

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

October 21, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, October 21, at the White March Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were Claudia Cruz, Maureen Walsh David, Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, Michael Netzer, and Anne West.

Staff in attendance: Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, Chief Executive Officer; Ann Beegle, Chief External Affairs Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects & Data Manager; Justin Hartzell, Capital Projects Manager; Meghan Kalendek, White Marsh Assistant Library Manager; Cassandra Miller, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director; Helen Rowe, Director of Fiscal Services. Robin Linton, Human Resources Director, arrived during the meeting.

Also in attendance was Patty Foglesong from Greenway Strategy Group.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of September 16, 2025 **(Walsh David/Lin-Chen)**.

Correspondence

None.

Upcoming Events

The CEO highlighted the upcoming Dia De Los Muertos Festival at the Reisterstown Branch; the Booked for BCPL author event featuring Kate Quinn, sponsored by the Foundation for BCPL; and Flu shot clinics happening around the system.

Comments from the Public

Ms. Sharonda Huffman made suggestions for alternative funding sources for the new Essex Library and, in the future, for a Middle River Library. Ms. Huffman suggested that BCPL consider using more college students and internships in the library to meet staffing needs for new locations.

Ms. Morgana Schuirmann and Mr. Michael Barron spoke to the Board about recent bed bug issues at the North Point Library and their negative impact on staff.

Ms. Nicole Dvorak shared comments made by staff during the strategic planning process.

Ms. Cheikh called for a motion to change the order of the agenda which was made **(Lin-Chen/Walsh David)** and approved.

REPORTS

Operations (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke shared several updates with the Board.

North Point Builders has won a gold award from the Greater Baltimore Associated Builders and Contractors for the renovation of the Catonsville Library.

Alex Houff, formerly Manager of Digital Equity and Virtual Services, has taken a position with the Baltimore County Office on Information Service as a Customer Relationship Manager. BCPL will be one of her customers, and Mr. Cooke looks forward to working with Ms. Houff in that role.

Baker and Taylor, BCPL's primary book vendor, is going out of business. Collection Development has worked diligently to transition book orders to other sources.

Mr. Cooke also updated the Board on the process used by County Property Management and their vendor to combat bed bugs when they are discovered. There are processes in place to sequester material or other items when live or dead bed bugs are discovered. Facilities Services acts promptly to bring in pest control for an assessment and follow the recommended treatment plan. Bed bugs are a complicated issue as they are associated with people and can be a reoccurring issue in public spaces. If necessary, branch management may address specific customers if their belongings or returned items have been the source of pests.

Ms. Walsh David asked if the pest management vendor had best practices specifically for libraries. Mr. Cooke assured her that BCPL and Property Management maintain an ongoing dialog with the vendor and implement new methods when available.

Ms. Cheikh asked if there was any way to expedite the response from the County. Mr. Cooke shared that ideally mitigation occurs within 24 hours, however there is sometimes a delay with scheduling the pest control company.

Ms. Cheikh encouraged Mr. Cooke to make sure these issues are expedited as much as possible.

CEO's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

CEO Alcántara-Antoine discussed the accomplishments of Ms. Beegle and the Philanthropy department. Two years ago, the development arm of BCPL was separated into its own department. This allowed the department to focus exclusively on fundraising. Ms. Beegle was hired and provided an extensive knowledge of fundraising and politics.

Ms. Beegle was specifically charged with a number of goals including: strengthen the Foundation Board through identification of prospective Board members; strengthen the existing staff by introducing a clearer differentiation of roles and training, and to identify additional roles and opportunities; assess the impact of established events, with an eye towards making way for new stewardship opportunities; and, recommend a long-term fundraising plan with appropriate annual goals, metrics, and timelines.

During her tenure as Executive Director of the Foundation for BCPL, Ms. Beegle has accomplished all that and more, ushering in a new era of philanthropic giving at BCPL. Building on the Foundation's 36-year legacy of fundraising, Ms. Beegle brought a strategic focus to the cultivation of new donors and deepening relationships with existing supporters. That set the stage for unprecedented fundraising success: in the past two years, the Foundation for BCPL awarded nearly \$1 million to BCPL to enhance essential services and fuel innovation. Ms. Beegle has also elevated the profile of BCPL by attracting prominent figures to the library, like Colson Whitehead and Erik Larson.

CEO Alcántara-Antoine expressed her appreciation and gratitude for Ms. Beegle's leadership as BCPL welcomes a new Executive Director for the Foundation and Ms. Beegle moves into her new role as Chief External Affairs Officer. The CEO also offered special recognition to the Philanthropy team, who along with Ms. Beegle, worked diligently to get BCPL to this point.

BCPL has ambitious goals and a vision of having 21st century libraries all around Baltimore County. The CEO looks forward to continued partnership with Baltimore County Government, the state of Maryland, and the Foundation for BCPL in reaching new heights in the years ahead.

The CEO introduced Meghan Kalendek, the interim Library Manager at White Marsh, to give the branch report. The CEO noted that Ms. Lombardo, the former Library Manager, retired at the end of the summer after 36 years of dedicated service.

White Marsh Report (Kalendek)

Ms. Kalendek discussed the community served by the White Marsh Branch. The community is becoming increasingly diverse, and two new schools have been built in the branch service area. The branch sees many visits from adult daycare groups, young families, and passport applicants. The recent renovation updated the bathrooms and meeting room with new paint, flooring, and lighting. New furniture was added to the children's area, and study rooms were added. Ms. Kalendek thanked the Foundation for the grant which provided funding for the study rooms, the most requested enhancement of the renovation.

Fiscal Services Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe shared the Finance Report and noted that revenues continue to be greater than expenses. Some expenditures have been offset with support from the Foundation for BCPL for library projects.

Ms. Walsh David noted that the expenditure on security was lower. CEO Alcántara-Antoine shared that the amount spent on overall safety and security remains unchanged; BCPL has moved away from contracted security guards and instead has hired guards as library employees.

Human Resources Report (Linton)

Ms. Linton provided a written Human Resources report in advance of the meeting.

Strategic Plan (Gamertsfelder/Foglesong)

Patty Foglesong, Greenway Strategy Group, provided an update on the strategic planning process. There are three phases to the plan. Phase 1 (August to October) was data gathering and analysis, stakeholder input, a review of environmental trends, and identification of key findings. Phase 2 (November-March)

will include a design session, drafting a strategic plan framework, stakeholder input, refinement of the framework, and draft metrics. Phase 3 (April) will include identifying key initiatives, creating action plans, and developing a monitoring process.

Greenway has conducted 10 interviews with several more scheduled, 7 focus groups, 2 staff input sessions, a staff thought exchange, 3 regional branch conversations, 3 community conversations, and a community survey and thought exchange. Next steps will be completing stakeholder engagement, incorporating feedback into analysis, facilitating design sessions using analysis, and drafting the strategic plan framework.

Operational Plan (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared the Operational Plan reports from the 4th quarter of FY 2025, and the 1st quarter of 2026. She noted that several programming goals have been updated or expanded as many had been accomplished early in the year.

Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared the Statistical Dashboard and noted that numbers are on target, and there has been an increase in tech sessions.

Ms. Cheikh noted that she wants the number of registered cardholders to increase.

Ms. Linton arrived.

Capital Projects Dashboard (Hartzell)

Mr. Hartzell updated the Board on several capital projects. With funding from the Foundation, study rooms have been installed at the White Marsh Branch, and the Towson Branch was repainted, and the children's area refreshed.

Construction has started on the Woodlawn renovation, and work will begin soon for the North Point HVAC replacement.

Ms. Cheikh complimented Mr. Hartzell on the dashboard and is pleased that the Board can now see the costs related to each project.

Human Resources (Linton)

Ms. Linton's arrival allowed her to give the Board a brief update. She shared that Human Resources has been planning a Staff Day to be held in December. Branches will close for half a day, and staff will attend virtual sessions at their branch locations.

External Affairs (Beegle)

Ms. Beegle spoke briefly about her work with the Foundation. Notably, over the last 2 years the number of Foundation Board members has risen to 16 active participants. The Foundation also received support and event participation from the Board of Library Trustees.

Ms. Beegle shared that the County Executive declined to sign a lease for a new Middle River Library. This project will be revisited when a new County Executive has been elected.

There will be a community open house at the Essex Branch later this month. Attendees will see the new library design and be able to ask questions about the project. A wide range of County, State, and Federal elected officials have been invited to attend. Ms. Beegle is working with the CEO to apply for federal Community Project Funding, formerly Federal earmarks, for this project.

Foundation Fundraising Plan (Beegle)

Before discussing the Foundation Fundraising Plan, Ms. Beegle introduced Mr. Emanuel Figueroa, the new Philanthropy Manager.

Ms. Beegle was tasked with developing a five-year funding plan for the Foundation that would be a working document that aligned with BCPL's Strategic Plan. The goal for FY 2026-FY 2030 is to raise \$7 million by maximizing annual giving, launching a major gifts program, and positioning 50 donors for legacy gifts.

Ms. Walsh David complimented Ms. Beegle on the plan and asked about the amount of federal funding BCPL is asking for. Ms. Beegle shared that BCPL is requesting \$4 million for the new Essex Library and is working in consultation with Maryland Senate members on the request.

Ms. Cheikh stated that the Board is 100% behind the work of the Foundation and recognized Ms. West as a transformational donor to the Foundation in support of BCPL's work.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh congratulated and thanked the CEO and the Foundation for a fantastic afternoon with Erik Larson. The event was attended by over nine hundred Baltimore County residents. It was an afternoon of culture and humor that delighted everyone. Ms. Cheikh also thanked her fellow Board members for attending and expressed their excitement for the upcoming evening with Kate Quinn.

Ms. Cheikh highlighted the professional development occurring at BCPL. Ms. Cheikh and fellow Board members recently attended a Digital Divide Simulation at the Owings Mills branch. At the training, attendees walked through the simulated day of some of the County's most vulnerable residents. It was a reminder of the challenges and daily frustrations of Baltimore County's communities that do not have consistent access to the internet and resources that many take for granted. Attendees left with renewed energy to address these challenges and support BCPL staff in helping residents navigate the digital divide. Ms. Cheikh expressed the Board's thanks to Ms. Houff, former Digital Equity and Virtual Services Manager, and her team for providing the program.

Ms. Cheikh thanked the branches for their engaging programming during Banned Book Week. She stated that Maryland leads the nation in securing protection for librarians and enshrining the freedom to read. However, libraries must remain stalwart champions of this mission. Book challenges are taking place across the state of Maryland, and BCPL must remain vigilant. As citizens in a democracy, the freedom to engage in culture wars, to have dissenting opinions heard, to vigorously argue our own unique perspective must be protected. The public library must remain a nonpartisan space in which different perspectives are available, and robust conversations take place.

Ms. Cheikh shared that the vote on the Maryland Immigration Enforcement and Sensitive Locations Policy will increase a sense of safety for customers and staff by providing strong protections around records and subpoenas and greater comfort for multilingual and immigrant users. The policy will reinforce that the library provides essential services to everyone, regardless of citizenship or immigration status. All Maryland residents have the right to equal access to library services.

Ms. Cheikh attended the groundbreaking for the Woodlawn renovation, a project that will assist BCPL's efforts to provide these ever-evolving services in renovated spaces. The groundbreaking was a wonderful event, with the Woodlawn High School marching band generating an atmosphere of celebration and excitement. Ms. Cheikh thanked local and state partners for their part in providing the funding for this \$22million project and hopes that together funding can be secured for projects across the County in the months ahead.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Purchasing Card Policy (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe shared an updated Purchasing Card Policy. Updates were made to the policy to remove redundant language and outdated positions, clarify the expectations of cardholders, and increase accountability and transparency. The Board approved the Purchasing Card Policy (**Walsh David/West**).

Ms. Walsh David requested that going forward, the Board be provided with both versions of a policy so they could better review the changes.

Ms. Ganguly left the meeting.

Maryland Immigration Enforcement and Sensitive Locations Policy (Miller)

This policy was developed in response to the Maryland Values Act (HB 1222) which designates Maryland public libraries as sensitive locations. Guidance was provided by the Attorney General and the Maryland State Library Agency and was used in developing this policy. Ms. Miller emphasized that immigration enforcement officers may only access private areas with a valid judicial warrant or in response to exigent circumstances. The policy mirrors BCPL's current practice, and resources have been created to assist staff.

Ms. Miller requested that the Board approve the policy to comply with state law, uphold customer rights, and guide staff in enforcement-related situations. The Board approved the Maryland Immigration Enforcement and Sensitive Locations Policy **(West/Walsh David)**.

Ms. Walsh David asked if there was a process in place to let people who might not use the library know of the policy. Ms. Miller shared that Ms. Cordova, BCPL's New Americans Outreach Specialist, is embedded in the new American community and is able to increase awareness.

Adjournment

The Board did not hold a closed session and Ms. Cheikh asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 09:26 am **(Cruz/Lin-Chen)**.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees