



**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**  
**July 23, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Emily Altman, Brent Graves, Cynthia Hinds, William Yates

**ABSENT:** Garrett Sawyer, Janet Woody

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

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 Ginter Park Branch Library located at 1200 Westbrook Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23227. 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>	Approve the July 23, 2025, Agenda as amended to add for discussion the mural project at the Belmont Branch Library Meeting in under New Business.  <i>Motion: William Yates, Second by Emily Altman</i>  <i>AYES: <u>6</u>    NOES: <u>0</u>    ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
<b>Consent Agenda</b>	Approve the June 25, 2025, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted:  <i>Motion: Emily Altman, Second by Sheron Carter-Gunter</i>  <i>AYES: <u>6</u>    NOES: <u>0</u>    ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
<b>Public Comment Period</b>	None present.
<b>Reports</b>	
<b>Friends of the Library (FOL)</b>  <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	Chair Ruth DeBoer provided an updated on the Friends of the Library's recent activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Friends of the Library have sent their annual donation to the Library, totaling approximately \$32,000. The Library has already allocated these funds for specific purposes.</li><li>• An author has been selected for the Annual Meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for October; the exact date will be confirmed soon.</li><li>• The Fall Book Sale is planned for the first full weekend of November 2025.</li><li>• Discussions are underway with two potential new Board members.</li><li>• Efforts to recruit additional volunteers are currently in progress.</li><li>• September 3: Friends Board Meeting.</li></ul>

Reports (Continued)	
<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> <p><b><u>Foundation Update:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FY25 Impact Report is in development: Release expected October/ November.</li> <li>• The annual audit is currently underway.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Grant Update:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Jack R. Anderson Foundation grant report is being finalized. Their support for the Early Learning Center at the Main Library has helped generate interest in enhancing Children's Areas systemwide.</li> <li>• A grant proposal to the Robins Foundation is in progress to support Read with Ripple. Robins continues to be a valued and collaborative partner.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Read with Ripple:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In preparation for Year 10, the team is gathering input from preschool principals, daycare partners, and volunteers to inform program improvements.</li> </ul>
<b>Administration</b>  <u>Scott Firestine</u>	<p>Mr. Firestine presented key statistics demonstrating the Library's strong performance over the past year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs offered increased by 100%</li> <li>• Circulation rose by 19%</li> <li>• New patron card registrations grew by 10%</li> <li>• Door count increased by 5%</li> </ul> <p>In Technical Services, significant efforts were made to discard outdated and obsolete materials. This process involved substantial catch-up work and collection weeding. The current year has seen a more balanced approach to collection management.</p> <p>Notably, the North Avenue Branch Library was recognized as having a significant circulation increase. After a period of decline, the branch experienced a remarkable 20% increase in circulation compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine also announced the passing of Harriet Henderson Coulter last month. Several individuals have inquired about ways to honor her memory. The Foundation maintains the Harriet Henderson Coulter Early Literacy Fund, established upon her retirement, to support donations in her name. An informational email will be sent to all Board members and interested parties regarding contributions to Early Literacy.</p>
<b>Branch Manager Update</b>  <u>Louis Maranski</u>	<p>Library/Community Services Manager Louis Maranski provided a concise and informative update on the Ginter Park Branch Library, highlighting recent developments, current initiatives, and future plans:</p> <p><b><u>Facility Updates:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Greening Project:</b> Positive feedback continues. Phase 2 will add outdoor seating and a shade structure.</li> <li>• A pine tree was lost in the July 18 storm.</li> </ul>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Branch Manager Update (Continued)</b>  <u>Louis Maranski</u>	<p><u>Usage and Programming:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulation up by 5,000(+) items compared to the first half of 2024.</li> <li>• Programs increased across all ages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Young Adult programs grew from 11 to 45 (Jan–June), with attendance tripling.</li> <li>○ Youth Services attendance also up.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Adult Programs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining regular attendance in programs such as Art workshops, LEGO club, Horror book club, and Tech help sessions to name a few.</li> </ul> <p><u>Community Engagement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer Reading Program: 150+ sign-ups, 50+ prizes given.</li> <li>• Westminster Canterbury Book Club remains active.</li> <li>• Strong new partnership with Henderson Middle School; limited success so far with other public schools.</li> </ul> <p><u>Future Plans:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a children’s play/reading nook.</li> <li>• Add more book displays and front-facing shelving.</li> <li>• Expand community outreach.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy Task Force</b>  <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>	No Formal Report.
<b>Policy Taskforce</b>  <u>Emily Altman</u>	<p>Ms. Altman mentioned she did not receive any emails or feedback in the past month over the policies. The plan is to approve the policy changes from last month and maybe approve the additional policies changes in 05.01 Library Card Registration Policy, which Mr. Firestine received additional feedback from Managers and staff.</p> <p>Ms. Altman provided the background for the changes, which she agrees with, except for the new wording under e-Card. The original update it states the e-Card can also be used for <i>computer workstations in the library</i>. In the new change, that language was deleted.</p> <p>Upon conclusion of the discussion, the motion passed as followed:</p> <p>Approve the initial reviewed and updated policies as submitted with the exception of 05.01 Library Card Registration Policy.</p> <p><i>Motion: Cynthia Hinds, Second by Brent Graves</i></p> <p><b>AYES: <u>6</u>      NOES: <u>0</u>      ABSTAIN: <u>0</u>      Approved Unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Mr. Firestine and Ms. Altman to develop a series of experiments to test and evaluate how the 05.01 Library Card Policy should function during a 90-day trial period, with mutual agreement on the approach. Mr. Firestine will report back.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<b>Chair Report</b>  <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	<p>Chair Peterson highlighted the following key points:</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 and/or specialists provide departmental overviews. Feedback was positive. A draft schedule outlining staff presenters for the coming months and into next year was distributed.</li> <li>2. <b><u>Facilities Upgrades:</u></b> Chair Peterson discussed the ongoing need for facility improvements and asked members to consider next steps. Key areas identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Main Library:</b> Upgrades needed to bring the building up to current City Building Codes.</li> <li>2. <b>Branch Libraries:</b> Belmont, Westover Hills, and East End were identified as the oldest branches, each located in high-use areas. All three are currently too small to adequately serve their communities.</li> <li>3. <b>Future Growth Areas:</b> Scott's Addition, Council District 8, and Council District 9 were highlighted as growing and significantly underserved regions, signaling a need for expanded library services.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Chair Peterson requested members to reflect on how to move forward with addressing these facility needs.</p>
<b>Finance</b>  <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	No Formal Report.
<b>Facilities</b>  <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	No Formal Report.
<b>Governance</b>  <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u> Christine Peterson	No Formal Report.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
<p><b>Discussion on Three-Board Gathering</b> – Members expressed positive feedback regarding the outcome of the recent Three-Board Gathering. Chair Peterson initiated a discussion about the frequency of future gatherings, asking whether members preferred holding the event annually or every other year. Mr. Yates suggested convening another meeting within the next six months as a possibility.</p> <p>Chair Peterson will collaborate with Chair Ruth DeBoer of the Friends Board and Susan Revere of the Foundation to plan the next gathering. One proposed enhancement is to have each board share their current priorities. This would be followed by the Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) presenting their priorities, concluding with a group discussion on opportunities for alignment and collaboration among all three boards.</p> <p>Members also gave positive feedback on the facilitator's performance during the gathering.</p>	

## NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Firestine introduce Library/Community Services Manager Hayley DeRoche who gave a presentation on a proposal of a mural project at the Belmont Branch Library. Artist and Museum District resident Zara Fina Stasi will use a Museum District Association grant to fund the project if approved. Stasi approached the library as an involved community member interested in brightening the children's space of the library.

The mural will make the children's area of the library feel enticing and exciting for all community members who enter and use the Belmont Library. It will be painted with community members, led by the artist, who is a professional mural artist, and designed in collaboration with Richmond Public Library. Upon conclusion of the discussion, the motion passed as followed:

Approve the proposal for a mural project at the Belmont Branch Library and to formally commission Richmond-based artist and author Zara Fina Stasi to execute this work, subject to the terms and conditions as outline in the project agreement presented to the Board today.

***Motion: Emily Altman, Second by Sheron Carter-Gunter***

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

### Richmond Public School Proposed Initiative:

Vice Chair Carter-Gunter proposed initiating a campaign within Richmond Public Schools (RPS) to ensure that all students and staff obtain a library card. Chair Peterson inquired whether Vice Chair Carter-Gunter would be willing to lead the initiative, to which she agreed.

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

There is no meeting in August. The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at the Main Library located at 101 E Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219 starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved:   
Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP  
Senior Executive Assistant