

South Plainfield Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes September 13, 2022

Topic	Discussion	Outcome/To Do
Call to Order	The meeting was called to order by President Cheryl Nagel-Smiley at 6:30 pm. President Nagel-Smiley announced that the meeting was held in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act and as such, proper notice of the meeting was published in the official newspapers, The Observer, The Courier-News and The Home News Tribune.	
Roll Call	Trustees Present: Cheryl Nagel-Smiley, President; Gary Jones, Vice President; Melissa Katsingris, Treasurer; Ray Rusnak, Mayor's Rep; Frank Lemos; Christine Brandenburg, School Rep; Anne Troop; Stephanie Wolak; Excused Absent: Robert A. Bengivenga	
Discussion Of Procedures Going Forward	President Nagel-Smiley presented document reinforcing committee procedures. It is to everyone's benefit that we have this in writing so all members are aware of the expectations of how committees should operate. There are three parts to the document – Committee Responsibilities, Background Info and Moving Forward. Key points include the difference between capital projects and those projects that are funded by operating monies. The light on the ramp is part of the capital plan and will therefore be managed by the capital committee. The landscaping work and holiday lights will be grandfathered in as being under the capital committee's direction. President Nagel-Smiley asked if there were any questions. No questions.	
Approval of Minutes	Cheryl called for a motion. Ray motioned to accept the minutes from the previous meeting. Gary seconded the motion. There was no discussion.	Motion carried unanimously.
Payment of Vouchers	Cheryl reviewed the vouchers (checks #14722 - #14767 totaling \$ \$124,810.32) and called for a motion. Melissa motioned to accept the voucher payments. Anne seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Linda noted that the expenses this month were a little higher than usual because the Borough billed us for the annual pension payment all at once instead of monthly. Stephanie Wolak questioned why it was handled this way. Linda responded that the library only began being charged for pension contributions last year and that it may have just gotten away from them this year. President Nagel-Smiley suggested that perhaps CFO Cullen delayed the charge due to the Borough's budget not being passed until recently.	Motion carried unanimously.
Expense Report Review	Cheryl reviewed the expense report and called for a motion. Frank motioned to accept the report. Ray seconded the motion.	Motion carried unanimously.
Cash Receipts Report Review	Cheryl reviewed the cash receipts report and called for a motion. Gary motioned to accept the report. Frank seconded the motion. There was no discussion.	Motion carried unanimously.
Statistical Report Review	Cheryl called for a motion. Melissa motioned to accept the report. Frank seconded the motion.	Motion carried unanimously.

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Director's Report	Linda reviewed her report in detail. Cheryl called for a motion. Anne motioned to accept the report. Christine seconded the motion. There was no discussion.	Motion carried unanimously.
Treasurer's Report	Melissa presented the report. No Motion – Report Filed Comments: Treasurer Katsingris handed out the 20-21 Audit and asked all Board Members to review prior to the October Meeting so it can be voted on next month.	The report was accepted.
Buildings and Grounds Report	Linda noted that Bob Bengivenga asked her to present the report in his absence. President Nagel-Smilely asked Linda not to continue. President Nagel-Smilely pointed out that what was distributed to the board was not a Buildings and Grounds Report, but rather a summary of Bob's opinions about two business items. President Nagel-Smilely noted that she feels very disrespected because this summary concerns an email conversation that was between the Building and Grounds Committee. Instead of answering her email, Bob took his response to the Board as a whole. This is not the way committee reports should function. Reports should be a summary of what the committee members discussed and this document has no such summary. Whatever the majority of the Committee decides is what should be presented to the Board. Cheryl feels that Bob should have reached out to her directly to address the email and should have reached out to both Ray and Gary for their input. Ray did respond to Bob with a similar opinion as Cheryl and it is not noted in the report. Cheryl noted that Bob is aware of the vision problems that Vice President Jones has and therefore should have called him to discuss rather than email him, especially when the Director asked him to call Gary Jones. Cheryl also noted that she is frustrated because she has always been very accommodating to Bob's needs – she will often change the order of the agenda to allow him to present his report and leave the meeting early. Cheryl stated that it was very unfair to have this document distributed to the Board at the meeting instead of ahead of time like every other committee report. This does not give Trustees any time to go over things. Cheryl also feels maligned because she was misquoted and did not call the DPW unprofessional as was stated in Bob's memo. She noted that what she said was that DPW workers are not as experienced as licensed professionals and are not tree experts. Stephanie Wolak asked what exactly Cheryl thinks should be in the building and grounds report. President Nagel-Smilely responded that Bob should have presented a report informing the board about the toilets backing up on the 29th of August as well as his progress on the ramp lighting as these are issues directly under his purview. It is getting darker earlier and we cannot wait much longer on the light repair.	

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Buildings and Grounds Report, continued	The damage to the light fixture was noted in January, it is now September and there has been very little progress. Cheryl asked Linda to explain to the Board exactly what happened on August 29th. Linda explained that all 4 bathrooms backed up at once. She notified Bob as Buildings and Grounds Chair and Cheryl as Board President. A plumber came to snake the line and discovered that people flushing hand towels created the problem. The plumber advised getting rid of the paper towels and installing hand dryers instead. Cheryl asked Linda to please make note that this document is not a Buildings and Ground report, but rather Bob's opinions. This document can be taken into consideration when we are discussing Old and New Business tonight, but should not be filed as a Buildings and Grounds Report.	
Policy Committee	Anne Troop would like to have a meeting. The library was recently approached about having a sign on their lawn and we have no formal policy. Ray Rusnak noted that the town does have sign ordinances in place.	Anne will get a copy of the ordinance and will discuss with committee to come up with a recommendation at October's meeting.
Personnel Committee	President Nagel-Smiley announced that we have some good news. Children's librarian Jessica Gentile is pregnant. Her maternity leave has already been worked out with Linda and at the moment we do not anticipate needing to hire a temporary substitute. Jessica plans to be out mid-December through March/April so it falls within a quieter time for the library. President Nagel-Smiley encouraged board members to congratulate Jessica when they see her.	
Technology Committee	There is nothing to report at this time.	
Capital Projects Committee	Ray Rusnak noted that the new circulation and children's desks are expected to arrive by the end of this month. Under New Business we will decide about closing the building for a few days to accommodate delivery and set up. The furniture company we were working with on the staff room project has had a few changes in personnel so we are waiting on an updated quote from them. Since the plumber has recommended removing the paper towels from the bathrooms we will get started on that project. The committee will also try to get things moving on the repair of the ramp light fixture.	
Community Relations Committee	Stephanie Wolak reported that previous director Sunnie Randolph had some unexpected health issues and would therefore prefer to wait until spring to have the reading nook dedication ceremony. The Library's Fall festival is coming up and the committee usually handles the refreshments and pumpkins so they will be meeting to coordinate that.	

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Mayor's Alternate	Ray Rusnak had nothing to report from Mayor Anesh.	
Liaison to the Friends Report	Frank Lemos noted that the Friends have not met due to the Summer break they normally take. President Nagel-Smilely stated that there is a meeting scheduled for 6:00 pm Thursday, September 22. The Book Sale has been postponed until next spring.	
Schools Report	Christine Brandenburg reported that the upper grade Librarians had classes for the first time this week. The district is trying to fill some elementary library positions but finding candidates has been challenging. The middle school students will be taking a new standardized skills assessment test (start strong).	
Board President's Report	President Nagel-Smilely commended the staff for all of their hard work over the summer. They deserve to take a break from programming this month. She noted that TapInto South Plainfield ran a very nice article regarding the library's funding of the retention basin and blacktop projects. President Nagel-Smilely added that she reached out to Councilwoman Faustini regarding fencing the blacktop area. Linda met with Councilwoman Faustini, CFO Glenn Cullen, DPW Head Len Miller and Recreation Director Elizabeth Yarus. Linda explained that everyone was in favor of fencing but thought it best to wait until the paving was complete to decide on placement etc. Stephanie Wolak raised a concern about the brook that runs behind the blacktop, and asked if a chain link fence could be installed. Linda replied that her understanding is that the DEP has certain regulations for fencing and she wasn't sure if it would be permissible. Ray Rusnak stated he believed that since they do allow water to flow through, a chain link fence should be ok. Stephanie Wolak noted that she also thinks pylons should be installed to prevent cars from accidentally driving through the fencing. President Nagel-Smilely stated that the Borough should have funds available to do the work because the Board gave them \$200,000.00 for projects and to her knowledge only around \$50,000.00 has been spent. They should have approximately \$150,000.00 left.	
Old Business - Tree Removal and Pruning Discussion	Stephanie Wolak made a motion to bring back the tabled discussion from last month's meeting regarding tree removal and pruning. Ray seconded. Discussion: President Nagel-Smilely noted that all board members should have copies of quotes from LDS, Countryside and Riccardi as well as the document that outlined Building and Grounds Chair Bob Bengivenga's opinion that we should use DPW. Stephanie Wolak asked what if any charges we would incur by using DPW. President Nagel-Smilely answered that she wasn't aware of details regarding charges, but that she is extremely concerned about the white cedar that is leaning	Motion to bring back the tabled discussion regarding tree removal and pruning carried unanimously (with Bob not present for the vote).

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Old Business - Tree Removal and Pruning Discussion, continued	<p>against the pergola and it is her opinion that the tree should be removed by someone who has experienced with professional tree removal. Stephanie disagrees that the tree is not big enough for removal to be a concern. President Nagel-Smiley asked Ray if she could share his response to Bob Bengivenga’s email with the board. Ray reports that his opinion is that LDS has the most at stake since they are our landscapers. They will be very careful while working on the property and take care not to disturb anything unnecessarily and their price is in line with every other quote. If there should be a problem it would be much easier for us to hold LDS accountable since we have an existing relationship with them. President Nagel-Smiley agrees with Ray and added that LDS also knows exactly where our sprinkler system is and will take care not to hit it. Treasurer Katsingris added that it had not even occurred to her that LDS would be the easiest to hold accountable for any problems, and that it makes sense to use them. Ray Rusnak asked how quickly the board is looking to have the work done. President Nagel-Smiley responded that considering this conversation was started due to a fire that we had on library grounds, it should be taken care of asap so LDS can remove the mulch and replace it with stone.</p> <p>Frank Lemos made a motion to use LDS for the tree removal and pruning project. Vice President Jones seconded the motion.</p> <p>Seeing no reason to open up the public comment portion since there was no public present the board went right into the New Business vote.</p>	
New Business - Vote on using LDS to remove designated trees and prune cherry tree	<p>In favor: Brandenburg, Jones, Katsingris, Lemos, Nagel-Smiley, Rusnak, Troop, Wolak Not present: Bengivenga</p>	Motion carried unanimously (with Bob not present for the vote).
Holiday Lights	<p>Ray Rusnak suggested that the Board consider contracting with Christmas Décor to hang holiday lights on the outdoor trees and shrubs as well as to decorate the indoor 12’ Christmas tree. We asked them to quote an option to add on an additional 4 juniper trees, but that added \$2,272 onto the price. This seems unnecessary because what we had last year was very well received. Ray believes that using a professional company makes sense because they will be responsible for the entire project – they will bring the lights, hang them, deal with any issues, and come to remove them at the end of the season. President Nagel-Smiley pointed out that last year the lighting was done in concert with a winter holidays program for the children in the community. She noted that over the past 5 years the Borough has been given almost half a million dollars in either givebacks or projects like the development of Willow Park and the installation of a new sign. She does not think it is accurate to say that paying a company to hang lights is a waste of tax payers money since it is done with the community in mind. She believes that if we were to use DPW they would not be able to be as responsive in the event of a problem. By using a company, we also do not have to worry about going to purchase supplies, maintain, or store them.</p>	

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<p>Holiday Lights, continued</p>	<p>Ray Rusnak noted that sometimes it makes sense to invest money into a project to ensure that it is successful. President Nagel-Smiley stated that DPW is short staffed as it is, so it makes sense to free them up to do things like leaf pick up and snow removal if we are able to hire a company to do the work. Frank Lemos asked if we should ask the Borough for funding to do this. Stephanie Wolak stated that the Borough doesn't pay for lights anywhere else so it would be unreasonable to ask them to fund lights at the Library. Ray mentioned that last year CFO Glenn Cullen was so impressed with the job that he contacted Ray to ask who did the work. Stephanie Wolak stated that although the lights looked nice last year, it is a lot of money to spend. She would like to suggest that the Library do something similar to what town hall and the senior center have which are red, white and blue lights around the buildings. If we are going to spend money on something it should be a project like that so that everything is cohesive. Frank Lemos thinks that the Borough should coordinate with the Library to plan a light display. He doesn't believe it should be up to the Library to pay for this. President Nagel-Smiley explained that by state law, the Borough is required to fund our library at a certain level. We plan a budget and are careful with how we spend so it is not necessary for us to ask the town for anything, we have the funds available to pay for the project. Treasurer Katsingris added that she attended the event last year and it was wonderful to see the community's reaction. It was a spectacular night. Stephanie Wolak stated that she thinks by doing this the library would be showing up the Borough. Treasurer Katsingris noted that this should not be the Library's concern. Ray Rusnak added that the Borough has money to do a similar project, they are just making different choices than the Library. President Nagel-Smiley added that the Borough should have at least \$150,000 in surplus funds from the Library to spend. Treasurer Katsingris asked if the Library was ever approached by the Borough about putting up red, white and blue lights on our building. Linda indicated that the library was not approached. Stephanie Wolak feels like if we are going to spend money on lights they should match the Borough's lights. President Nagel-Smiley noted that the lights on Borough hall's lawn last year had visible extension cords and wires running across the lawn. Ray Rusnak responded that we did not have this issue last year because the professional company lifts sections of the grass to hide the wiring. If we go with the same work we had done last year it will come to \$5,790.50. Treasurer Katsingris made a motion to contract with Christmas Décor for \$5790.50 to hang holiday lighting and decorate indoor Christmas tree. Anne Troop seconded the motion.</p>	<p>Motion to contract with Christmas Décor to hang holiday lighting and decorate indoor Christmas tree. In favor: Brandenburg, Jones, Katsingris, Lemos, Nagel-Smiley, Rusnak, Troop, Not in favor: Wolak Not present: Bengivenga</p>
<p>Close the building to the public on dates TBD to accommodate desk installation</p>	<p>President Nagel-Smiley stated that we are expecting delivery of two new service desks this month and want to avoid patrons walking through an active construction site, so the library should be closed to the public during installation. Curbside pickup and services like fax, notary etc. would be available. We are waiting confirmation of delivery dates so we will vote as "to be determined" to have flexibility since the desks will arrive before the October meeting. Christine Brandenburg made the motion to close the library to the public as necessary, TBD, to accommodate installation. Treasurer Katsingris seconded the motion.</p>	<p>Motion carried unanimously (with Bob not present for the vote).</p>

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Trustees Remarks	<p>Lemos: September is going by fast; he is hoping and praying that everyone stays safe.</p> <p>Jones: everyone stay safe and i'll see you next month.</p> <p>Katsingris: she is looking forward to all the great events the library has coming up in October – it will be a busy month.</p> <p>Troop: she was impressed that last year during the holiday lighting event, entire families were showing up – mom and dad. It was nice to see.</p> <p>Wolak: no comment.</p> <p>Brandenburg: hopes she will be able to attend the Hispanic Heritage event. She was speaking with (Spanish teacher) Ms. Salazar and she is very excited about the event.</p> <p>Rusnak: this has nothing to do with the library, but would like to note that the Shop Rite in Piscataway is planning on moving to Middlesex Mall since it has better parking. This will be good for South Plainfield and tax revenue.</p> <p>Nagel-Smiley: apologizes for keeping everyone so late, it was a long meeting but we did accomplish a lot.</p> <p>Cheryl mentioned what is on the September Diversity Events Calendar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/15-10/15 – National Hispanic Heritage Month: This month honors the culture and contributions of both Hispanic and Latino Americans • National Recovery Month: This month helps to educate all Americans on treatment and mental health services for those with substance use disorder • German American Heritage Month • 9/11 Patriot Day • 9/20 – HeForShe (Women): initiated by the UN to promote gender equality • 9/22 – Autumnal Equinox: As summer moves into fall, the autumnal equinox is a time for various religious observances worldwide • 9/25 – 9/27 – Rosh Hashanah (Jewish): the Jewish New Year, a time for reflection in the faith <p>The SP Senior Center has a nice trip coming up - Broadway show and dinner if anyone is interested.</p>	
Adjournment	Cheryl called for a motion. Melissa motioned to adjourn. Gary seconded the motion.	Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Mahon, Secretary to the Board