

## **BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**April 15, 2025**

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, April 15, at the North Point Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were: Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, and Maureen Walsh David. Ms. Cruz, Mr. Netzer, and Ms. West were absent.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; Julie Brophy, Adult and Community Engagement Manager; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Nay Keppler, Woodlawn Branch Manager Amanda Leitch, Human Resources; Helen Rowe, Fiscal Services Director; Elizabeth Storms, North Point Branch Manager; Connie Strittmatter, Youth and Family Engagement Manager; and Jamie Watson, Collection Development Manager.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

##### ***Minutes***

The Board approved the minutes of the March 18, 2025, meeting **(Walsh David/Lin-Chen)**.

##### ***Correspondence***

None.

##### ***Upcoming Events***

The CEO highlighted An Afternoon with Victoria Christopher Murray and the Author Appearance by Lois Lowry.

##### ***Comments from the Public***

None.

#### **REPORTS**

##### ***CEO's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)***

The CEO highlighted last week's National Library Week and acknowledged all libraries do in service to the community. The week was kicked off with Colson Whitehead - a blockbuster event in partnership with the Foundation for BCPL and Goucher College. The event highlighted how staff put our community first when developing and delivering programs and services that are meaningful and relevant to the people BCPL serves. The CEO expressed her gratitude to the Trustees, who demonstrated their support for BCPL and library staff by showing up to events and serving on the Board.

Earlier this month, BCPL was invited to attend the Emerging Adult Summit. The CEO presented on a panel and several BCPL staff and leaders were there. The focus was on Emerging Adults, young people ages 18-29, and on how libraries can better serve this group. Emerging Adults are facing a lot more instability and uncertainty than previous generations, which makes it harder for them to easily transition to adulthood. BCPL will be identifying the role the library can play in their lives. This age group contains future taxpayers, voters, and a potential pipeline of future supporters, librarians and library workers. An investment in this core age group is an investment in BCPL's future. BCPL has a work group tasked with recommending dedicated services and programs for this age group.

She was pleased to share that after a long hiatus, the Lawyers in the Library program will be resuming. This is a partnership with Maryland Legal Aid, Pro-Bono Resource Center, and the Community Law Center to offer free legal advice to Baltimore County residents.

The ongoing conversation about Emerging Adults and our Lawyers in the Library program are just two ways that BCPL is investing in the community to support the health, vitality, and resiliency of Baltimore County. On the heels of National Library Week, we are reminded libraries matter now more than ever and the work BCPL does levels the playing field for all.

#### ***North Point Branch (Storms)***

Ms. Storms shared an overview service at the North Point Branch. The branch serves a community of 75,000 with a high social vulnerability index. There is a heavy focus on technology help at the branch, from setting up email accounts to filling out job applications. The branch also makes outreach to the 14 schools in their service area a priority.

#### ***Operations (Cooke)***

Mr. Cooke shared that the installation of portable study rooms will soon begin at North Point. A partial HVAC replacement is underway at Pikesville, and a full HVAC replacement is being planned for North Point. The renovation of the White Marsh meeting room, lobby, and restrooms has begun and is currently slightly ahead of schedule. A refresh of Storyville at Rosedale has just been completed thanks to a grant from the Foundation for BCPL.

BCPL has also submitted entries for two awards related to the Catonsville renovation. The American Libraries Annual Library Design Showcase, and the Baltimore area Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) Annual Award. BCPL has won two prior ABC awards.

#### ***Fiscal Services Report (Rowe)***

Ms. Rowe shared that gap between revenues and expenditures is narrowing. BCPL received \$265,000 in grant funding from the Foundation for BCPL which brings the year-to-date amount to \$308,000. BCPL will need to absorb \$25,000 in expenses related to the revocation of IMLS grant funds. The grants provided funding for long-term lending and staff development and training.

Ms. Cheikh asked about the stability of energy costs. Ms. Rowe explained that there are fluctuations month to month in the cost.

Ms. Cheikh thanks Ms. Rowe and her team for their work on the FY 2026 Budget submission.

### ***Statistical Dashboard and Human Resources Report***

The Board received the Statistical Dashboard and Human Resources Report before the meeting and did not receive a verbal report.

### ***Collection Development (Watson)***

Ms. Watson reviewed collection-based statistics with the Board that compared the FY 23 and FY 24 collections. She shared that the two branches whose circulation saw the most impact from the closure of Catonsville for renovation were Arbutus, with an increase of 62.57%, and Woodlawn with an increase of 9.53%. Overall, the size of the BCPL collection has remained level with an overall 25% of the collection in circulation. Some branches see much more of the collection in circulation, Cockeysville with 37% and Pikesville with 45% are the standouts. Children's materials are the collections have extremely high circulation and particularly good return on investment even with rising costs. The items in the Library of Things collection also continue to be popular. Overall, material costs were increasing even before the latest news about tariffs. It is currently unclear of the impact the tariffs will have on BCPL's buying power, but they will have an impact.

Ms. Cheikh stated that BCPL's high circulation shows just how good the Collection Development Department is at choosing items for the collection.

### ***Board Report (Cheikh)***

Ms. Cheikh thanked the North Point Branch for hosting the Board Meeting and for the work the branch does with the community.

Ms. Cheikh also thanked the Foundation for sponsoring Colson Whitehead at Goucher College, the BCPL staff that supported the event, and Goucher College for the collaboration. There were 900 attendees at this insightful program. The Board is so excited for the Foundation's rollout of the 2025-26 Foundation book events and author events.

Ms. Cheikh attended the County Executive 2024 Budget Message with the CEO and Foundation Executive Director. She appreciated the County Executive's public remarks and continued fiscal support of BCPL. It is only through the fiscal support of County and State funding sources that BCPL can thrive as a library system. She thanked Ms. Rowe and her budget team for working closely with the County. The Board is excited to continue to grow BCPL's services and expand outreach efforts.

Ms. Cheikh shared that she was personally pleased with the carefully curated virtual collection of books for Arab American Heritage month available on the website and shared that as a young Arab American growing up, she never imagined that her library had Arab American authors and stories in its collection. She stressed the importance of making sure BCPL's collections reflect the community.

BCPL's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is an example given the book bans happening nationwide. The Naval Academy recently banned Maya Angelou's, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Ms. Cheikh ended her report, with Ms. Angelou's powerful words that offer direction in this turbulent time, "My wish for you is that you continue. Continue to be who and how you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness. Continue to allow humor to lighten the burden of your tender heart."

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ***Policy Update – Rules of Conduct (Keppler)***

Ms. Keppler presented suggested changes to the Rules of Conduct. Included were updating the terminology used to revoke access from "banned" to "suspended" which more accurately describes what is happening. Also recommended is updating the language to show that the mobile libraries and other services will also be unavailable to the customer during the period of suspension.

After discussion, the Board voted to amend the draft policy as follows:

Update "prohibited at all branches" of BCPL with "prohibited at all facilities" of BCPL **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

Update the statement regarding noncompliance with the Rules of Conduct to read "noncompliance may result in the suspension of library privileges, including access to library property for up to one year" and include in a separate sentence that "engaging in any activity prohibited by law may also result in arrest and prosecution" **(Lin-Chen/Walsh David)**.

With those amendments, the Board approved the updated Rules of Conduct **(Walsh David/Ganguly)**.

### ***Policy – Programming Policy (Brophy/Strittmatter)***

Ms. Brophy and Ms. Strittmatter presented a draft Programming Policy for approval. This policy will allow the library to implement a consistent framework for program development, improve internal collaboration, and make certain that future programming aligns with BCPL's mission and community needs. The Board approved the Programming Policy **(Walsh David/Ganguly)**.

### ***Policy – Heat Related Illness Prevention (Leitch)***

Ms. Leitch presented the Board with a draft Heat Related Illness Policy. This policy was developed in response to regulation mandated by the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Division to protect workers from heat hazards. The policy outlines the steps BCPL will take to prevent and manage heat-related illness for the employees most exposed to heat. At BCPL this is primarily Delivery drivers, Mobile Services staff, and staff participating in outdoor outreach

events. The policy sets minimum requirements and responsibilities to protect workers. The Board approved the Heat Related Illness Policy **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 08:57 am **(Ganguly/Walsh David)**.

Submitted by

Havaca Ganguly

Acting as Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees