

Palisades Park Public Library Board of Trustees  
 Minutes of Regular Meeting on September 5, 2024  
 At the Library Meeting Room

Flag Salute: 7:07 PM

Attendance:

Name	Present		Absent
Joseph Ferguson (President)	X	in-person	
Anne Ahne (Treasurer)	X	in-person	
Alice Albanese			X
Fran Beck	X	virtual	
Richard Giacobone	X	virtual	
Irene Grala	X	in-person	
Helen Jeon	X	in-person	
Superintendent Joseph Cirillo			x
Councilwoman Youbong Won-Yoon (Christine)	x	in-person	

Quorum was established

This meeting is a regular meeting.

Joe Ferguson read the meeting notice by the Open Public Meeting Act

The meeting was called to order by Joseph Ferguson by 7:17 PM

Public: about 20 in attendance

Entered Closed session #1 to Interview three candidates for the position of Part-time Young Adult Librarian

Open session was resumed at 7:40 PM

**Resolution 2024-9-1: Authorization to hire Yuliya Abova to work no more than 24 hours per week at the wage of \$31 per hour**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Seconded by</b>	Joseph Ferguson
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

### **Discussion on Arcari + Iovino' proposal**

Anthony Iovino virtually presented the proposal to develop engineering specifications for Roof replacement and Stucco replacement at fees of \$12,400 and \$39,500, respectively. He also recommended the following steps:

1. Patching the leaking area of the roof immediately
2. Replace the roof and stucco sometime in March/April 2025 (because winter is not a good time for construction)

The following points were raised:

- Borough is responsible for the construction because it owns the Library building and has experts.
- Borough has higher priority projects, resulting in not taking action with the same priority as the Board.

Mayor and Joe will have a follow-up discussion on this matter.

### **Public Participation**

(A) Elynn Kim at 320 E. Central Blvd. Palisades Park, NJ; Casey Kim at 40 Bennett Rd., Englewood, NJ

A Library employee, Elynn Kim, raised concerns in writing about her treatment despite her long-standing dedication over 15 years. She also proposed some improvements to the library's operation. She submitted the complaints in writing and presented them in person (in Korean) to the Board. She requested her matters be discussed openly rather than in a closed session. Casey Kim interpreted Elynn Kim's statements in English.

The complaints have two parts: (1) complaints as an employee and (2) proposals for improvement.

- (1) Below are multiple points about her complaints as an employee:

- **Achievements:** She emphasized her contributions, including setting up Korean programs and raising \$25,000 from the Republic of Korea's Consulate in New York between 2017-2023.
- **Promotion Process:** Elynn raised concerns about the lack of transparency in the current promotion process, noting that despite her repeated requests for promotion, she has been passed over for management roles in favor of employees hired after her.
- **Salary Discrepancy:** Elynn Kim reported her salary concerns to the Union, which initially informed her that her salary was accurate. However, two weeks later, the Board President and Library Director told her she received more than her correct pay. This discrepancy made Elynn claim that the Board's action violated Union rules.
- **Office move:** She claims her office was moved without being notified.
- **Potential Legal Action:** Elynn mentioned she would pursue legal action to resolve these issues.

Elynn's concerns seem to span both procedural fairness and salary discrepancies.

(2) For improvement of the library operation, she proposed the following:

- Establish a Korean department and promote a manager with an appropriate salary and authority
- Hire a Korean-speaking full-time employee at the Circulation Desk

The Board pointed out that supporting her proposal requires funds.

**<follow-up action>** The Board asked the Director and Elynn Kim to discuss her proposal and develop the appropriate plan.

(B) Andy Neehn at 185 Prospect Ave. #17C, Hackensack, NJ

Andy claims to be a civic advocate. According to him, the NJ laws of Civic Rights allow Elynn Kim to pursue legal actions freely when the Union denies taking action for her requests.

(C) Ki Chul Park at 272 Glen Ave., Palisades Park, N

Park reported that his 8th-grade daughter and her friends frequently visited the library after school. Recently, seven of them, including his daughter, were forced to leave the library without any specific reason. In contrast, another non-Korean American group making noise was allowed to stay. Since then, his daughter and her friends have been afraid to return to the library. He claimed that it was racial discrimination.

**<follow-up action>** The Board asked Mr. Park to meet with the Director to report, and the Director will investigate this incident and report to the Board at the next meeting.

(D) Dongrhi Kim at Bradley Dr., Edison, NJ

Mr. Kim asked about the current compensation policy for Elynn Kim, who served 15 years and developed & set up Korean programs.

The Board responded that she gets a salary based on the contract of the Union she belongs to and a stipend.

**The public session ended, and the Board meeting resumed.**

**Elynn Kim’s formal complaint as an employee**

**<follow-up actions>**

- (1) Christine to consult the Library lawyer for further actions/steps and report to the Board
- (2) The director Stephanie to collect any relevant files about Elynn Kim

**Resolution 2024-9-2: Approval of the July 2024’s special meeting minutes**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**President’s Report**

Mayor Kim requested that the Library parking space be open to the public on September 14, 2024. On that date, the Borough is organizing a celebration event for its 125th anniversary.

**Treasurer’s Report**

New Millennium Bank Account: The Board opened a bank account with 4.04% and deposited \$1,093,453.71, the excess fund accumulated over many years. With August’s interest of \$2,053.61, the current balance as of August 30, 2024, is \$1,095,507.32. This fund is for the Library building improvement projects.

PNC Bank Account: The beginning balance of July 2024 was \$62,726.23. With a deposit of \$806.99 and interest of \$100.51 (1.09%), the current balance is \$63,630.73 as of July 31, 2024.

The total cash is \$711.99 as of June 29, 2024.

**Resolution 2024-9-3: Approval of the Capital Plan submitted by acari+iovino in June, 2024**

The State Library requires an approved capital plan in the file to use the Library’s excess funds for building improvement. However, the plan can be revised as the Board wishes.

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-4: Approval of the July 2024 Bill List**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Seconded by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-5: Approval of the August 2024 Bill List**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-6: Approval of the September 2024 Bill List**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Director’s Report**

The Library hosted 29 programs with 422 attendees. Sixty children signed up for the Summer reading program on Beanstack.

**Resolution 2024-9-7: Authorization of spending up to \$1,000 for the new VoIP phone**

This VoIP phone will consolidate the current five lines into one line with free long-distance calls. It is expected to reduce phone expenses (~\$6,000). However, the Board needs more information on monthly costs.

**<follow-up action>** The director will send more information to the Board.

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Fran, Richard, Irene, Christine
<b>No</b>	Anne, Helen

**Resolution 2024-9-8: Authorization of spending up to \$2,000 for purchasing lockers in the staff area**

Quote from Global Industrial is for \$1,354. However, there may be additional costs to install.

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Fran, Richard, Irene
<b>No</b>	Anne, Helen, Christine

**Resolution 2024-9-9: Authorization of subscription of FacilitySight a people counter**

This service recognizes patrons and generates various reports of attendance required by the State. The initial set-up cost is \$2,770, covering hardware, ethernet installation, and the first year’s yearly subscription. The annual fee is \$480.

**<follow-up action>** The director will send more information to the Board.

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Fran, Richard, Irene, Christine
<b>No</b>	Anne, Helen

**Resolution 2024-9-10: Authorization of allowing authors to sell books**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Seconded by</b>	Helen Jeon
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-11: Authorization of allowing two Seasonal Pages, Bryan and Ani, to work up to 6 hours a week (each) at \$16 per hour**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Helen Jeon
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Entered Closed session # 2 for contract renewal of the two Librarians**

**Resolution 2024-9-12: Approval of Renewal of Rachel Stephenson’s employment per the revised contract**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Richard Giacobone
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-13: The director to share annual end-of-year reviews/evaluations of all employees with the Board from 2024**

**The motion passed with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Seconded by</b>	Helen Jeon
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Anne, Fran, Richard, Irene, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	

**Resolution 2024-9-14: Table to renew Kimberlee Benjamin’s employment per the revised contract**

**The motion was rejected with the following roll calls**

<b>Motion made by</b>	Christine Won-Yoon
<b>Seconded by</b>	Anne Ahne
<b>Yes</b>	Anne, Helen, Christine
<b>No</b>	Joe, Fran, Richard, Irene

**Resolution 2024-9-15: Renewal Kimberlee Benjamin’s employment per the revised contract**

**The motion carried with the following roll calls**



<b>Motion made by</b>	Joe Ferguson
<b>Seconded by</b>	Irene Grala
<b>Yes</b>	Joe, Fran, Richard, Irene
<b>No</b>	Anne, Helen, Christine

**Joe motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Christine seconded. They were all in favor.**

**Meeting adjourned.**

### **Closed session #1**

The Board interviewed three candidates for a part-time Young Adult librarian position for 13-18-year-old children: Patricia Miraglilo (virtually), Yuliya Aabova (in person), and John Campbell (in person). While John is the most experienced candidate for Young Adults, he has a full-time position at the Fort Lee Public Library, so the board was concerned about his availability. Patricia is the least experienced candidate. Yuliya's experience focuses on young children but is enthusiastic about working with teens.

### **Closed session #2**

The Board's discussion about the revised contracts for Rachel and Kimberlee highlights the following concerns:

- 1) Equal Salary Increases Despite Differences in Tenure  
Rachel has been with the Palisades Park Library since 2016, while Kimberlee joined in 2022. Both received the same salary increase in their revised contracts, which raised concerns from some Board members about fairness, considering their different years of service.
- 2) Kimberlee is underpaid according to the NJLA (New Jersey Library Association) standards. A beginning librarian in 2024 should be earning a minimum of \$62,395, and Kimberlee currently earns \$4,000 less than that. The goal was to bring her closer to that minimum.
- 3) Kimberlee's unverified involvement in Ki Chul Park's Complaint  
A board member claimed that Kimberlee was involved in Ki Chul Park's public complaint, but this has not been verified yet. The board member expressed that the decision on her salary increase should be delayed until then.