



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
May 27, 2026

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Emily Altman, Brent Graves, Antione Green, Cynthia Hinds, Janet Woody, William Yates

ABSENT: Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Phil Shephard, Chloe McCormick, 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 11:47 a.m. at the Main Library located at 101 E 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.

Agenda	Approve the May 27, 2026, Agenda as submitted. <i>Motion: <u>Janet Woody</u>, Second by <u>Emily Altman</u></i> <i>AYES: <u>6</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i> <i>Mr. Green was not present for the vote.</i>
Consent Agenda	Approve the April 22, 2026, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted: <i>Motion: <u>William Yates</u>, Second by <u>Emily Altman</u></i> <i>AYES: <u>5</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i> <i>Mr. Green was not present for the vote.</i>
Public Comment Period	None present.
Reports	
Friends of the Library (FOL) <u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u>	Ms. DeBoer reported the Friends organization was in the process of cleaning up following the May book sale and continuing efforts to recruit additional volunteers. She shared that the spring book sale was very successful and generated approximately \$24,000, setting a new fundraising record for the organization. Ms. DeBoer expressed her appreciation to staff and volunteers for their assistance and support during the book sale. Ms. DeBoer also reported that a couple of board members recently resigned due to job-related reasons, creating a total of four vacancies on the Board. Efforts are underway to encourage volunteers to step forward and fill open positions.

Reports (Continued)	
Library Foundation <u>Susan Revere</u>	Ms. Revere provided an update on the Foundation's recent activities and developments. Foundation Updates: Ms. Revere shared that the Foundation is welcoming Dr. Ron Ferguson to Richmond Public Library to host the "Early Learning Lab with Ron Ferguson: The Basics for Children and Their Caregivers." The program is scheduled for 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 provide a presentation followed by a Q&A session focused on simple and effective ways parents can support early learning and childhood development. Families will also have the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities with children's librarians. Registration is required for attendance. Children's Area Upgrades: Ms. Revere reported that Westover Hills and Ginter Park Branch Libraries have completed installation of their new children's area assets. Open Houses are currently being scheduled, and invitations will be extended to Board members. She also noted that upgrades at the North Avenue and West End Branch Libraries are the next phase of the project.
Administration <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine had no additional updates beyond what was included in his Director's Report.
Memory Lab/Special Collections <u>Chloe McCormick</u>	Senior Librarian Chloe McCormick, who oversees the Memory Lab and Special Collections, provided an update on the many successes and ongoing projects within these areas. In 2026, the Memory Lab conducted 468 appointments, and staff assisted patrons with more than 250 local history-related inquiries. Ms. McCormick also reported that new equipment has been acquired, including a large-format scanner that will allow the Library to digitize maps from the City's Department of Parks and Recreation and Maury Cemetery in-house. She shared a digitization update, noting that with funding from the Mellon Foundation, the Library is digitizing significant collections of records from city-owned cemeteries, local churches, City of Richmond annual reports, City Assessor of Real Estate property cards, and other historical materials. Digitized materials are made available through Digital Special Collections, which has added more than 60,000 digital items in 2026. Ms. McCormick further reported that Special Collections recently accepted the donation of the Richmond Free Press collection, a comprehensive archive chronicling the publication's 34-year run documenting Richmond's Black community. The Library will begin processing the collection this summer and plans to add oral histories with the Boone family and Free Press staff members. The collection includes more than 250 boxes of photographs, biographical files, and newspaper copies.
Advocacy Task Force Sheron Carter-Gunter Antonie Green	No Formal Report.

Reports (Continued)	
Policy Taskforce <u>Emily Altman</u>	Ms. Altman reported that the Richmond Public Library Strategic Plan for 2022-2027 is in the process of being reviewed. More information coming.
Chair Report <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	No Formal Report.
Finance <u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Yates reported on the financials to date: • Budget passed with the 2% cut, which was planned • The Collective Bargaining 3.25% raise for staff – money will be added to cover • Starting July, the City will start negotiations with the new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the five bargaining units which will impact FY2028 • CIP received another million dollars to help with the facilities expansion and improvement
Facilities <u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u>	Mr. Firestine reported on two key topics. First, he shared that the final Dewberry Report has been completed, and copies of the report were distributed at the meeting for review prior to the June 2 meeting with the Facilities Committee, LBOT members, and Dewberry Engineers Inc. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the Branch Library Study for the East End, Belmont, and Westover Hills Branch Libraries and to answer any questions related to the study. Mr. Firestine also reported that the EV Bookmobile has been ordered.
Governance <u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u>	Chair Peterson discussed two key topics in Governance: Succession Plan: Chair Peterson reported that there has been limited interest from members in serving in the Chair and Vice Chair positions for the upcoming term. She announced that, if no additional interest is expressed, she is willing to continue serving as Chair until the conclusion of her term on June 30, 2027. Chair Peterson also shared that Ms. Sheron Carter-Gunter does not wish to continue serving as Vice Chair when her term ends. If no other nominations are presented, Mr. Graves will assume the Vice Chair position. She also noted Mr. Graves has not agreed (though is inclined) to then step into the Chair position after her term ends. Chair Peterson encouraged members to consider the proposed leadership plan and advised that a vote will take place at the June 24 meeting. Vacancies: Chair Peterson stated that she would like to see trustee representation from each City district, noting that having all districts represented gives the Library a stronger voice throughout the City. She reported that there are currently trustees representing five districts, while Districts 3, 6, 7, and 9 do not currently have representation on the Board. Chair Peterson shared that she plans to speak with the Councilmembers from the unrepresented districts to identify individuals within their communities who are supportive of libraries and may be interested in serving as trustees. She also encouraged Board members to reach out to her if they know of potential candidates from those districts who would be a good fit for the Board.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chair Peterson confirmed the 3-Board Working Session scheduled for Tuesday, June 23, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Main Library. She explained that the meeting will focus on messaging, based on feedback received from attendees during last year's session.

Chair Peterson reported that Reagan Thacker from the Library of Virginia will again serve as speaker and facilitator for the meeting. She shared that the program has been designed to elevate the Board's communication and advocacy efforts by helping participants develop their own personal approach to communicating the Director's key messages. The session will include discussion of data points and guidance on how members can draw from their own stories and neighborhood experiences to craft messages that feel authentic and comfortable to deliver. The training will also address what to say and different methods of delivery, all based on Mr. Firestine's identified messaging points. Chair Peterson stated that the expectation is for participants to learn from an expert facilitator, practice communication techniques during the session, and leave with a stronger understanding of how to effectively share the Library's message.

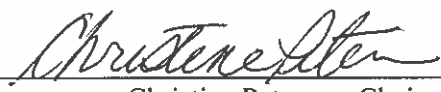
Chair Peterson also noted that the LBOT has hosted the previous two meetings and expressed her hope that the Friends and the Foundation would host future meetings to keep the momentum going.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business was discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:24 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, at the West End Branch Library located at 5420 Patterson Avenue, Richmond, Virginia, 23226, starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved: 
Christine Peterson, Chair

Recorder: *Gianna Pack, CAP*
Senior Executive Assistant