



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
September 24, 2025

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

VIRTUAL: Janet Woody

ABSENT: Garrett Sawyer, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer, Clay Dishon, Susan Revere

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Phil Shephard, Erin Brallier, Heather Montgomery

GUEST: David Lydiard, Former LBOT Member

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 Main Library located at 101 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. 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 Janet Woody 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 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.

Ms. Woody has met the requirement of notifying in advance that she is unable to attend in person due to a personal illness that prevents her physical attendance at the meeting. Ms. Woody will attend from her residence.

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

Motion: William Yates, Second by Sheron Carter-Gunter, and moved by unanimous consent from the members that were present.

Chair Peterson welcomed guests attending the meeting.

Agenda	Approve the September 24, 2025, Agenda as submitted. <i>Motion: Sheron Carter-Gunter, Second by Emily Altman</i> <i>AYES: <u>7</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
---------------	--

Consent Agenda	Approve the July 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted: <i>Motion: William Yates, Second by Cynthia Hinds</i> <i>AYES: <u>7</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
Public Comment Period	None present.
Reports	
Friends of the Library (FOL) <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	Mr. Firestine provided an update on the Friends of the Library's activities in the absence of Chair Ruth DeBoer: - September 6: The Fall Book Drive to prepare for the November Book Sale. - October 1: Friends Executive Board Meeting.
Library Foundation <u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine provided an update on the Foundation's recent developments with the Jack R. Anderson Foundation Grant Report in Ms. Revere's absence. Ms. Revere provided a summary report: At the July 23 meeting, Ms. Revere provided an overview of the Jack R. Anderson Foundation Grant Report, noting at the time that the report was in the final stages of preparation. The finalized Foundation Update outlined progress toward three key grant objectives: <u>Goal 1: Increase Family Visit Duration:</u> Prior to the Early Learning Center (ELC) upgrades, families typically attended story time and spent only a few minutes selecting books before leaving. Since implementation, families are now staying an average of 45 minutes to an hour longer. <u>Goal 2: Attract and Retain First-Time Visitors:</u> New visitors arrive daily, with compelling evidence of strong retention. <u>Goal 3: Generate Community Awareness and Attraction:</u> Multiple social media stories highlighted new resources, extending our reach to new users. Existing partnerships evolved into expanded programming opportunities. Chair Peterson added that over the past two summers, participation increased 52%.
Administration <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine reported the conclusion of the Summer Reading Program, noting a decrease in attendance of approximately 300 participants compared to the previous year. The program's final event was held at Pine Camp, which coincided with a Richmond Public Schools event. This scheduling conflict likely contributed to the lower turnout than anticipated. Despite this, the event, and the overall program, was considered a success. In terms of library usage, Mr. Firestine shared positive news regarding circulation figures. Circulation numbers are approximately 15,000 higher than the same period last year, indicating strong and encouraging growth in library engagement.

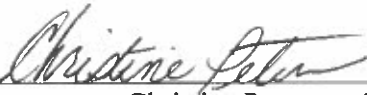
Reports (Continued)	
Tech Services Update by LCSM (Continued) <u>Erin Brallier</u>	Erin Brallier is the Library/Community Services Manager for Technical Services, system wide. She is responsible for the selection of print and digital titles for all ages, as well as, selecting and evaluating the online learning databases. The Tech Service Team is responsible for processing the new materials and together help evaluate and manage the collection for the entire system. <u>Key Accomplishments Over 2.5 Years with RPL:</u> • Collection Management: Partnered with Thrift Books to repurpose discards and earn credits for new materials. • Space Optimization: Created an Overflow area to increase shelf space and improve item browsability. • Catalog Enhancements: Improved discoverability through updated subject headings, record cleanup, and reclassification of Biographies. <u>New Materials Introduced:</u> • Vox Books – Talking books that support early literacy. • Book Club Bags – Promote community engagement through shared reading. • Zines – Launching October; reflect Richmond’s strong DIY and cultural scene. <u>Circulation Growth:</u> • Surpassed 1 million circulations last fiscal year. • Print circulation up 3%, digital circulation up 30% in the current fiscal year’s first quarter compared to last year. <u>Focus Ahead:</u> Meeting growing demand on Libby despite rising content costs—while continuing to build a responsive, engaging collection for all patrons.
Advocacy Task Force <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sharon Carter-Gunter</u>	Chair Peterson gave an update on the Library Board of Trustees’ advocacy work, focusing on four main points: 1. Trustee Assignments to Council Members: There is a list of which Trustees are paired with which City Council members. Please review and let Chair Peterson know if you want to switch to a different council member or take a break from contacting your current one. The goal is to have these assignments finalized by early October before budget season and the advocacy campaign kickoff. 2. Emails About Children’s Programs: Trustees should have already sent an email about the library’s children’s programs to their assigned Council Members. If not, this needs to be done by the end of September. 3. Speaking at Council Meetings: Chair Peterson spoke at the Council meetings twice last year and will be speaking again at the meeting on October 14 to keep the library’s needs on their radar. 4. Getting Ready for a Tough Budget Year: Since the budget looks tight this year, Chair Peterson asked Mr. Firestine and Vice Chair Sharon Carter-Gunter to work with Finance Chair Mr. Yates on putting together a draft advocacy plan. This plan will cover: ○ What key messages LBOT should share with Council and when to share them. ○ Any special approaches or techniques should be used to get our points across. They will have this draft ready to discuss at the next meeting on October 22, focusing on how the LBOT will handle advocacy through the budget process. Chair Peterson stressed the importance of everyone staying involved and coordinated getting ready for a busy advocacy season ahead.

Reports (Continued)	
Policy Taskforce <u>Emily Altman</u>	Ms. Altman reported the LBOT approved all the policies except for Policy 5.01 Library Card Registration at the July 23 meeting. She noted that Mr. Firestine had developed a plan to address the concerns raised regarding this policy and invited him to present his approach. Mr. Firestine explained that he has formed a committee composed of staff members to review and gather all existing RPL procedures related to policies, including those specific to individual departments. The committee will be responsible for updating and redrafting Policy 5.01. Once the revised draft is complete, it will be reviewed by managers and staff for feedback. Following this internal review, the updated policy will be presented to the LBOT for final consideration and approval.
Chair Report <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	Chair Peterson talked about major facilities initiatives and asked members to reflect on how to move forward with addressing the facility needs at the July 23 meeting. Key Facilities Areas Identified: 1. Main Library: Upgrades needed to bring the building up to current City Building Codes. 2. Branch Libraries: 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. 3. Future Growth Areas: 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. After further discussion on a path forward on the key facilities areas identified, and Mr. Firestine's eagerness to support and move the initiatives forward into the future, Chair Peterson called for motion. The Library Board of Trustees fully supports Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Director Scott Firestine's effort to improve and expand RPL facilities to include Main Library, expansion/replacement at Westover Hills, Belmont Branch and East End Branch Libraries, and the consideration of new libraries. <i>Motion: William Yates, Second by Brent Graves</i> <i>AYES: <u>7</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
Finance <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Yates reported the budget is on target. He did note there were certain line items that were at 100% with only being two months into the FY26. These were encumbered funds for the year, such as Security. There is a need for more money for next fiscal year.
Facilities <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	No Formal Report.

Reports (Continued)	
Governance <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u> Christine Peterson	No Formal Report.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
No Unfinished Business was discussed.	
NEW BUSINESS	
No New Business was discussed.	

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at the Hull Street Branch Library located at 1400 Hull Street, Richmond, Virginia 23224, starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved: 
Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: *Gianna Pack, CAP*
Senior Executive Assistant