minutes from the December 2022 Board meeting with one correction, amending "Office of Children Protection and Permanency" to "Division of Child Protection and Permanency"

B. Patricia Smith seconded the motion

C. **Motion passes 6-0**

**VI. Open Public Address**

A. No members of the public present

B. (*no public comment*)

## VII. Presentations

### A. Financials *(presented by Ann C. Zawartkay, CPA, CGMA)*

1. *(see "December 2022 financial reports" from Ann C. Zawartkay, CPA, CGMA)*
2. **NOTE:** This is a preliminary report, as some minor invoices may still come in for 2022 (such as the monthly Security bill), but this will largely be the end-year report.
3. **Total fund balance** (as of December 31, 2022) was approx. **\$2.4M**
  - a. \$1,153,000 in cash/investments, of which \$336,000 is in TFPL's operating checking account
  - b. This is a \$47,000 decrease from previous month due to operating activity
  - c. Roughly \$125,000 of various trust funds and trust fund income has been designated for various purposes. Approximately \$243,000 was released from restriction during the period to cover construction-related expenditures.
4. **Grant revenue and donations, Library materials and programming expenses, legal fees, audit expenses, and technology hardware and software were over budget**
5. **Personnel expenses, facilities and utilities expenses, security expenses, and planned expenditures from surplus for the Reading Room/tech upgrades were under budget**
6. **E-rate reimbursement program** is giving a credit for internet service instead of cash payment. TFPL is only paying for internet service above and beyond what the credits cover each month.
7. **Grant revenue and donations** over budget by \$170,000, as TFPL does not budget for private grants.
8. **Personnel expenses** under budget by \$115,000 due to vacancies in budgeted positions
9. **Library materials and programming expenses** are over budget by \$34,000 due to timing of purchases for the collection and Pop-Up Library Expenses covered by a grant.
10. **Facilities and utilities expenses** are under budget by \$59,000 due to repairs on the HVAC offset by an insurance check received for \$76,000. Increased utility rates impacted these expenses.
11. **Security** is under budget by \$16,000 due to timing of submission of the December invoice. The invoices are typically billed a month late.
12. **Legal fees** are over budget by \$7,000 due to an ongoing matter.
13. **Audit expense** is over budget by \$10,000 due to the additional audit being performed for the six months ending December 31, 2021.
14. **Technology hardware and software** is over budget by \$17,000 due to timing of subscription invoices compared to the previous year and some two-year renewals coming due.
15. **Planned expenditures from surplus for the reading room and tech upgrades** are under budget by \$629,000. The budget was amended to incorporate unspent budget amounts approved in prior years for the related projects into the current year budget. The revised budget amounts for the calendar year were spread evenly over twelve months.
16. **Net income** (as of December 31, 2022) was a deficit of approximately \$387,000. This compares to a budgeted deficit of \$1,537,000 for the

period, which is a positive variance of \$1,151,000. The deficit was budgeted in anticipation of the renovations performed, though the overall costs were below the budgeted amounts. Excluding the Reading Room and technology upgrades offset by trust funds released, there is a positive variance against the operating budget of \$279,000, which is primarily due to grants received that were not budgeted and the receipt of the insurance reimbursement for the HVAC repairs.

17. The City still owes \$160,000 from previously due disbursements. This includes \$16,000 from this period.

B. Personnel Report (*presented by Director Rebecca FrancoMartin*)

1. (*no personnel changes*)

C. Friends of TFPL (*no Friends present*)

1. (*no presentation*)

D. Director's Report (*presented by Director Rebecca FrancoMartin*)

1. **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

a. **Coat Drives**

- i. Two coat drives held during December in Community Room A
- ii. More than 40 families reached and more than 100 coats provided to Trenton children, including the remaining coats being distributed in the Children's Room
- iii. Approximately 30 coats remaining that are being distributed to children as needed

b. **One Simple Wish**

- i. TFPL has partnered with One Simple Wish to provide gifts to children and teens upon special request
- ii. Profiles set up for four children in need during the holidays and all four gift requests were granted
- iii. This will continue throughout the year for birthdays, holidays, and other celebrations on an as-needed basis

2. **MARKETING/PUBLIC RELATIONS**

a. **Baker & Taylor / Pop-Up Libraries**

- i. New QR code versions of Pop-Up Libraries to be launched
- ii. Planned to re-launch in February and will be available city-wide via QR code
- iii. Goal is to use these Pop-Up Libraries to increase literacy in schools and in the community generally, as well as to further market the Library
- iv. QR codes are unlimited for use – can be placed anywhere throughout the City
- v. There will be separate QR codes for youth locations (schools, the YMCA, RISE Center, etc.)
- vi. Also markets the Library by providing opportunities to market Library events

b. **Board of Public Utilities (BPU)**

- i. Press conference held at TFPL to announce \$6M grant award to expand broadband access in the state of New Jersey to bridge the 'digital divide'
- ii. Coordinated with former head of Trenton IT Joe Rivera

- iii. Good press was generated for TFPL, and new connections were made to promote the services and resources available at the Library
  - c. **Social Media Engagement**
    - i. Up for the month of December across multiple platforms
    - ii. The most successful post was about a young boy who read more than 400 books last year for the “1000 Books Before Kindergarten” program
      - That boy received a sticker, award certificate, and a free book
      - A number of local businesses as well as Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson congratulated him on the TFPL Facebook page
3. **BUILDING & TECHNOLOGY**
- a. **Human Capital Management**
    - i. A few years ago, TFPL transitioned to a new human capital management system and eliminated several others that were in use
    - ii. This system is better than the previous but still has features with which the administration is unsatisfied, and is split across several platforms
    - iii. A new system, ConnecTeams, was discovered that will streamline operations and will allow TFPL to further digitize records, onboard digitally, and integrate the ticketing and messaging systems
    - iv. This new system will decrease costs while increasing workflow
  - b. **Language and Literacy Lab**
    - i. Provided instruction to 15 patrons for workforce development and GED preparation
    - ii. The Computer Literacy class has five attendees in December
    - iii. This was a slower month than usual, likely due to the holiday season
4. **STAFF & VOLUNTEERS**
- a. December was a challenging month for staff due to **floating holidays**, as most December holidays fell on weekends
  - b. The majority of the staff have been sick and having to use **sick time** throughout the month, though most seem to have recovered
5. **CONTINUING EDUCATION & MEETINGS**
- a. **Princeton University**
    - i. Met with TFPL Archivist and professor from Princeton University
    - ii. Virtual tours to commence in February
    - iii. Researching urban libraries, relevant social issues, etc.
  - b. **City Council Meeting**
    - i. Director and Mayor’s Delegate attended Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trenton City Council
    - ii. This was the first regular meeting of the newly elected Council

- iii. Director invited members to tour the Library, learn about services and resources, and discuss budgetary issues
  - c. **NJ State Library Social Work-Informed Library Services**
    - i. Discussed social services and social work in relation to libraries
    - ii. Social Workers in training from local universities may be available to assist in certain capacities at libraries
6. **LIBRARY SERVICES**
- a. **Holiday Gift Giveaway**
    - i. Annual event was once again a huge success
    - ii. Gifts provided to 151 children and teens thanks to donations from the Trenton PBA and the Friends of the TFPL
    - iii. One Simple Wish also contributed gifts (*see above*)
  - b. **Isles Environmental Science Program**
    - i. Isles will begin presenting an afterschool program on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> focusing on environmental science for 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders
  - c. **Tax Form Outlet Program**
    - i. Will provide tax forms that are to be shipped mid-January
    - ii. The federal Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) will hopefully provide tax preparation services at the Library throughout tax season – dependent on availability of tax aids
    - iii. VITA would provide free tax services to residents and patrons
    - iv. May also contact AARP and United Way as back-ups
  - d. **Visits and Media Usage**
    - i. **Most Attended Programs:**
      - *Holiday Play* by Todd Evans
      - “A Revolutionary Conversation: Living Museum” presented by Sprout U.
      - “Alexander Hamilton and the 24 Cannons at Trent Town” lecture by David Bostead
      - More than 100 patrons attended the three events
    - ii. **Program Attendance and Circulation** slightly less than previous months (likely due to holiday season)
    - iii. **Patron Visits** were high at 6,001 (even despite holiday closures)
    - iv. **Database Usage**
      - Increased 59% from November to December
      - NewsBank, EBSCOhost, and BrainFuse: HelpNow were the most used databases
7. **COLLECTIONS & MATERIALS**
- a. The two **most read adult fiction** books were:
    - i. *Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson: Two estranged siblings delve into their mother’s hidden past—and how it all connects to her traditional Caribbean black cake—in this immersive family saga, “a character-driven, multigenerational story that’s meant to be savored” (*Time*).

- ii. *Memphis* by Tara Stiefel: A spellbinding debut novel tracing three generations of a Southern Black family and one daughter's discovery that she has the power to change her family's legacy.
- iii. Both selections have been out or on hold since being added to the collection, and they have consistently been the two most checked-out titles.

## 8. FINANCES/FUNDING

### a. Pay Increases

- i. A number of staff are due for **longevity increases** for time worked at the Library
- ii. All staff will receive their **COLA increase** in the first pay period of the new year
- iii. City has shifted to a Sunday-to-Saturday pay period (from Thursday-to-Wednesday), which has made scheduling easier for staff, days off, etc.

### b. Donations

- i. TFPL received more than \$2,000 in donations in December
- ii. Another donation was promised by patron Dossier Hammond, who sells books and donated the funds to the Library

## 9. TRENTONIANA

- a. **Holiday Cards** were mailed to previous monetary donors and donations were received in the amount of \$1,730
- b. **Addison Vincent's "Pandemica"**
  - i. Gallery opening was a huge success
  - ii. Frequently visited by patrons since its installation
- c. **Trentoniana Inquiries** made by 49 patrons via email, phone, and research form in December

## VIII. Action Items

### A. Bill List

- 1. (*see "TFPL January 2023 Unpaid Bills"*)
- 2. Approval of Bill List
  - a. The final HVAC bill is being held until the hard-copy binder is received – this is the \$67k bill for EMY Solutions, LLC
  - b. Baker & Taylor funding was “use-it-or-lose-it” for the end of the year, which is why the bill is higher than typical
  - c. Crystal Smith made the motion to approve the January bill list
  - d. Lavern Rice seconded the approval of the bill list
  - e. **Motion passes 6-0**

## IX. Old Business

### A. Personnel Policy Manual

- 1. Only major change from previous version was from Section 5.2 regarding Nepotism, which removed a section on exceptions that was no longer applicable
- 2. Deniece suggested codifying the ADA process to ensure standard application

3. Deniece also suggested adding “or a designee” to relevant locations where responsibilities of the Director are discussed

## **X. New Business**

### **A. Mural for Art Gallery**

1. Draft image was distributed to Board via email
2. Image will be in grayscale to avoid distracting from the actual gallery art on display
3. Suggested edits include replacing the State House with either something more art-related (paint palette, easel, etc.) or something more Trenton-related

### **B. Roof & Masonry Project(s)**

1. Timetable received for roof, masonry work, and Library Construction Bond (LCB) work
2. Clark Caton Hintz assessed the needed work and recommended bidding the projects out together due to overlapping issues
3. May need to open roof to inspect internal structure to avoid repairing surface work and having to then tear it up to repair internal issues
4. Funding is from CDBG, so Director will discuss possibilities with City representatives

## **XI. Announcements**

- A. The next regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting is Thursday, February 9, 2023, beginning at 6:00 pm
- B. Rick noted that the most recent edition of the *Downtowner* featured a cover story on the historic N.C. Wyeth painting that Thomas Edison State University has been attempting to sell.
- C. Upcoming events (*see flyers*):
  1. Ongoing through January 28<sup>th</sup>: “Pandemica: Images of a Potential Future” by Addison Vincent
  2. January 21, 3pm: *Elegy for a Lady* by Arthur Miller (Always Love Lucy Theatre Company)
  3. January 23, 6-7pm: Adult Book Club (current selection is *Signal Fires* by Dani Shapiro)
  4. February 2 and February 15, 2:15-4:30pm: Tablet with Free WiFi giveaway (Affordable Connectivity Program)
  5. Children’s Activities:
    - a. Lego Club (ages 8-12, Tuesdays@4-5pm)
    - b. Open Art (ages 4+, Saturdays@1-3pm)
    - c. Monday Night Crafts (Mondays@4-5pm)
    - d. Movie Night (Wednesdays@2pm and 5pm)
    - e. Bilingual Storytime (Thursdays@12-1pm)
    - f. Math Tutoring (Saturdays@11am-1pm – registration required 609.392.7188 ext. 32)

## **XII. Executive Session (if required)**

- A. (*none required*)

## **XIII. Adjournment**

- A. Crystal Smith made a motion to adjourn

- B. There were no objections
- C. Meeting adjourned at 6:56pm

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Kavin  
TFPL Board of Trustees Recording Secretary