

EAST ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
MAIN LIBRARY

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the East Orange Public Library Board of Trustees held at the Main Library, 21 South Arlington Avenue, East Orange, New Jersey on April 10, 2025 in the East Orange Room.

PRESENT: Hon. Jimmy Small
Gloria Holt
Hon. Jacquelyn Davis
Hon. Mumtaz Bari-Brown
Laudaine Simeon
Hon. Councilman Sammed Monk

ABSENT: Jada Braime-Butler
Lynella George
Duwan Bogert

STAFF: JP Porcaro
Pamela V. Holmes
Jenny Tong
Nancy Barrantes-Lei

The President, Hon. Jimmy Small, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Sunshine Law

The President read the Statement re: Public Law 1975, Chapter 231, known as the Sunshine Law at the Opening of the meeting.

2. Minutes: March 13, 2025

Correction: Hon. Mumtaz Bari-Brown was excused at the March meeting (not absent).

Motioned by Gloria Holt to accept the amended Minutes for March 13, 2025 as presented. Seconded by Jacquelyn Davis. Approved by the Board.

3. Financial Report

Nancy Barrantes-Lei gave the report.

Total Expenses Paid thru March 2025	\$711,885
Percentage Spent thru March 2025	21.01%
Total Resources Received thru March 2025	\$773,115
Percentage Received thru March 2025	21.04%

(Monies Received less Expenses Paid)

\$ 1,230

- **Approved Payments: March 2025**

Motioned by Jacquelyn Davis to approve the Approved Payments for March 2025. Seconded by Laudaine Simeon. Approved by the Board.

- **Proposed Payments: April 2025**

Motioned by Laudaine Simeon to approve the Proposed Payments for April 2025. Seconded by Jacquelyn Davis. Approved by the Board.

4. Public Participation

Bro. Lamar shared additional information on the history of East Orange.

5. Director's Report

The Director gave the report. Full report attached to Minutes.

In the Director's report, he indicated that the City's Finance Department and Business Administrator had a call with the General Contractor who is doing the Library's renovations. The Director was told that the Business Administrator and Contractor came to a verbal agreement that another contractor would complete the last phase of the project, which is the replacement of the entry vestibule and the flooring in the room connected to the East Orange Room. Because the Library itself is not a party to the contract (which is between the City and General Contractor), nor is the Library a party to the grant (which is between the City and the State Library), the Director was not on that call. You cannot change a legal document over the phone. The Director made sure to loop the City's Law Department into this. The Director has no updates beyond that. The Board agreed that the Library is the beneficiary of the grant and the Director should be part of the discussions and conversations. This should not be verbal but put in writing. The renovations are being done to serve the Library and its patrons. It was also recommended that for the Library's protection, the Director should put something in writing. Councilman Monk sits on the Department of Public Works Committee. He will look into this and update the Director on the renovations and HVAC replacement.

6. Trustees Concerns/Comments

- **Hon. Jacquelyn Davis**

Hon. Jacquelyn Davis reminded the Board that April 30 is the deadline for all appointed officials to file their financial disclosure statements with the State of New Jersey. If not received on time, the penalty is \$100.00.

It's time for the Board to do a Strategic Plan. Part of budgeting is Strategic Planning. A strategic plan is comparable to a road map that clearly defines where you are, where you want to go and how to get there. The Library prepared a Strategic Plan 12-15 years ago. The community has grown since then and is more diversified. The Library needs to find out the community needs/interests. The Branches need to be reopened. Councilman Monk asked if there have been conversations with partners wanting to help revitalize Ampere and Elmwood. The response was not as of yet. A meeting will be scheduled to start the planning process.

- **Gloria Holt**

A while ago, the Director and Ms. Tong worked with the City in support of the application for the Capital Funding Grant. The grant will provide broadband internet access to students and households. She wanted to know the status. Ms. Tong responded nothing as of yet.

- **Hon. Jimmy Small**

The Library offers an array of services. Hon. Jimmy indicated that the Library needs to promote its programs via press releases and social media.

Hon. Jimmy Small talked about book banning. He commented that patrons should be able to read whatever they choose. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.

7. Committee Reports

- Hon. Jimmy Small gave the Technology Report.

Verizon finally adjusted the February monthly telecommunication bill in compliance with the rate signed in the contract. The credit of overcharge will be worked on according to Verizon staff.

The fireball upgrade went very well on March 18. Internet went down about half an hour. There was no impact on the tax assistance services. Sixty percent of the total cost of the upgrade is eligible for e-rate funding.

The Library applied for the 2025-2026 e-rate funding for upgrading a network switch and three UPS. Ms. Tong and Ms. Blackburn reviewed the Form 470 bids and made a final selection of a vendor.

Patrons printed close to 10,750 pages using the Library's SAM print system. Staff printed over 6,300 pages for patrons who sent print jobs to print@eopl.org at the Circulation Desk. Patrons printed approximately 700 pages using Wi-Fi printing service launched early this month. The new print service allows different payment options including cash, card, Apple and Google Pay.

Approximately 970 patrons used computers at the Library. In addition, many patrons enjoyed the free Wi-Fi and quiet study at the Library. The booking of the Study Rooms went up significantly.

Additional programs were offered to the patrons. IT staff provided the required technology setups.

No other Committees reporting at this time

8. Old Business

There was no Old Business to discuss.

9. New Business

There was no New Business to discuss.

Hon. Mumtaz Bari-Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Laudaine Simeon. The public portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

10. Executive Session

The Board did not go into Executive Session.

EOPL Director's Report for April 2025's Meeting:

I attended the March 24th City Council meeting in person. There was only one meeting since the last EOPL Board meeting. The service contract for the upcoming library HVAC replacement was approved.

On March 18th I met with the Mayor's leadership team. While the library is not a city department, past practice was for the EOPL director to be included with / treated as a department head. At the Mayor's upcoming department heads meetings, there will be presentations of the directors' plans for the future of their department, and they want me to be the first to present to set a good precedent for other department head presentations. The Mayor's team was very happy with my presentation, although I went too long and need to make some cuts for my actual presentation, which has not been scheduled yet. I will give this presentation to the library board at our next meeting, but in the interest of time, I will skip a bit of the library basics that the board is aware of but the other department heads might not be. I am happy that I get to set a standard for the city in this regard.

On March 19th, the HR department held a department head training at the library. The training's topic revolved around legal issues with employee discipline and Mr Charles Simmons of the city's legal department gave a lot of good legal insight. I believe the HR department was pleased with the library's support for their training.

I attended a Zoom meeting about the CWA and ESPA contract negotiations on March 24th. This meeting was very short, and there are no current issues with the library's contributions to the negotiations.

On March 26th I was Mayor Green's guest on his weekly Facebook live video chat. We had a really wonderful discussion about the library's services, resources, and programs. You can watch the video on the East Orange City Hall Facebook page (again, the March 26 post). It was not only informative, but very fun - Mayor Green even said "this was fun" towards the end of the video. Councilman Monk even came to support me, although he wasn't ever on camera. I offered to Mayor Green and CIO Connie Jackson to come back on a quarterly basis, or whenever they are in need of a guest; I have no shortage of library "things" to talk about.

On April 1, the city's finance department and Business Administrator Solomon Steplight had a call with the General Contractor doing the library's renovation, and I was not on that call. I am told that Steplight and the Contractor came to a verbal agreement that another contractor would complete the last phase of the project, which is the replacement of the entry vestibule and the new room connected to the East Orange room. Because the library itself is not a party to the contract (which is between the City and the GC), nor is the library a party to the grant (which is between the City and the State Library), I looped the city's legal department into the conversation. I have no updates beyond that. I would like to see this project completed, but it is difficult for me to

make any movement when EOPL as an organization is not a party to either of the aforementioned contracts, and especially difficult when I am not included on these calls.

We have received a quote for updating our access card system for locked doors in the building. Because many new doors were installed during the construction, this has needed to take place. I am waiting for an updated quote that includes the cost of wiring the new doors, which was left out of the quote I received on April 7th. Our current system's hardware will still be used, so it is an upgrade rather than a replacement, but there will be software changes since the software we currently use is very old and expensive to license. The current system is 20+ years old.

You may have heard that President Trump has made extensive cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. At the moment, this doesn't impact any of our services directly, but there may be some indirect ramifications in the future. Fortunately, the State of NJ is generally supportive of library funding and most funds are raised through state & municipal tax.

Submitted for the April 10, 2025 meeting.

JP Porcaro, Director