



Richmond Public Library
Library Board of Trustees
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Library Board Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2025

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Emily Altman, Brent Graves, Cynthia Hinds, Janet Woody, William Yates, Gail Zwirner

ABSENT: Garrett Sawyer, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer, Gianna Pack

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Monica Malouf, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Phil Shephard, Heather Montgomery

Meeting of the Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) was called to order by Chair Christine Peterson at 11:42 a.m. at the Broad Rock Branch Library located at 4820 Old Warwick Road, Richmond, Virginia 23224. The meeting was posted, and the public could attend in person or by viewing the Richmond Public Library YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/2VfKL9U>, where it was live streamed. A quorum was established.

Agenda	<p>Approve the February 26, 2025, Agenda as Submitted.</p> <p><i>Motion: Sheron Carter-Gunter, Second by Gail Zwirner</i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>8</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p>
Consent Agenda	<p>Approve the January 22, 2025, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Amended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Add Heather Montgomery as a staff member in attendance to the final meeting minutes.2. Correct the Circulation Report Totals on Page 10 of the Board Packet:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. For October 2024 (FY25), change the figure from 4,050 to 94,050.b. For November 2024 (FY25), change 9,204 to 89,204.<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. These corrections will be reflected in March Board Packet. <p><i>Motion: William Yates, Second by Emily Altman</i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>8</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p>
Public Comment Period	<p>None present.</p>

Reports	
Friends of the Library (FOL) <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	Mr. Firestine reported in Ms. DeBoer's absence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 1: Spring Book Drive (9am-2pm) • March 5: Full Board Meeting • May 2, 3, & 4: Spring Book Sale • New FRPL Board Member, Terenia Guill, is working with Chris Cain on the Friends Board to organize the volunteer list and communicate with people who contact the Friends via email and website about volunteering
Library Foundation <u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	No Formal Report.
Administration <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Director's Report: Mr. Firestine provided an update on library activities since the January meeting: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Snow Days and Closures: The library was affected by three snowstorms, resulting in city-wide closures. 2. Budget Preparations: The library is currently preparing its budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in response to a request from the city, with all departments required to submit their information ahead of the March 27 budget announcement. 3. New Signage: Two new signs featuring the library's updated logo have been installed at the Main Library, replacing the original signs that had been in place for 40 years. Additionally, new signage will soon be installed at the Ginter Park Branch Library. 4. Ginter Park Stormwater Project: Progress on the stormwater project has been delayed due to adverse weather conditions and city-wide closures.
Branch Update <u>Heather Montgomery</u>	Library/Community Services Manager Heather Montgomery provided an overview of the Broad Rock Branch Library. <u>Broad Rock Branch Library at a Glance:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff: 8 employees (5 full-time, 3 part-time), with 5 staff members fluent in Spanish. • Patron Demographics: 55% Black, 25% Latino, and 30% White, with some overlap between groups. • Educational Attainment: 25% of patrons do not have a high school diploma. • Income Levels: Over 60% of the community earns below the median income of \$54,795 in Richmond, Virginia

Reports (Continued)	
Branch Update (Continued) <u>Heather Montgomery</u>	<u>Unique Aspects of Broad Rock Branch Library:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently ranks among the highest in monthly door counts across the entire RPL system. Second in the system for computer usage, after the Main Library. Leads the system in notarizations, completing over 1,000 in FY25 alone. This service provides the community with a savings of approximately \$10,000. Homework Help program supports an average of 84 children each month (Monday to Thursday, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. year-round), assisting with assigned homework and reading practice. Hosts an annual Black History Month Social in partnership with the community. Organizes El Día de los Niños, a community-wide event celebrating childhood and reading, held every April. The 4th annual event will take place on April 26.
Advocacy Task Force <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>	<p>Ms. Carter-Gunter provided the following advocacy updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In February, emails were sent to Councilmembers, and branch tours were arranged. Monthly communications are sent to Councilmembers individually, with the respective Trustee for each Councilmember copied. The goal is to strengthen the group's reputation as a dedicated resource for supporting city residents. Chair Peterson attended the February 24 Council meeting at City Hall to thank Councilmembers and mention the role that libraries played throughout the water crisis. During the meeting, Councilmembers discussed collaborating with Trustees to visit libraries in their districts. Ms. Carter-Gunter highlighted RPL's proactive efforts to assist individuals in accessing library services. Chair Peterson will send the next communication email to all Trustees, asking them to tailor it to their respective Councilmembers.
Policy Taskforce <u>Emily Altman</u>	<p>Ms. Altman reported the review of library policies is actively underway. She and Mr. Firestine have dedicated significant time to reviewing the policies, discussing notes, and seeking feedback from staff or subject matter experts where necessary. Mr. Firestine is coordinating this process.</p> <p>Once the revisions are complete, the Policy Taskforce will present the updated policies to the LBOT for discussion and approval.</p>
Chair Report <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	<p>Chair Peterson announced the month of February was National Library Lovers' Month, a time to celebrate the individuals who cherish libraries and recognize all the invaluable work they do.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
Finance <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Mr. Firestine reported this year's budget preparation process will be different from previous years. The budget is set to be announced on March 27, and there are still uncertainties regarding potential departmental cuts. Additionally, there will be no funding for new Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). Instead, the city will focus solely on emergency maintenance and existing projects that are already in progress.</p> <p>Mr. Yates added if cuts are necessary, the LBOT should consider them individually by branch and program, rather than across the board, as some programs are more critical than others. If cuts are made, the LBOT can then approach their respective Councilmembers to advocate for adjustments. He also noted RPL's budget is on track financially.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine reported Mayor Danny Avula invited City Councilmembers to a Retreat Advance on February 28-29, where they will discuss goals and outcomes with a third-party facilitator. The objectives of the retreat are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust and strengthen relationships between the City Council, Mayor's Office, and City Administration. • Clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure alignment in decision-making and governance. • Establish a vision for effective communication and define best practices for collaboration. • Identify shared priorities to guide legislative and policy efforts.
Facilities <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Ms. Woody reported the Facilities Committee is in the process of updating the 2009 Master Plan, and numbers have now been included in the CIP.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine added all staff input has been collected. The next step is to gather feedback from the public. During National Library Week this year, children will be invited to draw their "<i>dream library</i>" as part of the feedback process. Additionally, paper surveys will be made available in the branches.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine will collaborate with the Committee to set a date for submitting a draft of the plan to Chair Peterson for review.</p>
Governance <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u>	<p>No Formal Report.</p>
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
<p>No Unfinished Business was discussed.</p>	

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Carter-Gunter inquired whether there was a space at the Main Library where people could record a podcast. Mr. Firestine responded that, as part of the Mellon Grant, RPL has been involved in many oral history projects. The library recently purchased a Zen Booth, a modular piece of equipment that will be placed in the Richmond Room. This booth features acoustic treatment and is designed to accommodate up to four people, providing an ideal space for recording oral history projects, including podcasts.

Mr. Firestine provided an update to members regarding the Comcast education channel, which relocated from the Comcast building on the Boulevard to the Main Library approximately six years ago. The channel was intended to offer a platform for individuals to produce and broadcast their own shows on public television. However, the equipment is now broken and remains inactive. Despite Mr. Firestine's repeated requests to Comcast, submitted through the city, for new cameras, digital equipment, and an overall upgrade to the studio's infrastructure, the necessary funding has yet to be provided.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members that were present.

The next meeting of the LBOT will be held on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at the East End Branch Library, located at 1200 N 25th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23223

Approved: _____



Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: *Gianna Pack, CAP*
Senior Executive Assistant