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 23, 2026

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Brent Graves, Emily Altman, Sheron Carter-Gunter, Cynthia Hinds, Linda Pechin, Samuel Runner, Janet Woody

ABSENT: Antione Green

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Ben Himmelfarb, Danielle Howard, Heather Montgomery, Phil Shephard, 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 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.

Chair Peterson welcomed the two new LBOT members, Linda Pechin and Sam Runner to the Board.

Agenda	Approve the September 23, 2026, Agenda as submitted. ***Motion:*** ***Sheron Carter-Gunter*** ***, Second by*** ***Emily Altman*** ***AYES:*** ***8*** ***NOES:*** ***0*** ***ABSTAIN:*** ***0*** ***Approved Unanimously.***
Consent Agenda	Approve the July 22, 2026, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted: ***Motion:*** ***Cynthia Hinds*** ***, Second by*** ***Sheron Carter-Gunter*** ***AYES:*** ***8*** ***NOES:*** ***0*** ***ABSTAIN:*** ***0*** ***Approved Unanimously.***
Public Comment Period	None present.

Reports	
Friends of the Library (FOL) Ruth DeBoer Clay Dishon	Mr. Dishon reported on updated activities of the Friends of the Library in Ms. DeBoer's absence: • Next Friends Board Meeting: October 7, 2026 • September 19, 2026: Annual Book Drive • November 6, 7, 8: Annual Fall Book Sale Mr. Dishon added the Friends of the Library has a new Executive Board Member, Ms. Mary Frueh.
Library Foundation Susan Revere Scott Firestine	Ms. Revere reported on updated activities of the Foundation: **Early Learning Interns and Children's Area Upgrades**: It was a busy summer with our 10 early learning interns and ongoing children's area upgrades. Once again, 100% of the interns indicated that they would recommend the program to friends and family. Children's Area upgrades remain on schedule for completion in November. The Foundation is awaiting delivery of a new LEGO table at the Broad Rock Branch and is piloting a sound barrier at the Belmont Branch. Families continue to express their appreciation for the new resources and improvements. Ms. Revere invited Board members to attend the next Open House at the Hull Street Branch on Wednesday, September 30, at 11:00 a.m. The event will feature Ripple the River Otter and snacks for children. **Grants**: The Foundation submitted a request to the REB Foundation for Read with Ripple. A Letter of Intent (LOI) was also submitted to the Memorial Foundation for Children to support the summer internship program. Ms. Revere announced the Foundation added two new Foundation Board members: Erica Cruz, Digital and Visual Designer at Kettle, who will serve as the Friends liaison, and Jess Skinner, Director of Advancement at the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center. She also welcomed the newest Trustees and expressed enthusiasm about working together. **Calendar Items:** • November 22: Richmond Free Press Legacy Event at the Main Library. • December 2, 2026: Foundation Open House, 5:00–6:00 p.m., at the Main Library.
Administration Scott Firestine	Mr. Firestine highlighted several key items from the Director's Report: • **2026 Summer Reading Program:** The program had 3,672 participants, an increase from last year. Mr. Firestine attributed the growth to an increased number of storytimes and programs. He also recognized the summer interns for their contributions in expanding program capacity and services. • **Circulation:** Circulation has increased by approximately 250,000.

Reports (Continued)	
Administration (Continued) Scott Firestine	Following Mr. Firestine's report, Chair Peterson asked about the number of storytimes and programs held last year compared with this year. Mr. Firestine will provide the information back Chair Peterson and to the LBOT. Mr. Firestine then introduced Senior Librarian Danielle Howard, who will provide an overview of the work staff is doing on the second floor of the Main Library, including programs and activities in the Innovation Lab. Action Items: 1. Provide storytimes and programs numbers for FY25 and FY26 – *Scott Firestine*
Main Library 2nd Floor and Innovation Lab Danielle Howard	Senior Librarian Danielle Howard provided an overview of the Main Library's second floor, which includes the computer lab, study rooms, Innovation Lab, and Media Lab. She reported that new public computers installed in July 2025 have contributed to increased usage, with 17,672 computer sessions recorded in 2026 and an average session of approximately 55 minutes. Staff provide technology assistance, job application support, help with online services and social service applications, and one-on-one appointments. Staff have completed 288 scheduled appointments so far this year. The Innovation Lab offers 3D printers, sewing machines, an embroidery machine, large-format printing, and a Cricut machine. Staff provide equipment instruction and creative programs, with 185 reservations recorded as of September 23, 2026. The Lab also supports community groups and Library-wide printing requests. Ms. Howard highlighted programs including Internet Safety for Seniors, 3D Printing and Modeling, Cybersecurity, Sewing, ART CLUB, and introductory animation. The team also partners with City departments, schools, and community organizations, including Parks and Recreation, Richmond Public Schools, VCU, RRHA, RBHA, VPM, and The Repair Café. Ms. Howard emphasized the second floor's role in providing accessible technology, creative learning, and community services. She noted that positive patron interactions demonstrate the importance of creating an environment where patrons feel comfortable returning to the Library for assistance. Following Ms. Howard's presentation, Ms. Carter-Gunter requested a one-page summary describing the resources and services available on the second floor at the Main Library. Action Item: 1. One-page summary of resources and services available on the second floor of the Main Library – *Scott Firestine*

Reports (Continued)	
Advocacy Task Force Sheron Carter-Gunter Antonie Green	The LBOT discussed advocacy efforts in preparation for the City's budget season. It was noted that the Library is fully funded through the City budget and that advocacy for continued funding is a priority. Trustees were encouraged to share current Library data, accomplishments, and community impact with their assigned City Council members. Advocacy messages will be coordinated and distributed through the LBOT's established process, with Trustees encouraged to tailor the information to the interests of their respective districts. The LBOT also discussed expanding Library card access for students through partnerships with Richmond Public Schools, school librarians, PTAs, and homeschool organizations. Members expressed interest in exploring ways to make Library card registration more accessible during school enrollment, while noting the importance of providing parents with information about Library card access and resources. Additional advocacy efforts discussed included increasing public awareness of Library programs and services through local media, community partnerships, and meetings with City and community representatives. Action Items: 1. Set up a meeting with the Library Director and Jenn Deuell with Ms. Carter. Gunter and Antione Green for October to discuss support needed from the LBOT with outreach. – *Mr. Firestine* 2. Holiday Cards and Thankyou Cards for the LOBT. – *Ms. Pack* 3. Update Trustee and Counselor Listing with new Trustees added. – *Ms. Pack*
Policy Taskforce Emily Altman	Ms. Altman reported that she and Mr. Firestine had updated the Library's Strategic Plan Progress Report to summarize progress made over the past several years. Mr. Firestine explained that the report serves as a scorecard, summarizing the data and demonstrating how the Library's progress aligns with the goals and objectives established by the LBOT in 2022. Mr. Firestine reviewed the Executive Summary and highlighted key areas of progress, comparing the Library's status in FY22 with FY26: • **Circulation Expansion:** Circulation increased from 701,027 in FY22 to 1,333,618 in FY26. • **Door Count:** Annual door count increased from 428,474 in FY22 to 609,796 in FY26. • **Programming:** Public programming increased from 889 offerings in FY22 to 4,135 in FY26, with total attendance increasing from 12,525 to 44,838 patrons. • **Digital Access:** Public Wi-Fi and workstation connections more than doubled, increasing from 107,507 uses in FY22 to 236,755 in FY26. • **Library Cards:** Annual new patron card issuances increased by 72.5%, from 13,071 in FY22 to 22,545 in FY26. Online e-card registrations increased by 152%. Mr. Firestine noted that the updated report provides a concise summary of RPL's strategic direction, documents progress through data, and connects the Library's goals and objectives to measurable outcomes. The report will be posted on the RPL website.

Reports (Continued)	
Policy Taskforce (Continued) Emily Altman	**Action Items:** 1. Prepare correspondence for LBOT members to send to their respective Councilors regarding the Strategic Plan Progress Report – *Ms. Altman and Mr. Firestine* o Draft correspondence highlighting the data and progress reflected in the report. o Reaffirm that the Strategic Plan's key priorities remain relevant and important to the City. o Emphasize the LBOT's continued commitment to the established goals and objectives. o Provide hard copies of the report upon request. o Include the website link once the report is posted. o Ms. Altman will share the draft with Advocacy Committee Chair Ms. Carter-Gunter for comment before forwarding it to Mr. Firestine and Ms. Pack for distribution. 2. Post the Strategic Plan Progress Report to the RPL website – *Ms. Pack* Following the discussion, the Strategic Plan Progress Report was moved to New Business for consideration and acceptance.
Chair Report Christine Peterson, Chair	Chair Peterson invited new LBOT members Linda Pechin and Samuel Runner to introduce themselves and provide a brief overview of their backgrounds. Chair Peterson provided an overview of the recent 3-Board Retreat involving the Library Board of Trustees, the Library Foundation, and Friends of the Library. She noted that each organization has a distinct role and set of responsibilities, but the Boards have gathered together over the past two years to address shared issues and opportunities. The most recent retreat focused on advocacy and messaging. Chair Peterson noted that the retreat was particularly valuable because Senior Managers also participated. The retreat had 44 attendees, and 7 responses were submitted, with feedback ranging from "great" to "glowing." Chair Peterson also noted Foundation President Dontrice Brown stated that the Foundation is prepared to host the next 3-Board Retreat.
Finance Scott Firestine	Mr. Firestine reported that the FY2027 budget kickoff occurred on September 22, 2026. The RPL budget has been activated and is being tracked. He noted that, in preliminary discussions, the Chief Administrative Officer has emphasized the competing demands facing the City of Richmond. The budget process is expected to follow a timeline similar to last year, with housing, collective bargaining, infrastructure, and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) identified as key priorities. Additional budget activities are expected to begin in October 2026.

Reports (Continued)	
Facilities Janet Woody, Chair Scott Firestine	Chair Peterson gave an overview of the facilities expansion initiative, which has three prongs: 1. Main Library needs to be brought up to code. 2. Focus on three old and very small, but heavily being used facilities (Belmont, East End, and Westover Hills Branches) must be expanded. 3. Focus on a new library south of the river since there are five locations north of the river and only three locations south of the river with population exactly the same. Ms. Woody reported there were three meetings with Counselors from the three districts with the Library. Discussion focused on information from the Dewberry Report and express commitment from the LBOT for upgrading these facilities. All three Counselors support the Library efforts and have given positive feedback. Mr. Firestine provided status on three key topics: 1. Bookmobile: The EV Bookmobile has been ordered in July 2026. It takes 350 to 400 days for delivery. 2. The Crozet House (Property located on the corner of First and Main Streets): In the process of crafting a LOI, which is a non-binding ask of the owner to sell it to the City and the Library as a property to add to the Main Library. There is opportunity to create a library campus, address some issues, also preserve the space in ways that might be great. Asking price is under $1 million. 3. Solar Panels: There is legislation going through Council currently. They are in a rush to get it through before the end of the month to place solar panels on approximately 39 buildings in the City of Richmond to offset electric bills. Some of the libraries were selected. Chair Peterson summarized where RPL is with facilities improvement and expansion: 1. Main Library: Possibilities with the Crozet House property and solar panels. Mr. Firestine and Ms. Clark have a list of improvements and will be working with the Department of General Services. District 2 Counselor Katherine Jordan would like to meet with Chair Peterson and Mr. Firestine on a status. 2. Expanding: It costs exactly the same to renovate each of the three libraries from 5,000-6,000 square feet to 17,000 feet as it does to build new. The CIP will be $17 million for each of the three locations. It should take 18 to 24 months to demolish, build a new library after procurement phase. 3. New Library on the Southside: Possibilities in progress with public and private partnerships.
Governance Christine Peterson, Chair	No formal report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
No Unfinished Business was discussed.
NEW BUSINESS
Chair Peterson called for a consensus to accept the Progress Report to the Richmond Public Library Strategic Plan. The report was reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:04 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at the Hull Street Branch Library located at 1400 Hull Street, Richmond, Virginia 23224 starting at 11:45 a.m. Vice Chair Brent Graves will lead the meeting. Chair Peterson will not be in attendance.

Approved:_____
Brent Graves, Vice Chair

Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP
Senior Executive Assistant