

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

June 17, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, June 17, at the Woodlawn Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board Secretary Claudia Cruz. Other Board members present were Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, and Ms. Cheikh by phone. Mr. Netzer, Ms. Walsh David, and Ms. West were absent.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects & Data Manager; Alexandra Houff, Digital Equity and Virtual Services Manager; Nay Keppler, Woodlawn Library Manager; Robin Linton, Director of Human Resources; and Helen Rowe, Director of Fiscal Services. Also attending from Cornerstone were Mr. Bernie Marczyk and Ms. Jenna Sublett.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the May 20, 2025, meeting **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

The CEO highlighted the No Kid Hungry press conference July 1, the start of Summer Meals on June 23, and Legal Pop-Up @ the Library on July 1.

Comments from the Public

None.

REPORTS

CEO's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

CEO Alcántara-Antoine shared that the recent uncertainty around federal funding has had a domino effect on organizations that rely on federal funding. While federal funding makes up less than 1% of BCPL's budget, any loss of funding has an impact. Fortunately, BCPL has been authorized to spend IMLS funds that were allocated for FY 2025 and FY 2026. BCPL uses these IMLS funds towards staff training and development.

Over the past four years, BCPL has worked to build sustainable sources of funding beyond what is received from local, state, and federal governments. The Director of Philanthropy and Partnerships is building BCPL's fundraising capabilities through grant seeking, annual giving, planned giving, corporate sponsorships and political advocacy. These investments have paid off. In the past two years, the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library has granted BCPL \$1.1 million towards innovative

programs and services, and small capital needs. BCPL has also received an unprecedented \$85 million in investment from Baltimore County and Maryland towards major capital projects.

BCPL has leased a temporary space to continue offering service to the community during the \$22 million renovation and expansion of the Woodlawn Library. A considerable amount of advocacy went into getting support for the project, and BCPL looks forward to the start of the project. Advocacy work will be critical in the next few years as BCPL looks to gain funding and support for other capital projects during this time of increased fiscal uncertainty. The CEO stressed that BCPL is on the right path and will continue to make the necessary investments so that BCPL can continue to grow.

Cornerstone End of Session Report (Marczyk)

Mr. Bernie Marczyk and Ms. Jenna Sublett of Cornerstone shared a summary of the work Cornerstone did on behalf of BCPL during the last legislative session. Cornerstone monitored several bills that would impact BCPL and supported BCPL in opposition to House Bill 1071/Senate Bill 914, which would have allowed BCPL supervisors to collectively bargain. Cornerstone guides BCPL in establishing relationships that have allowed BCPL to share the library's impact on residents. As a result, over the last four years BCPL has received \$52,280,000 for the new Randallstown Library. Mr. Marczyk encourages the Board to write a note of thanks to Speaker Adrienne Jones, who has been instrumental in securing this funding.

Operations (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke thanked Ms. Houff and her team for the work being done to prepare for the upcoming Polaris update. This challenging project requires coordination between the vendor, the Office of Information Technology, and BCPL.

The Loch Raven branch was closed for a week as a new roof, HVAC system, and flooring were installed. The White Marsh renovation is on schedule and the branch will reopen in mid-July. The Woodlawn renovation has gone out to bid with the Baltimore County's on-call contractors. The project is expected to begin in October. Branch services will move into a temporary space during the renovation. Ms. Cruz asked how long the project is estimated to take, Mr. Cooke shared that it is anticipated to be a 22-month project. Ms. Cheikh asked if summer meals would be served from the temporary space, Mr. Hartzell shared that it is anticipated that meal service will continue.

Woodlawn Temporary Space (Keppler/Cooke)

Ms. Keppler shared an overview of what service will look like in the Woodlawn temporary space. It is anticipated that the branch will be able to provide most of the current service in the smaller location. With the substantial reduction in space, some staff will be deployed to other branches during the renovation. Ms. Keppler has worked with BCPS to take after-school programming to Woodlawn High School during the branch closure.

Fiscal Services Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe shared the Finance Report. Revenues remain slightly above expenses, and BCPL used \$27,137 from the Prior Fund Balance.

Human Resources Report (Linton)

Ms. Linton shared that the department continues recruitment for open positions in Human Resources and a small number of other positions. The Senior Training and Organizational Development Specialist vacancy has been filled. Contract negotiations with the Union are expected to start in September or October.

Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)

The Board received the May dashboard via email.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh thanked the BCPL staff for the wonderful programming this month. She also thanked those who gave reports at the meeting. The busy agenda spoke to the vitality of the organization. There is exciting and worthwhile work done at BCPL. The summer meals being served, the planned Pride Month activities, and the relationships that are being built with state and local legislatures with the assistance of Cornerstone all speak to BCPL's successful efforts.

Ms. Cheikh thanked the Foundation for their robust campaign, The Big Give. Many Board members have given gifts this month and Ms. Cheikh encouraged everyone to participate in this fundraiser supporting BCPL's programming.

She thanked Ms. Walsh David, Ms. Cruz, and Dr. Lin-Chen for serving on the Nominating Committee and thanked those who agreed to serve as officers for the coming year.

Ms. Cheikh reflected on the impact of the political and economic uncertainty that is expected in the coming year and the impact any downturns will have on BCPL. BCPL will face many challenges to meet the increased demands created by economic hardship.

The Board remains vigilant and determined to demonstrate BCPL's value and justify funding as budgets tighten. History has shown that during economic downturns libraries see surges in usage, as people seek free resources, internet access, job search assistance, and other services that bridge the digital divide. BCPL place as a community hub, and work to provide these and other resources will play a pivotal role in economic recovery.

Ms. Cheikh shared that the Board is confident that with CEO Alcántara-Antoine's leadership, and the work of BCPL's employees, the library will successfully navigate the current uncertainty. The Board will advocate for continued funding and support for BCPL, crucial to maintaining essential services which strengthen our community and provide opportunities for Baltimore County residents.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Officers (Cruz)

Dr. Lin-Chen reported on the Nominating Committee's recommendation that the current officers serve for another year. The Board approved this slate of candidates: President – Ms. Cheikh, Vice President – Ms. West, Treasurer-Ms. Ganguly, Secretary-Ms. Cruz **(Ganguly/Lin-Chen)**.

FY 2026 Board Meeting Dates and Locations

The Board approved meeting dates and locations for FY 2026 **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

Approval of Fee Increase for Cornerstone (Rowe)

At the request of the CEO, the Board amended the agenda (Lin-Chen/Cruz) to consider an increase in fee of \$1,000 per month requested by Cornerstone. This increase will raise the cost for the final year of the current contract to \$60,000. The Board approved the request (Lin-Chen/Cruz).

Award of Contract: Strategic Plan Consulting Services (Gamertsfelder)

An RFP for a Strategic Plan Consultant was published on the BCPL website. Thirteen proposals were submitted, and those proposals were reviewed and scored. The Board awarded the contract for Strategic Plan Consulting Services to Greenway Strategy Group for \$75,375 **(Lin-Chen/Cruz)**.

Policy: Long-Term Loan Devices Acceptable Use Policy (Houff)

Ms. Houff presented a policy that will address the requirements of the E-rate program and clarify the rules and expectations around the long-term lending Wi-Fi hotspots. The library's general Acceptable Use Policy remains unchanged. Ms. Houff shared that it is possible that Congress will remove hotspots from the E-rate program this year, but BCPL needs to be prepared to have a policy in place on July 1, if funding continues.

The Board approved the Long-Term Loan Device Policy to be implemented, when necessary, based on the decision of Congress to continue to support E-rate hotspots **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 08:56 am **(Ganguly/Lin-Chen)**.

Submitted by

Havaca Ganguly

Acting as Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees