

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

November 18, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, November 18, at the Towson Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board President Yara Cheikh. Other Board members present were Maureen Walsh David, Havaca Ganguly, Pamela Lin-Chen, Michael Netzer, and Anne West. Ms. Cruz arrived during public comments.

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; Cassandra Mille, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director; Michelle Romney, Human Resources Business Partner; Helen Rowe, Director of Fiscal Services.

Also in attendance were William Early and Brendon Glover from CLA.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of October 21, 2025 **(Lin-Chen/Ganguly)**.

Correspondence

Ms. Cheikh has received correspondence about the removal of the part-time librarians which will be added to the Board files.

Upcoming Events (Beegle)

Ms. Beegle highlighted the upcoming Pop-up Shops at the Catonsville, Cockeysville, and Owings Mills branches; and noted the kick-off of the annual Battle of the Books program.

Comments from the Public

The Board heard comments from BCPL union representatives, including Anita Bass and Rachel Jackson, union representative speaking in solidarity with BCPL staff, and community members about the firing of the part-time Librarians.

Ms. Cruz arrived.

Ms. Cheikh thanked everyone who spoke or attended to support staff.

REPORTS

CEO's Report (Alcántara-Antoine)

The CEO acknowledged those present and those who spoke during public comments. She thanked them for taking the time to share their input. The CEO stated her pride in seeing the care and commitment the staff and community show for our public library system. The CEO spent time over the last few days listening, talking with key stakeholders, and absorbing what has transpired with the phase out and then

the reinstatement of the part-time librarian position. She recognized that the recent decision created unintended consequences and undermined trust in our library system, took responsibility for those actions, and affirmed her commitment to making it right. The 14 part-time librarians have also been reinstated and will be paid for all scheduled hours before and after the reinstatement. The CEO also called each to offer an apology.

The CEO shared that she is working on next steps which include establishing clearer decision-making and communication protocols for any future organizational changes; an all-staff open forum with staff to listen and discuss what support or changes are needed to move us and the organization forward; and changes to the leadership team to foster transparency, rebuild trust, and guide us toward a stronger future.

BCPL staff play a key role in fulfilling the mission, vision, and values of the Baltimore County Public Library, making it a welcoming and inclusive place for all to explore, learn, create, and connect. There is no library without staff with their passion and commitment to serving the residents of Baltimore County.

A demonstration of this took place this past month with the graduation of the most recent class of the Entrepreneur Academy, BCPL's 8-week course to help residents build or expand their businesses. Since 2019, 500 have graduated from this program. The CEO offered congratulations to the Adult and Community Engagement Department who run the program. The CEO also noted that the Essex Branch hosted a Community Fair with a focus on reintegration of those who had been incarcerated, released and starting a new life. There were more than 300 people in attendance.

Fiscal Services Report (Rowe)

Ms. Rowe shared the Finance Report; there were no significant changes.

Human Resources and Labor Relations Reports (Romney)

Ms. Romney reviewed the Human Resources report and shared that meetings of the Labor Management Committee have been productive.

External Affairs (Beegle)

Ms. Beegle reported that the Foundation for BCPL's most recent author event with Kate Quinn was a huge success. She thanked Ms. Cheikh for facilitating the discussion with the author. She also congratulated Ms. Frederick and the Marketing team on their recent honorable mention from the Library Marketing Conference Group for the Wild About Sunday events.

Operations (Cooke)

Mr. Cooke shared that BCPL continues to work with Baltimore County Property Management on bed bug remediation. Additional monitoring and a new type of trap that should attract the insects if they are present have been put in place which should allow for a more rapid response from the pest control contractor. Additional chemical treatment of enclosed spaces has also taken place.

Capital Projects Dashboard (Hartzell)

Mr. Hartzell shared that construction for the Woodlawn renovation has begun. The North Point HVAC replacement project has started, and a temporary wall has been constructed to reduce the impact on staff and customers.

Statistical Dashboard (Gamertsfelder)

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared that October statistics were on track. Statistics for the Woodlawn temporary space will be reflected on next month's dashboard.

Board Report (Cheikh)

Ms. Cheikh stated that each month in her Board report, she mentions the incredible work of Baltimore County Public Library employees and that as a Board, Trustees know that their actions must reflect their words. She went on to say that the Board was shocked and devastated by the immediate phase out of all our part-time librarians and the way these individuals were treated upon dismissal.

Individually, the Board reached out to the CEO to express their concerns, and the Board thanked all the community and government partners that stood with BCPL staff.

Part-time librarians have been reinstated, and a realignment has been made in Human Resources as important first steps. Repairing and restoring trust is required for staff to have confidence that they are respected, and their work is valued and that the Board of Library Trustees see, hear and support them. Transparency throughout the process is required for meaningful change and true accountability.

In the weeks ahead, the Board will be reviewing the hiring and separation policies in place and general administration practices. They will also consider how best to hear from our staff and evaluate staff satisfaction; and evaluate the growth of our system and the budgetary repercussions of that growth at all levels.

The Board will meet virtually in December to continue the work.

Ms. Cheikh expressed the Board's gratitude for the staff and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Acceptance of FY 2025 Audit (CLA)

Mr. Early of CLA gave the Board an overview of the draft FY 2025 Audit. Due to lack of time to review the draft, the Board voted to defer acceptance of the FY 2025 Audit to a December meeting **(Cruz/Netzer)**.

The Board voted to amend the agenda to add a closed session **(Cruz/Lin-Chen)**.

CLOSED SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

At 9:11 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 to a specific employee **(Cruz/West)**, and to adjourn

from the closed session. Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Ganguly, Lin-Chen, Netzer, West, and Walsh David. CEO Alcántara-Antoine was also present during the Closed Session.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees

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