

## BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**September 16, 2025**

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, September 16, at the Essex Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were Claudia Cruz, Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, and Maureen Walsh David. Mr. Netzer and Ms. West were absent.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; Ann Beegle, Chief External Affairs Officer, Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Jarrett Farmer, Randallstown Library Manager; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects & Data Manager; Justin Hartzell, Capital Projects Manager; Michael Jackson, Essex Library Manager; Amanda Leitch, Human Resources Business Partner, Michelle Romney, Human Resources Business Partner; Helen Rowe, Director of Fiscal Services; Jody Sharp, Cataloging & Processing Manager; and Tyler Wolfe, Regional Manager.

#### COMMUNICATION

##### *Minutes*

The Board approved the minutes of the June 17, 2025 **(Walsh David/Lin-Chen)** and August 4, 2025 **(Walsh David/Lin-Chen)** 2025, meetings.

##### *Correspondence*

None.

##### *Upcoming Events*

The CEO highlighted the upcoming Booked for BCPL author event featuring Erik Larson, sponsored by the Foundation for BCPL; a Digital Divide Simulation which will be attended by members of the Board, staff, and key stakeholders which will give participants an opportunity to learn the challenges faced by people with limited access to technology; the Woodlawn Groundbreaking Ceremony; and Read Out Proud, featuring author visits by Lil Miss Hot Mess and Sarah Prager.

##### *Comments from the Public*

None.

#### REPORTS

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

The CEO shared that the organization of the Board Agenda has been restructured. The agenda includes direct reports from all chief officers, with additional reports from their teams organized under the corresponding chief officer. The CEO continues to serve as Acting Chief Public Services Officer. However, the recruitment process for a new CPSO is ongoing.

The CEO welcomed the Board to the Essex Library. A design study has recently been completed to create a bold vision for the new Essex Library.

There is excitement around the closing of the Woodlawn Library for a \$22 million renovation and expansion. This is the largest capital budget BCPL has ever seen for this type of project. For comparison, the capital budgets for the Reisterstown and Catonsville renovations were just \$4 million and \$7 million, respectively. BCPL's last new construction project was Owings Mills in 2013 for \$6.5 million. The price tag for Woodlawn reflects what it costs in 2025 dollars to build libraries. It is also noteworthy because typically when renovating or building a branch, the full budget required to do everything needed has not been available. For the first time ever, BCPL does not have to scale back to just the most basic or critical needs—we can offer the community something truly exceptional. The CEO is appreciative of the County's support of BCPL and faith in BCPL's vision for a transformative library experience for the Woodlawn community.

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

Ms. Rowe shared the Finance Report. As it is early in the fiscal year, revenues are currently greater than expenses. Salaries have a large variance, and there will be greater alignment after the start of the calendar year when the approved Cost of Living Adjustment is in place.

#### ***Human Resources Report (Leitch, Romney)***

Ms. Leitch introduced Ms. Romney who is a Human Resources Business Partner and is the acting Labor and Employee Relations Manager.

Over the last few months, Human Resources staff have launched a new Learning and Development Hub for staff; revamped and relaunched Training Highlights messaging of upcoming training opportunities; drafted Drug Free Workplace training for supervisors; developed a Naloxone Toolkit and supported staff training; developed updated Standard Operating Procedures for internal consistency within Human Resources; drafted a Corrective Action and Personal Improvement Plan Toolkit for managers.

#### ***Essex Branch (Jackson)***

Mr. Jackson gave the Board an overview of the service provided by the Essex staff to the socially vulnerable in their community. Mr. Jackson and his staff work with several partners to meet the community's needs. Mr. Jackson also shared how the branch has been adapting as they make changes and implement feedback from the community.

Ms. Walsh David and Ms. Cheikh expressed appreciation for the work the branch is doing in the community.

#### ***Operations (Hartzell)***

Mr. Hartzell shared that to maximize efficiency and work through a backlog of maintenance requests, materials delivery has been merged from three routes to two. This allows greater flexibility of route coverage and allows more maintenance tickets to be completed.

The Woodlawn expansion and renovation is moving forward. The current Woodlawn Branch will close to the public on September 26, and the new temporary space will open on October 6<sup>th</sup>. During the closure the final set up of the temporary space will take place. The Baltimore County Office of Information Technology will move and set up public and staff facing equipment. The branch will be emptied and select materials and furniture moved into the temporary space. The remaining furniture and collections will either be stored or moved to other branches. The official groundbreaking event will be on October 1 with construction anticipated to begin in late October and take 22 months.

#### ***New Essex Branch (Hartzell, Jackson)***

Mr. Hartzell and Mr. Jackson presented an overview of the design of the new Essex Library created by Quinn Evans architects. The bold innovative design reflects the site's proximity to water and the woods, and Essex's industrial history and will have a footprint of 37,700 sq. ft. This will be a new building on a large site that has already been purchased by the County. The cost of construction is estimated to be \$47 million.

#### ***Capital Projects Dashboard (Hartzell)***

At the request of the Board Mr. Hartzell has developed a Capital Projects Dashboard. The Board was asked to review the document and share any suggested changes with the Executive Assistant. This report will be made available to the Board at each meeting.

#### ***Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)***

The Board received the June, July, and August Dashboards.

#### ***External Affairs (Beegle)***

Ms. Beegle is now in the role of Chief External Affairs Officer. In this role she will oversee government affairs, several departments including Marketing and Communication Strategy, Partnerships and Public Programs, and Philanthropy.

Ms. Beegle shared FY 2025 highlights from the Foundation and discussed the *New York Times* bestselling author program, *Booked for Baltimore County Public Library*. The Philanthropy and Partnerships department has increased donor retention and the minimum donation during FY 2025.

Ms. Beegle reported that Marketing and Communication Strategy has organized *Be in Tune with Your Library*, a series of Sunday music programs across the County. Marketing has also been working on press coverage announcing the closure of the Woodlawn Branch and the opening of the "mini" branch.

A candidate to fill the vacant Director of Philanthropy and Partnerships position has been selected and interviews to fill the new Senior Manager of Partnerships and Public Programs role have been scheduled.

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

Ms. Cheikh thanked staff for the incredible service provided to County Residents this summer and for the wonderful summer programming and meal distributions that took place. BCPL is a thriving hub of

activity for our communities and with the start of school and college students back on campuses, staff will be kept busy this Fall.

Ms. Cheikh shared several administrative items. On August 4th, the Board held a virtual meeting that went into a closed session. At that time, the Board voted to approve the recommendation of Human Resources on a personal matter. In addition, the Board did not hold their annual retreat in August but rather received asynchronous training. Ms. Cheikh thanked the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team for assembling worthwhile professional development for the Board. Later this month several Board members will attend the United for Libraries-Library Policy Retreat for Boards on Intellectual Freedom & Artificial Intelligence, and they are excited to bring these new insights to the Board's work.

Ms. Cheikh thanked library architects Quinn Evans for their collaboration with BCPL in imagining what a new Essex branch could provide residents and gave many thanks to Mr. Jackson for his leadership at the Essex branch and the invaluable service the branch provides invaluable services to the community. She also thanked the CEO, Mr. Hartzell, and Ms. Gamertsfelder for their responsiveness to the Board's request to establish a capital project dashboard. The Board is looking forward to seeing this update at future Board meetings.

The Board is excited for the upcoming fall events, particularly the afternoon with Erik Larson and thanked the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library for making the event possible. The Board is also looking forward to the groundbreaking ceremony for the Woodlawn renovation and the opening of the temporary branch.

Ms. Cheikh stated that preserving and strengthening our democracy is on the mind of all our Board members during these unprecedented times when public broadcasting and television, our libraries and our museums are under attack. Funding has been cut, good civic servants fired, books taken off shelves and exhibitions cancelled. The Board is eager to fortify our defenses against this onslaught of hate, vitriol, and regression and are proud that our library is meeting the needs of our diverse County. Hate has no place in our Baltimore County Public Libraries.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ***Staff Handbook Policies (Leitch, Sharp)***

Ms. Leitch and Ms. Sharp reviewed updates to Staff Handbook policies made to align with the current Memorandum of Understanding with the International Associations of Machinists and Aerospace Workers approved by the Board in November 2024.

At Ms. Walsh David's suggestion, the Board voted on the policy revisions for the Staff Handbook as a group in a single vote rather than individually. The Board approved changes to Staff Handbook Sections: 5-7 Employee Parking Policy, 5-14 Sunday Schedules and Pay Policy, 6-3 Holiday Closures and Pay Policy, 6-4 Sick Leave, 6-19 Floating Holiday Leave Policy, and 7-2 Vacancy Announcements (**Walsh David/Ganguly**).

**CLOSED SESSION**

At 9:01 am Ms. Cheikh called for a motion to close the public portion of the meeting under General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) to consider personnel matters related a specific employee **(Lin-Chen/Walsh David)**, and to adjourn from the closed session. Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Ganguly, Lin-Chen, and Walsh David. Ms. West and Mr. Netzer were absent. The staff members present at the Closed Session were CEO Alcántara-Antoine, Mr. Farmer, Ms. Leitch, Ms. Romney, and Mr. Wolfe.

After returning to open session at 09:13 am, the Board affirmed that had had voted unanimously to approve the personnel actions recommended by Human Resources and to adopt minutes of the closed session.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 09:14 am **(Cruz/Walsh David)**.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees