



**Richmond Public Library**  
**Library Board of Trustees**  
101 E. Franklin Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 646-4256 / fax: (804) 646-7685



**Library Board Meeting Minutes**  
**June 25, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Emily Altman, Cynthia Hinds, Garrett Sawyer, Janet Woody, William Yates

**ABSENT:** Brent Graves, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer

**STAFF:** Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Phil Shephard, Lisa Crisman, Heather Montgomery

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 West End Branch Library located at 5420 Patterson Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23226. 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.

<b>Agenda</b>	<p>Approve the June 25, 2025, Agenda as amended to add discussion of the 3-Board Gathering Meeting in Unfinished Business.</p> <p><i><b>Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by William Yates</b></i></p> <p><i><b>AYES: <u>7</u>      NOES: <u>0</u>      ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</b></i></p>
<b>Consent Agenda</b>	<p>Approve the May 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted:</p> <p><i><b>Motion: Janet Woody, Second by William Yates</b></i></p> <p><i><b>AYES: <u>7</u>      NOES: <u>0</u>      ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</b></i></p>
<b>Public Comment Period</b>	<p>None present.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Friends of the Library (FOL)</b>  <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	<p>Mr. Dishon presented the Friends of the Library Report in Ms. DeBoer's absence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Friends book sales went very well this year. They expect to have additional funds to give to RPL once the year-end finances are finalized.</li> <li>• Library/Community Services Manager Ben Himmelfarb has connected the Friends again with a director at The Triangle Players. The Friends are looking forward to providing books to the Players for use in a play.</li> </ul> <p>Ms. DeBoer received a letter on behalf of the Friends in the mail a couple of weeks ago, along with a donation. Mr. Dishon read the letter:</p> <p><i>"To the Librarian and staff of the Richmond Public Library. Thank you for all you do for those of us who read books, those in need of a place to rest, and our entire community. Most of all, I thank you for preserving freedom and information, including continuing to provide books by authors of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community. You are loved!"</i></p>
<b>Library Foundation</b>  <u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Ms. Revere provided an update on the Foundation's recent activities and developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Foundation is excited to unveil a new logo, which will be officially introduced and used starting July 1.</li> <li>• The Foundation received a generous grant of \$60,000 from the Schaberg Foundation. These funds will support intern programs and enhancements to children's areas throughout the library system.</li> <li>• Additionally, the Richmond Public Library secured an \$8,000 grant via the Community Foundation Donor Advised Funds, designated for updates and improvements in children's spaces across the system.</li> <li>• The Foundation honored Lyn Kyle Manson for her remarkable 28 years of service on the Board. Her dedication and passion have been invaluable, and she will be greatly missed.</li> </ul>
<b>Administration</b>  <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Mr. Firestine proudly reported that the library system has surpassed one million items in circulation, with one month remaining in the fiscal year. He also noted that all summer interns are now on board and actively supporting both the Summer Reading Program and RippleCon.</p> <p>He commended staff for their resilience and dedication in continuing to serve the public despite recent heat-related challenges. Additionally, the library has been recognized in local media for its role as a community cooling center.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine shared that Councilmember Reva Trammell generously contributed \$2,400 from her council account to the Broad Rock Branch Library to support programs and initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year.</p> <p>Lastly, he acknowledged the upcoming retirements of Barbara Crump and Tammie Woodson, effective June 27. Both employees have been instrumental in leading the <i>RVA Reads</i> initiative and leave behind a legacy of service and commitment to early literacy.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Branch Manager Update</b>  <u>Lisa Crisman</u>	<p>Library/Community Services Manager Lisa Crisman provided a concise update on the West End Branch Library, highlighting its history, services, and current community engagement. Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The branch, which opened in 1978, celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2018. It was the final branch in the system to undergo renovation, reopening in August 2017.</li> <li>• The library maintains a strong sense of continuity and serves a multigenerational community of readers. In FY2025, circulation surpassed 100,000 items.</li> <li>• Programming remains robust, particularly in early literacy with well-attended storytimes.</li> <li>• The branch is a hub for educational support, with numerous tutors and active English Language Acquisition (ELA) programming.</li> <li>• Facility usage remains high, with the meeting and study rooms serving approximately 1,200 individuals in FY2025.</li> <li>• Community outreach is ongoing, including regular participation at the St. Stephens Farmers Market (May–October).</li> <li>• Staff continue to attend First District Town Hall meetings to stay engaged with the local community, including the one scheduled for tonight at 6:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy Task Force</b>  <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>	<p>Chair Peterson provided an update on the LBOT advocacy efforts for the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Town Hall Presentations in May 2025 – A Trustee, Library staff, and Youth Services Staff attended.</li> <li>• Three Town Hall Presentations in May to June 2025 – Garrett Sawyer with District 3, Sharon Cater-Gunter with District 7, and Cynthia Hinds and Brent Graves with District 8.</li> <li>• One Town Hall Presentation on June 25, 2025 – Lisa Crisman, Emily Altman, and Chair Peterson to go to Mary Munford for the last meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Members reflected on the community feedback received so far, noting it was overwhelmingly positive. There was strong consensus to continue advancing the advocacy work and attending future Town Hall meetings moving forward.</p>
<b>Policy Taskforce</b>  <u>Emily Altman</u>	<p>Ms. Altman reported that Mr. Firestine had submitted revised versions of the policies previously identified for updates. She provided both electronic copies in advance and printed copies at the meeting for members' review.</p> <p>Following the discussion, the members reached a consensus to postpone the vote on adopting the revised and reviewed policies. The decision was made to table the vote until the next scheduled meeting on <b>July 23, 2025</b>, allowing additional time for review.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Chair Report</b>  <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	<p>Chair Peterson highlighted the following key points in her Chair Report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Departmental Overviews:</u></b> Members expressed strong support for continuing the practice of having Branch Managers or specialists provide overviews of their departments. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.</li> <li>2. <b><u>LBOT Committee Participation:</u></b> Emphasis was placed on aligning Library Board of Trustees members with committee roles that best utilize their individual strengths and expertise.</li> <li>3. <b><u>Upcoming Initiatives:</u></b> The July meeting will include discussions on two major upcoming initiatives.</li> </ol>
<b>Finance</b>  <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Mr. Yates informed the members that the FY2026 budget requires approval. He introduced a motion to approve the FY2026 Budget as submitted by the City of Richmond.</p> <p><i>Motion: William Yates, Second by Garrett Sawyer</i></p> <p><b><i>AYES: <u>7</u>      NOES: <u>0</u>      ABSTAIN: <u>0</u>    Approved Unanimously.</i></b></p> <p>Mr. Firestine reported that in previous years, unspent library funds—often due to vacancy savings or unpurchased items—were returned to the City. However, this fiscal year, additional funds were required to balance the RPL budget. To address this, the City Council introduced a corrective ordinance on June 23.</p> <p><b>Ordinance 2025-143</b> adds <b>\$849,584</b> to the RPL budget to offset overruns resulting from market adjustments, VRS transition costs, healthcare expenses, and temporary staffing services.</p>
<b>Facilities</b>  <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Ms. Woody reported that Mr. Firestine has completed all scheduled staff meetings as part of the engagement process to receive feedback on what they feel is needed to upgrade their library location. The public survey remains open, and eight "Next 100" Community Forum meetings have been conducted at various library branches to gather input from the community.</p> <p>Next step could involve bringing in a consultant to review the findings from the staff meetings, public survey, and community forums, and to provide recommendations based on the collected feedback.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Governance</b>  <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u> Christine Peterson	<p>Mr. Sawyer provided a recap of the current status of the Library Board of Trustees and the direction the Board is aiming to take regarding governance. A key priority moving forward is to ensure equitable representation from all areas of the City of Richmond on the Board.</p> <p>He shared that he has been actively engaging in conversations with individuals across the city to gain a deeper understanding of potential candidates' perspectives on both the City of Richmond and its library system. Following discussions and a collaborative review process with Chair Peterson, the pool of candidates was narrowed down to two finalists.</p> <p>Mr. Sawyer introduced a motion recommending Antoine Green for appointment to the Library Board of Trustees by advancing his application to City Council for consideration and vote.</p> <p><i><b>Motion: Garrett Sawyer Second by William Yates</b></i></p> <p><i><b>AYES: <u>7</u>      NOES: <u>0</u>      ABSTAIN: <u>0</u>    Approved Unanimously</b></i></p>
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
<p>Chair Peterson opened the discussion under Unfinished Business with a review of the recent three-board gathering. She began by inviting members to share their feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive. Chair Peterson noted that two key areas of interest emerged from the meeting: advocacy and a deeper understanding of each board's priorities.</p> <p>She asked members to come prepared to the July meeting with thoughts on how frequently these joint gatherings should be held, as well as suggestions for topics that would be beneficial to all participating boards.</p>	
NEW BUSINESS	
<p>No New Business was discussed.</p>	

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:02 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at the Ginter Park Branch Library located at 1200 Westbrook Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23227 starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved:   
Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP  
Senior Executive Assistant