



**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**  
**March 25, 2026**

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

**ABSENT:** Antione Green, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer

**STAFF:** Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Phil Shepard, Adam Zimmerli

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 East End Branch Library located at 1200 N 25th 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.

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| <b>Agenda</b>                | <p>Approve the March 25, 2026, Agenda as submitted.</p> <p><i>Motion: <u>William Yates</u>, Second by <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u></i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Garrett Sawyer was not present for the vote.</i><br/> <i>Ms. Emily Altman was not present for the vote.</i></p>   |
| <b>Consent Agenda</b>        | <p>Approve the February 25, 2026, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted:</p> <p><i>Motion: <u>William Yates</u>, Second by <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u></i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Garrett Sawyer was not present for the vote.</i><br/> <i>Ms. Emily Altman was not present for the vote.</i></p> |
| <b>Public Comment Period</b> | <p>None present.</p>  |

## Reports

### Friends of the Library (FOL)

Ruth DeBoer  
Clay Dishon

Mr. Dishon provided an update on the Friends of the Library's activities in the absence of Chair Ruth DeBoer:

- The Friends hosted another successful Spring Book Drive on March 21, receiving many donations, some of which will be featured in their specially priced section. The event was also supported by a strong group of dedicated volunteers.
- The Friends are exploring local authors as potential speakers for their annual meeting, which they plan to hold on the first Friday in October 2026.
- The Friends plan to help fund prizes for Adult Summer Reading Program prizes.
- The organization is currently one member short of a full Board and anticipates the departure of two additional Board members who have indicated they will be stepping down.
- Next Board Meeting: April 1, 2026.
- Next Book Sale: May 1–3 at the Main Library.

### Library Foundation

Susan Revere

Ms. Revere provided an update on the Foundation's recent activities and developments:

#### **Foundation Updates**

The Richmond Public Library (RPL) and the Foundation are pleased to announce that RPL will host an Early Learning Lab led by Dr. Ron Ferguson, featuring *The Basics* for children and their caregivers.

The program will take place on Saturday, May 30, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Children's Area near the Early Learning Center. Dr. Ferguson will deliver a presentation followed by a Q&A session, offering parents practical, effective strategies to support their child's early learning and development.

After the presentation, families will have the opportunity to apply these strategies through engaging, hands-on activities led by RPL's children's librarians. Registration is required.

#### **Early Learning Internships:**

The internship posting is now live, and the link was distributed to all three boards via the Foundation newsletter on March 24. Ms. Revere expressed her appreciation and encouraged members to help promote the opportunity for college students interested in child education, literacy, child development, or careers in teaching.

**Reports (Continued)**

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| <p><b>Administration</b></p> <p><u>Scott Firestine</u></p>               | <p>Mr. Firestine reported additional updates beyond what was included in his Director’s Report, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Circulation continues to climb, surpassing FY2023 at this point in the current year with four months left.</li><li>• Budget activity and attendance at the Town Halls have made a difference. CAO Donald noticed and the mayor noticed the presence of library supporters.</li><li>• DCAOs will be presenting the Budget to Council at the April 6, 1-3:00P at City Hall for the Council Budget Work Session. Mr. Firestine invited members to attend.</li><li>• National Library Week:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Date: April 19-25, 2026</li><li>○ Theme: Community starts at my library</li><li>○ Ripple story times, Ripple merchandise will be available for purchase</li><li>○ Bookmark design contest</li><li>○ Giveaways (yard signs)</li><li>○ Celebrating Library Workers</li></ul></li></ul>   |
| <p><b>East End Branch Library Update</b></p> <p><u>Adam Zimmerli</u></p> | <p>Library/Community Services Manager Adam Zimmerli shared information about the East End Branch Library by presenting a short video called "The East End Branch Library: Through the Eyes of Our Patrons." The video included interviews with branch patrons who were asked four questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.) What does the East End Branch mean to you?</li><li>2.) Why do you choose the East End Branch?</li><li>3.) What would you say to someone who has never been to the East End Branch?<br/>and</li><li>4.) Finish this sentence: "The best thing about the East End Branch is..."</li></ol> <p>Major themes discussed were the welcoming environment and customer-service oriented staff, the diversity and strength of the community, and the walkable, local nature of the branch within the neighborhood.</p> <p>Mr. Zimmerli felt that by interviewing the patrons, the LBOT would get greater insight into what makes the East End Branch Library special and what keeps regular library users coming back. In addition, this method allowed library users an opportunity to provide feedback in their own words, providing more clarity about what is most important to patrons when selecting a library. Finally, this method captured a greater sense of who our patrons are as residents and individuals, telling a better story of who and what makes the East End Branch Library unique and RPL stronger.</p> <p>Mr. Zimmerli also spoke about the many programs specific to the East End Branch Library.</p> |

**Reports (Continued)**

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| <p><b>Advocacy Task Force</b></p> <p><u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u><br/><u>Antonie Green</u></p> | <p>No Formal Report.</p> <p>Chair Peterson noted that the handouts include a list of dates and locations for this year’s Council members’ Town Hall Meetings, where Children’s leaders will present information about the Summer Reading Program. She explained that this outreach approach was used last year with great success in promoting summer reading.</p> <p>Following each meeting, participants took a group photo with a sign, which was later featured in the Council members’ newsletters, alongside shared talking points that relationship building.</p> <p>Chair Peterson encouraged members to review the schedule and sign up to attend when possible. Members who are unable to participate were asked to contact her to explore alternative options.</p>  |
| <p><b>Policy Taskforce</b></p> <p><u>Emily Altman</u></p>                                     | <p>No Formal Report.</p> <p>Chair Peterson asked Ms. Altman and Mr. Firestine to consider updating the Strategic Plan to include facilities improvements and expansion, now that the Facilities Improvement and Expansion Plan has been completed. Chair Peterson noted that, from a business perspective, aligning LBOT efforts with the Strategic Plan is advisable, particularly as facilities issues are expected to become increasingly prominent.</p> <p>After discussion, Ms. Altman and Mr. Firestine will report back on April 22, 2026, LBOT meeting with a recommendation on whether to proceed and, if so, proposed next steps for updating the plan.</p>  |
| <p><b>Chair Report</b></p> <p><u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u></p>                            | <p>Chair Peterson reported that, while serving on the LBOT, she has been actively engaged in several professional activities. She has volunteered with the Virginia Library Association and served on a committee, contributed as a committee member with United Libraries, and is currently nominated to serve on the American Library Association (ALA) Advisory Board representing Virginia.</p> <p>Chair Peterson encouraged members who are interested in greater involvement at the state level to consider participating in a division of ALA, specifically United for Libraries, which supports Foundations, Friends, and Trustees and the Virginia Library Association.</p>   |
| <p><b>Finance</b></p> <p><u>Bill Yates, Chair</u><br/><u>Scott Firestine</u></p>              | <p>Mr. Yates reported that City departments are currently implementing required budget reductions. He noted that Mr. Firestine successfully identified the requested 2% reduction, which includes holding vacant one Senior Librarian (1 FTE) position for the Law Library and postponing certain infrastructure and non-critical projects. He clarified that maintaining the vacancy will not impact operations, as the Law Library will remain open and accessible to the public.</p> <p>Mr. Yates also shared that \$1 million dollars has been allocated in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds. He stated that City Council is conducting Budget Work Sessions to review recommendations and may implement additional adjustments to the Mayor’s proposed budget, with the process expected to conclude in mid-April.</p> |

**Reports (Continued)**

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| <p><b>Finance (Continued)</b></p> <p><u>Bill Yates, Chair</u><br/><u>Scott Firestine</u></p> | <p>Mr. Firestine explained that the approach to budget reductions prioritizes minimizing impacts on library services. He emphasized that maintaining service hours, resources, and materials remains a top priority, and that the administration aims to avoid reductions to frontline staff or operating hours.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine further reported that personnel will receive a 3% pay increase effective July 1, 2026, in accordance with the City’s commitment to collective bargaining agreements.</p>   |
| <p><b>Facilities</b></p> <p><u>Janet Woody, Chair</u><br/><u>Scott Firestine</u></p>         | <p>Mr. Firestine reported on two key topics:</p> <p><b><u>Bookmobile:</u></b></p> <p>Mr. Firestine stated that he and Ms. Clarke have been working with the City of Richmond Fleet Department over the past several months to develop specifications for a new electric bookmobile. The estimated cost is between \$500,000 and \$600,000. Once specifications are finalized, the Fleet Department will proceed with ordering the vehicle, with an anticipated delivery timeline of approximately one year. The vehicle will be a specially designed, 22-foot electric model built to specification.</p> <p>In response to questions by the Budget Department regarding the CIP, Mr. Firestine reported that research indicates the electric vehicle will be approximately 30% less expensive to operate compared to a traditional vehicle. He noted that the vehicle supports sustainability goals and given that it will be driven less than 200 miles per day, charging capacity will not present a challenge. He emphasized that the bookmobile will significantly expand the library’s ability to serve neighborhoods with limited transportation access. During the procurement period, staff will focus on developing programming and operational plans for the vehicle’s use.</p> <p><b><u>Expansion/Renovation of Library Sites:</u></b></p> <p>Mr. Firestine reported that Dewberry Architects is expected to complete its facilities study in April. He is coordinating with the firm to present its findings to the Board. The study will assess and validate prior information regarding the three primary sites identified as the oldest and most critical facilities: Belmont Branch Library, Westover Hills Branch Library, and East End Branch Library.</p> |
| <p><b>Governance</b></p> <p><u>Scott Firestine</u><br/><u>Garrett Sawyer, Chair</u></p>      | <p>No Formal Report.</p>   |

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Chair Peterson announced that the evening event of the 3-Board Retreat is scheduled for Tuesday, June 23, 2026. Ms. Pack will distribute a calendar invitation to LBOT members.

Ms. Reagan Flacker of the Library of Virginia will serve as facilitator for the retreat, focusing on messaging. Members discussed potential topics for the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

No New Business was discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:36 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at the North Avenue Branch Library located at 2901 North Avenue, Richmond, Virginia, 23222, starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved:   
Christine Peterson, Chair

*Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP  
Senior Executive Assistant*