



Richmond Public Library
Library Board of Trustees
101 E. Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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Library Board Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2024

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Emily Altman, Cynthia Hinds, Garrett Sawyer, William Yates, Gail Zwirner

VIRTUAL: Janet Woody

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

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Susan Revere, Danielle Tarullo, Phil Shephard

Meeting of the Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) was called to order by Chair Christine Peterson at 11:45 a.m. at the Westover Hills Branch Library located at 1400 Hull Street, Richmond, Virginia 23223. 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: Gail Zwirner, Second by Sheron Carter-Gunter, and moved by unanimous consent from the members that were present.

Agenda	Approve the December 4, 2024, Agenda as submitted. <i>Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by Emily Altman</i> <i>AYES: <u>8</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>
Consent Agenda	Approve the October 23, 2024, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as submitted: <i>Motion: Garrett Sawyer, Second by Sheron Carter-Gunter</i> <i>AYES: <u>8</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i>

Public Comment Period	Mr. Firestine introduced Katie Riley of the James River Association who will be giving a presentation in the Facilities Committee section of the meeting.
Reports	
Friends of the Library (FOL) <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	Mr. Dishon reported in Ms. DeBoer's absence. • The Friends Fall Book Sale held the 1st weekend of November and took in approximately \$16,000.00 before expenses. • After the sale the Friends provided some books to the Greenville Correctional Center Library. They are looking for a new contact at the city shelter across 2nd Street from the Main library to provide them with some books and/or other materials. • The Friends have filled three vacant Board positions this year. Still searching for additional Board members. • The Spring book sale dates are yet to be determined and thoughts are for altering the Spring sale dates.
Library Foundation <u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Foundation Update: As the CY2024 ends, the Foundation is concentrating on its year-end giving efforts. The <i>Impact Report</i> and <i>Annual Appeal Letter</i> have been sent out and are already generating contributions. Those who have not yet made a year-end gift are encouraged to consider doing so to support the Foundation's mission. The Foundation extends its deep gratitude to the R.E.B. Foundation for its ongoing and substantial support of RVA Reads. The Foundation's Open House will be December 11 at 5PM after the Foundation Board Meeting at the Broad Rock Branch Library. Library staff and members of all three boards are invited to attend the open house. Details were included in the email sent December 3, and responses are kindly requested by December 9.
Branch Report <u>Danielle Tarullo</u>	Library/Community Services Manager Danielle Tarullo gave an overview of the Westover Hills Branch Library: The Westover Hills Branch Library serves a diverse population that includes both affluent and less affluent communities in South Richmond. Many customers live within walking distance in the nearby neighborhoods, with a strong presence of young families and avid readers. The library sees numerous seniors who are deeply invested in the community, having lived in the area for much of their lives. With the continued development of nearby apartment complexes, the Branch has observed an increase in new young adults accessing their services. The Branch's hardest-to-reach audience is teens, though Westover Hills remains committed to connecting with all patrons. The community relies on library resources to enhance their quality of life, including job searching, improving computer skills, and accessing technology. Additionally, there is a growing number of Spanish-speaking patrons, and the library staff makes every effort to help and foster inclusivity.

Reports (Continued)

Branch Report (Continued)

Danielle Tarullo

To strengthen community ties, the Branch is intentional about creating programming and shared spaces that allow the diversity of its patrons to coexist harmoniously. This involves thoughtful scheduling of programs, targeted outreach and promotions, and the development of strategic community partnerships. Reaching out to communities south of Forest Hill—many of whom may gravitate toward Broad Rock—is an ongoing effort to ensure all are welcomed and supported.

Westover Hills consistently ranks in the top four for door count, circulation, and program attendance among all library branches. Despite being a small space, the library is *mighty*, with its staff and resources demonstrating strength and adaptability. Laptop checkouts are at the highest levels within the system, largely due to the shared use of resources across the desk by dedicated staff members. Space remains the library's greatest constraint, but creative approaches continue to maximize service and programming.

The Westover Hills Branch Library demonstrates its commitment to the library's mission through several key focus areas:

- **Lifelong Learning:** Increased programming has been developed to support working and retired adults. These offerings include the popular *Crafting Hour* program, supported by a Foundation mini grant; book clubs; the *Adult Fall Reading Challenge*; and upcoming computer classes.
- **Accessible Library:** A recent reorganization of the branch has improved the physical flow of the space for easier access and navigation. The Branch has expanded its reach with pop-up libraries in the community, strengthening partnerships, and connecting with neighbors. Recent collaborations include the South of the James Farmer's Market, Crossroads Coffee and Ice Cream, and Stella's Market, which have supported the *Adult Fall Reading Challenge*.

With more programming opportunities available, the space remains in high demand, decreasing the availability of dedicated meeting areas.

- **Children's Literacy:** Expanded story time programs to better meet the needs of the community. Efforts are also being made to increase elementary and teen programming that aligns with the interests of this age group. Interactive literacy tools like *1000 Books Before Kindergarten (1000BBK)* displays and outreach visits to local schools for library card sign-ups have strengthened this focus.
- **Organizational Strength:** Building a cohesive and effective team has been a priority, with monthly branch meetings and weekly email updates to ensure all staff members are informed and engaged. Employees are recognized as the library's greatest resource and asset.

Additionally, efforts are being made to connect with community groups, homeowners' associations, businesses, and other organizations to share library services and opportunities. This avoids duplication of services while ensuring that messaging reaches the right audiences.

From the leadership perspective, it is evident that the Westover Hills community is deeply connected to its library. Likewise, the Branch is committed to demonstrating its care and support for the community it serves. This mutual investment has created a strong foundation to build upon as the library continues to grow, learn, and strengthen its connections.

Reports (Continued)

Administration <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Director's Report: In addition to the items submitted in this month's report, the following comments were made: • Statistically the stats are tracking very well. • Circulation is above normal, with the hope by the end of December we are expecting to surpass 2024 levels. • Door visits are up, which is a product of the extended hours and programs. Discussion of Homelessness Issue from the October 23 Meeting: Library's Approach to Unsheltered Patrons Mr. Firestine presented a comprehensive three-part strategy for assisting unsheltered patrons who visit the library. The approach focuses on maintaining a welcoming space for all while addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness: 1. Strong Policy: Libraries serve as one of the few public spaces where everyone is welcome. The library's primary rule is that all patrons must respect others' rights to use the space without disruption. All library users are required to adhere to Policy 4.2, which outlines the rules and regulations of conduct on library property. When a patron violates these rules, library staff will address the behavior, request a correction, and apply progressive disciplinary actions as needed. 2. Community Partners: The city has established a dedicated department and liaison specifically to assist unsheltered individuals in accessing the resources they need. Whenever a situation arises that requires additional city resources, library staff can refer patrons to these partners or directly connect them with support services. Collaborating with community partners has proven to be a vital element in addressing the needs of unsheltered individuals. 3. Training: Library staff receive ongoing training to prepare for the wide range of situations they may encounter with patrons. This training supports staff in effectively managing these situations, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge of available services and resources. Additionally, managers play a key role in keeping staff informed and providing ongoing support. Through these strategies, the library works to provide a safe and supportive environment for all patrons while addressing unique challenges as they arise.
Advocacy Task Force <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>	Chair Peterson reviewed the 2025 Draft Advocacy Plan. Topics of discussion included: 1. What Do We Advocate For? a. Raising awareness and communicate b. Budget to do what needs to be done c. Expand our reach and improve our infrastructure i. Bring the Main Library modern library standards ii. Existing libraries that are too small for the population they serve iii. Services to underserved people in the city 2. Who Will Be Advocating? LBOT member connection to Councilmembers 3. How Do We Advocate? Provide library tours to new Councilmembers 4. Plan and timetable discussed 5. Action Items 6. Receive Input – Feedback from LBOT

Reports (Continued)	
Advocacy Task Force (Continued) <u>Christine Peterson</u> <u>Sharon Carter-Gunter</u>	Ms. Zwirner asked if an update LBOT contact information be sent to everyone. Mr. Firestine will direct Ms. Pack to send out an updated contact list to LBOT members. Ms. Carter-Gunter inquired about sending the one-page information sheet detailing library services and the electronic version of <i>What's Happening</i> to the new Councilmembers. Chair Peterson directed Mr. Firestine to ensure the library services sheet is available at the January 22, 2025, meeting, and to also include the new survey. The LBOT engaged in a thorough discussion on strategies to involve the Councilmembers more effectively. It was decided that the final version of the 2025 Advocacy Plan will be presented for discussion at the January 22, 2025, meeting.
Policy Taskforce <u>Emily Altman</u>	No Formal Report.
Chair Report <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	No Formal Report.
Finance <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	No Formal Report.
Facilities <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine reported the Facilities Committee is currently working on the Facilities Committee Report. The public survey has been distributed, and there have already been over 300 responses. Staff surveys will begin at the branches in mid-December 2024 and continue through mid-January 2025, focusing on identifying the needs and feedback staff receive from patrons. Additionally, the Young Adult area at the Main Library is progressing, with furniture orders now underway. Katy Riley, Community Conservation Coordinator for the James River Association, presented the <i>Greening Richmond Public Libraries Project</i>. Following the presentation, Ms. Riley offered to send a copy of her slides to Mr. Firestine, who will then share them with the LBOT through Ms. Pack.
Governance <u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u>	No Formal Report.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
Approve the Richmond Public Library Holiday Closings for Calendar Year 2025, with Saturday, March 8, 2025, be removed from the list of closing dates as amended. <i>Motion: Sharon Carter-Gunter, Second by William Yates</i> AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously. <i>Mr. Sawyer was not present for the vote.</i> <i>Ms. Woody was not present by phone for the vote.</i>	

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business was discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members that were present.

The next meeting of the LBOT will be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2025, at the Main Library, 101 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Approved: _____

Christine Peterson
Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: *Gianna Pack, CAP*
Senior Executive Assistant