



Richmond Public Library
Library Board of Trustees
101 E. Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Library Board Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2025

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Emily Altman, Cynthia Hinds, Garrett Sawyer, Janet Woody

VIRTUAL: William Yates

ABSENT: Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Brent Graves, Gail Zwirner, Gianna Pack

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer, Phil Shephard

The Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) meeting was called to order by Chair Christine Peterson at 11:45 a.m. at the North Avenue Branch Library located at 2901 North Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23222. 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.

Chair Peterson announced that William Yates would like to attend today's Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting via electronic communication means, which complies with the RPL Governance Policy 4.12. This policy is to comply with the requirements of section 2.2-3708.2(C)(1) of the Code of Virginia to allow for and govern participation by one or more Library Board of Trustees in meetings by electronic communication means.

Mr. Yates has met the requirement of notifying in advance that he is unable to attend in person due to a personal matter, causing him to be on travel out of the Richmond area, which prevents his physical attendance at the meeting. Mr. Yates will attend from his out-of-area location.

Chair Peterson called for a motion to approve Mr. Yates' request to attend the meeting by electronic communication means from the LBOT Members present.

Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by Janet Woody, and moved by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

Agenda	Approve the April 23, 2025, Agenda as Submitted. <i>Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by Emily Altman</i> <i>AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
Consent Agenda	Approve the March 26, 2025, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted: <i>Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by Cynthia Hinds</i> <i>AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>

Reports	
Public Comment Period	None present.
Friends of the Library (FOL) <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	<p>Ms. DeBoer provided an update on the Friends of the Library:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Friends of the Library Board is preparing for the upcoming Spring Book Sale, which will take place on May 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. Note: Spring Book Sale will be in May moving forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ There will be purchased merchandise for sale, such as bookbags and stickers. • In the process of recruiting new board members. • The Friends are exploring the possibility of hosting a local author for a presentation at their Annual Meeting in the Fall. The date will be confirmed once an author is selected. • The next Friends of the Library Board Meeting is scheduled for May 7, 2025.
Library Foundation <u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Foundation Update:</p> <p>The focus is on building fundraising capacity and strengthening relationships. The fundraising efforts center on updating the children's areas across the library system, working with community input, youth librarians, and Library/Community Services Managers.</p> <p>Proposals are in process for the following opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freeman Family Foundation 2. Memorial Foundation for Children 3. Schaberg Foundation 4. Universal Leaf Foundation <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign/CVC submitted • Platinum Seal of Transparency on Candid
Branch Report <u>Craig Gill-Walker</u>	<p>Library/Community Services Manager Craig Gill-Walker shared recent highlights from the North Avenue Branch. The library remains committed to early childhood literacy, with a strong focus on engaging babies and preschool-aged children through programs like "Baby Arts Play" and a successful partnership with PBS Kids for a Pre-K Literacy Program. Youth Services Librarian Richard Wissmiller has been instrumental in leading these efforts.</p> <p>In response to the conclusion of the G.E.D. program, the branch has introduced new senior-focused offerings such as <i>Armchair Fitness</i> and <i>Movie Date</i> sessions held twice weekly. Outreach to senior living facilities is ongoing to provide meaningful and accessible programming.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
Branch Report (Continued) <u>Craig Gill-Walker</u>	<p>Workforce development is also a priority. The Branch has partnered with Abacus to host monthly job fairs, along with resume help and mock interviews for patrons. Additionally, a collaboration with Smokey Mug is in progress to install a Little Free Library at their new location.</p> <p>Community outreach continues to grow, with storytimes held at locations such as VCU, Ann Hardy, and Saint Thomas. The Branch is also expanding its book club offerings, including a new initiative with the Heritage Adult Center. These efforts have contributed to a noticeable increase in book circulation across Adult and Young Adult services.</p>
Administration <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Director's Report: Besides the items submitted in this month's report, several key updates were provided regarding the North Avenue Branch Library. Mr. Firestine contributed additional context to Mr. Gill-Walker's report, emphasizing the notable improvement in circulation at the North Avenue Branch—a point not previously highlighted.</p> <p>Following the severe waterline break in December 2022, which resulted in extensive flooding and damage to a large portion of the collection, the Branch underwent significant renovations. Damaged materials were replaced, and the layout of the building was redesigned to better support patron engagement and browsing. The new design places the circulating collection around the perimeter of the building, allowing easier access and improved visibility for library users.</p> <p>Nearly two years since the incident, the impact of these changes has been closely monitored. The data shows a marked increase in circulation, with current figures already surpassing those of the entire year of 2022. This demonstrates that the adjustments have been effective. Only materials with active circulation remain on the floor; this focused approach has proven beneficial. The ongoing use of experimental layout and collection strategies at this branch is providing valuable insight and may serve as a model for other locations.</p>
Advocacy Task Force <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>	<p>Chair Peterson began the report by introducing two key topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMLS and NEH Cuts: Mr. Firestine and Chair Peterson are talking on April 23, 2025, along with many other librarians and library leadership, with Senator Tim Kane, aimed exclusively at IMLS and NEH. They feel it is important to support the entire infrastructure of library activities. • RPL Budget: No major cuts currently. Proposes two advocacy suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Email to Council – being thankful for the budget. We have big plans, and RPL is going to serve this community like you have never seen before. ○ In May, the Trustee, Youth Services Librarian, and the Library/Community Services Manager are to show up at their respective Councilmembers' monthly public meeting, with one of those attending to stand up and talk at the meeting to the community about what RPL is going to do for them in the summer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have a handout to have at the meeting. ○ Mr. Firestine has been tasked to work out the details.

Reports (Continued)	
Policy Taskforce <u>Emily Altman</u>	Ms. Altman is currently reviewing the policies and then working with Mr. Firestine on the next steps.
Chair Report <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	Chair Peterson expressed sincere gratitude on behalf of the Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) on how much they appreciate the RPL staff for their hard work and dedication during National Library Week.
Finance <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Mr. Yates shared that the budget has come through as Chair Peterson indicated and expressed his satisfaction with the outcome. He also noted that the budget presented in the packet is progressing well, with expenditures currently at 76%—a typical rate for this point in the fiscal year.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine added that the Council has held two work sessions so far and, to date, has not made any reductions to the library's budget. He further highlighted that \$1 million has been allocated in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for library facility updates, allowing for space refreshes and general improvements in buildings that have not been renovated in 10-15 years, with even the possibility of procuring a bookmobile.</p>
Facilities <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine noted that the report is making good progress and that public meetings are being scheduled for May and June.
Governance <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u>	<p>Mr. Sawyer reported that he has been collaborating with Chair Peterson on developing a forward-looking governance strategy for the Library Board of Trustees (LBOT). This strategy focuses on two key priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring that all nine districts of the City of Richmond are represented on the Board. 2. Promoting a diversified structure of the Board of Trustees. <p>Looking ahead, the plan is to initiate outreach efforts now, recognizing that no immediate changes will occur in the current year. However, as the Board anticipates member transitions in 2026 and 2027, early engagement will help prepare for a more inclusive and representative Board in the future.</p>
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
No Unfinished Business was discussed.	

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Peterson initiated the discussion of new business, proposing the idea of convening a joint three-board meeting involving the Library Board of Trustees (LBOT), the Friends of the Library, and the Foundation. She recommended inviting Reagan Flacker from the Library of Virginia to lead a session focused on advocacy.

Following the discussion, there was motioned that the Trustees organize a three-board meeting in the summer of 2025, comprising the Richmond Public Library Trustees, the Friends of the Library, and the Foundation, to focus on advocacy efforts, and that members Chair Chris Peterson, Cynthia Hinds, and Janet Woody will meet after the May 28, LBOT Meeting to discuss plans for the June 5 three-board.

Motion: Emily Altman, Second by Cynthia Hinds

AYES: 6 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 Approved Unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at the Main Library, 101 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Approved: _____

Christine Peterson, Chair

*Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP
Senior Executive Assistant*