

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 17, 2026

A meeting of the Board of Library Trustees was held on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at the Hereford Library. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am by Board Secretary Claudia Cruz. Other Board members present were Maureen Walsh David, Mr. Netzer, and Ms. Cheikh by phone. Ms. Ganguly, Dr. Lin-Chen, and Ms. West were absent.

Staff in attendance: Erin Baker, Chief Public Services Officer; Ann Beegle, Chief External Affairs Officer; James Cooke, Chief Operations Officer; Marianne Cowles, Hereford Steward; Jen Evans, Executive Assistant; Emanuel Figueroa, Philanthropy Manager, Emily Gamertsfelder, Planning, Projects, and Data Manager; Justin Hartzell, Capital Projects Manager; Samantha O’Heren, Hereford Library Manager; Michelle Romney, Human Resources; and Helen Rowe, Director of Fiscal Services.

COMMUNICATION

Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the February 17, 2026, meeting **(Walsh David/Netzer)**.

Correspondence

None.

Changes to the Agenda

The Board voted to reorganize the agenda and move “old business” and “new business” ahead of the staff reports **(Walsh David/Netzer)**.

Comments from the Public

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Employee Handbook Policy Revisions

The Board approved revisions, as recommended by Human Resources and BCPL’s attorney, to the following Employee Handbook Policies: Section 4-2a Types of Employment – Temporary Employment; Section 4-14 Appointments, Suspensions, Release from Employment, and Part-time Break in Service; Section 8-16 Drug and Alcohol Policy **(Walsh David/Netzer)**.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution to Create Bylaws Committee

The Board adopted a resolution to create a Bylaws Committee **(Walsh David/Netzer)**.

Resolution to Create Executive Director Search Committee

The Board adopted a resolution to create an Executive Director Search Committee (**Walsh David/Netzer**).

Employee Handbook Policy Revisions

The Board approved revisions, as recommended by Human Resources and BCPL's attorney, to the following Employee Handbook Polices: Section 8-1 Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy; Section 8-18 Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy; 8-19 Workplace Harassment Prevention and Response Policy (**Walsh David/Netzer**).

Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding with IAM

The Board approved amendments to the FY 2027 Memorandum of Understanding in the following sections: Section 2.3 Union Activities; Section 7.4 Layoff and Recall. Going forward, BCPL will adjust notification to 15 calendar days in the event of layoffs, reduction in force, job classification elimination, promotion of employee to positions outside the bargaining unit, removal of positions from the bargaining unit, and of new employee orientation programs. In addition, the order of reduction in force now includes fiscal reasons and displaced employees will be offered a position before hiring any new employee. It is anticipated that this will foster improved employee and employer relations and remove ambiguities. The Board approved the amendments (**Walsh David/Netzer**).

REPORTS

Public Services

Hereford Branch

Ms. O'Heren thanked the Board for visiting the Hereford Branch. While the branch offers the usual materials and programs, Ms. O'Heren focused on their spaces. The Hereford Branch is used as a community meeting place. Young parents find support for themselves and engagement for their children. Students have a quiet place to work or a study room to meet with a tutor. Seniors can find a book and have friendly conversations. Entrepreneurs and remote workers find workspace and reliable Wi-Fi. Children with sensory issues enjoy all the special features in the new sensory space. Adults with disabilities can develop new skills and be social. Artists have a free place to display their creations. Electric vehicle owners can charge their cars at the only EV charging stations north of Hunt Valley. People of all ages can connect with nature and get their hands dirty in the sensory garden. County Agencies hold meetings to provide information and resources to the community.

Outreach to the community includes Pints and Pages program at the Black Locust brewery, Reading Cuddly Buddies at the Defenders of Animal Rights, and Library at Lunch at Hereford Middle School.

Chief Public Services Officer

Ms. Baker has completed her initial visits to all 19 branches this month. She also introduced author Markus Zusak at Owings Mills, attended staff meetings with the staff of Perry Hall, White Marsh, and Youth and Family Engagement, attended the Be At the Table community event in

Arbutus, and 6 of the County's Budget Town Halls. She continues to collaborate with Human Resources and the Labor Management Committee.

Programing

Hereford is hosting Digital Literacy for Adults with Disabilities set of classes. Adults and their caregivers learn computer basics, the internet, online safety, email, and navigating social media.

Rosedale will be hosting a caregiver meetup and well-being workshop where Caregivers learn tools for self-care that strengthen brain health, reduce stress, build resilience, and connect with community in a supportive environment.

Lansdowne has added a daily Peer Tutoring program where kids can be tutored by a National Honor Society student from Lansdowne High School.

Parkville saw the most participation in the High School Battle of the Books.

Pikesville is presenting an array of programs that explore Yiddish literature and Jewish culture as part of the Yiddish Book Center's Public Libraries Program.

Outreach

CASH Campaign has been extremely busy at the Towson and Woodlawn Branches. CASH Campaign offers free tax assistance to taxpayers making less than \$69,000 annually. So far, 600 taxpayers at Towson and 369 at Randallstown have received assistance.

In partnership with the Community Assistance Network, Randallstown hosts a weekly Community Choice Pantry.

Outreach from our branches to local schools continues to be a tremendous success with Library at Lunch. Notable visits include Southwest Academy and Woodlawn Middle School, engaged 232 students, and circulated 119 books, Nottingham with 80 attendees and 71 checkouts, and Middle River saw 95 attendees and 100 checkouts.

Branch Highlights

The Board received written highlights from all branches; Ms. Baker shared selections from those reports.

During the snow and bitter cold in February, the Essex Branch saw an increase in visits from unhoused customers looking for a warm place to spend the day. Staff worked hard to make sure these customers felt welcomed while also continuing to meet the needs of the many other people using the library. One customer even commented on how well staff balancing compassion with keeping the library running smoothly for everyone. Moments like this serve as a reminder of the significant role the library plays as a safe and welcoming space for the entire community.

At the February North Point branch meeting, staff took a moment to acknowledge the death of a longtime customer and daily visitor who was experiencing homelessness. He was struck by a

vehicle at a nearby intersection. During this difficult time, staff have been offered Employee Assistance Program support as well as guidance from Regional Manager Zeke White and Social Worker Supervisor, Ellie Camlin who shared the following: "When working with people, the "right" answer or choice is rarely clean-cut, especially when people are navigating complex intersections of behavior, experience, and systemic oppression...It is a tragedy, and we do have a responsibility as a community to work toward a world that holds less suffering for people who carry the most weight of it."

The staff have submitted the customer's name to be recognized during the annual Homeless Persons Memorial Day on December 21st.

DEI Report

DEI Director Cassie Miller shared a Black History Month "Cassie's Corner" for staff focused on "Not Neutral, Not Accidental: Black Librarianship as a Blueprint for Today."

Ms. Miller presented on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at Baltimore County Public Library at the updated New Staff Orientation.

Ms. Miller served on a panel with the DEI officers from the Enoch Pratt Free Library and the Howard County Library System at the State Library Resource Center Spring Conference to discuss the current state of DEI in libraries and how libraries can continue to promote diversity and inclusion in their communities.

New Americans Specialist Jessica Cordova attended several Library at Lunch sessions, and was a guest speaker at the Hereford Branch, promoting library services and assisting in creating library cards for ESL families. She also attended the Latino Providers Network monthly meeting.

Mr. Netzer read a citation from Delegate Forbes for Mr. Cooke, who is retiring this week.

Operations

Mr. Cooke introduced Don Osborn, the new Digital Equity and Virtual Services Manager. He also thanked Mr. Malley for his leadership while acting as DEVS manger.

Mr. Cooke reflected on his time at BCPL and as COO. During his tenure as COO, every BCPL location has seen improvements, some small, some large. He thanked his team of Department Heads and managers. He thanked Ms. Shindle at Property Management and staff for the strong working relationship that has been built with BCPL. He also thanked the Board for their trust and support.

Capital Projects

Mr. Hartzell shared the Capital Projects Dashboard. Upcoming and current projects include rust removal and new paint for railings at Hereford, the completion of the Admirative Office server room HVAC replacement, and work to repair exterior meeting room stairs and landings at Loch Raven. The Woodlawn interior demolition has been completed, and the 30% design plan for the new Randallstown building has been finalized.

Ms. Walsh David and Ms. Cheikh asked about access to the Loch Raven meeting room. Currently, access is from an exterior entrance on the side of the building. The room is being used for branch programming only, and no public use has been allowed since October.

Statistical Dashboard

Ms. Gamertsfelder shared the Statistical Dashboard and noted that there is still impact due to the operation of the Woodlawn Branch, and February is a slow month. Ms. Walsh David noted that the number of overall visits to BCPL have not been significantly impacted by the closure of the Woodlawn Branch.

External Affairs

Ms. Beegle reviewed the External Affairs report.

250th Anniversary Update

BCPL is partnering with the Baltimore County Government in celebration of the 250th anniversary of our nation. A cross-functional team of senior staff is working on a series of programs and events to highlight this important milestone.

Youth and Family Engagement is developing a coloring book featuring images of Marylanders who made a significant contribution to our county over the past 250 years.

Adult & Community Engagement (ACE) is planning a series of author visits. Featured are *A Founding Mother with Author Stephanie Dray* at Arbutus in June, *Pirates of the Chesapeake Bay presented by author and historian Jamie Goodall* at Cockeysville in July, and *Untold Stories of the American Revolution with author and historian Richard Bell* as a virtual program in October.

ACE will also be incorporating the 250th theme into the *Adult Reading Challenge* in the fall. The department is brainstorming ways to bring the theme to music, craft, and other historical programming before the end of the year.

The library's celebration will culminate with a special edition of the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library's author series featuring an appearance by a highly acclaimed historian on Sunday, November 15. The event will take place in coordination with community partner Goucher College, *Booked for BCPL* sponsors and additional new partners associated with the 250th anniversary commemoration in Maryland. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn from a preeminent scholar who will offer academic insight on not only our nation's past, but also on what our future might hold.

Adult & Community Engagement

Upcoming events from ACE include:

Local Author Showcase, Saturday, March 28, at Cockeysville. This is the 6th annual event that brings local authors from all genres of adult and children's books together to meet the community and sell their books.

Meet The Author: The Case of the Murdered Muckraker with Author Rob Osler, March 30, at Perry Hall. The award-winning author will discuss his newest book.

Some Bright Nowhere with Author Ann Packer, Sunday, April 12, at Owings Mills. The author discusses her newest novel. This program is made possible by a grant from the Baltimore County Department of Aging's Caregiver Support Program.

Recent events from ACE included:

The first *Pathways to Housing: A Community Resource Fair* held at the Owings Mills Branch. Coordinated by Social Work Supervisor Ellie Camlin, 23 community members met with 11 community partner organizations. As part of the fair, the Economic Action Maryland Fund offered a presentation on fair housing rights for renters. Ms. Beegle shared a story of the importance of these connections: A woman and her sister came together seeking housing resources. They were unsure of where to start with their current situation, which had a looming deadline. When they left, they told Kevin Jayce that they got all the questions they had answered and felt much better about their situation. Other comments included "Thank you for all that you are doing to help people." "We need it," "it was great that [the library] was doing things like this with everything going on in the world" and "it is amazing to see a fair like this." The next *Pathways to Housing* fair will be held on Tuesday, March 31 at Owings Mills.

As part of the *Spotlight on Caregiving* series, librarian Lori Hench hosted *A Caregivers Journey with Rosanne Corcoran* on February 24 and welcomed 65 virtual attendees.

In conjunction with The Associated, plans are underway for Jewish Heritage Month, including two author visits, one with a renowned kosher baker and the other with the biographer of Jewish toy makers.

Youth & Family Engagement

Upcoming Events include:

Battle of the Books author visits: Sally Pla, Saturday, March 21, at Reisterstown and Cockeysville; Jasmine Warga, Thursday, March 26, virtually; and Hena Khan, Saturday, April 18, at Owings Mills and Towson

Recent YFE Highlights included:

The Gene Luen Yang visit at the Catonsville branch was a tremendous success with almost 150 people in attendance.

In March, YFE added a fourth park to their outreach schedule: Honeygo Run Regional.

YFE added an activity to our visits to the Lansdowne, Middle River, and Hillendale recreational centers this month.

YFE is currently brimming with boxes of Summer Reading books and prizes. The team is doing an excellent job of pivoting to make space for storage as they work on distributing everything to all 19 branches.

Marketing & Communications

Marketing & Communications continues to support priority programming via multiple channels.

Marketing's Graphic Production staff are working on the Summer Reading Challenge game board, tote bag giveaway, posters, and all collateral near completion.

A media spot featuring Spotlight on Caregiving programs is now airing through Comcast targeting women 50+ and adults 66+ for a total of 285,038 impressions in Baltimore County. This campaign was funded by the caregiving grant.

Social Media accounts have been active with Facebook gaining 100 followers, 156 new followers on Instagram, and 24 on LinkedIn. The top post was for the recent closure for the winter storm on February 22, with 30,000 views on Facebook.

Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library

Mr. Figueroa shared that the Foundation for BCPL continues to be busy planning the upcoming 2026/27 *Booked for Baltimore County Public Library* Author series. Recent events from this series were highly successful with 450 guests attending the program with Jennifer Weiner.

Philanthropy is planning an April Library Day Campaign, and is working on the spring's final *Booked for BCPL* event with Percival Everett on March 29.

The FY27 internal grants program is underway. The Foundation received 17 applications totaling over \$400,000. The requests range from \$250 for bike locks at the North Point Branch, to \$127,000 to renovate the children's section at Owings Mills. The grant applications have been reviewed by the Library Leadership Team, and the Foundation Grants Committee, and select applications will move forward for Foundation Board approval.

Fiscal Services

Ms. Rowe reported that part of the variance in salaries is due to the month of February having only 28 days. She continues to work with the County on the budget submission.

Human Resources

Ms. Romney shared highlights from the Human Resources Report. BCPL has 504 active employees. HR is managing recruitment for 14 open positions. The HR team worked with BCPL's legal counsel to develop the policies on the agenda. A draft Longevity Plan is under development.

Union Report

Ms. Cowles reviewed the Union Report for the Board. She thanked those who helped create the organizational map for staff. There were no new grievances, and the union continues to express support for a new Human Resources Information System.

Over the past month, health and safety concerns included treatment for mice at Rosedale, HVAC issues in the staff area, and plumbing issues in the public restrooms at Perry Hall, and evacuation due to the smell of natural gas at Woodlawn.

The Labor Management Committee topics and issues to be discussed included policy updates, a Longevity Plan, determining what could be delaying staff step increases, seeking clarity around current transfer practices and discussion of hypothetical changes to those practices, and determining when staff may begin testing for certification as part of the Multilingual Pay Policy.

Board Executive Committee Report

The Executive Committee met this month and considered several items including leadership communication with the Board, the importance of process in Union relations, and the composition of the March Board agenda.

Board President's Report

With the current economic uncertainty, Baltimore County is facing fiscal challenges. The Board is appreciative of the leadership team in particular our budget office led by Ms. Rowe and their work to find ways to increase efficiency in our operations while staff continue to innovate and create meaningful programming and provide sought after resources for County residents.

Included on the agenda is the establishment of two committees, the Bylaws committee and the Executive Director Search committee, both of which will be created by resolution as directed in the Board bylaws. The Board will be reviewing submissions received in response to the RFI for an Interim Executive Director and from the RFP for an Executive Search firm. The Executive Director Search Committee will be considering how best to include staff, union, and leadership in the selection process.

The Board is committed to establishing appropriate policies and procedures and maintaining transparency during their implementation. The Board is interested in robust monthly and quarterly reports from BCPL leadership, union, and staff members to engage in constructive support for BCPL.

Ms. Cheikh looks forward to celebrating Mr. Cooke's retirement with him. The Board thanked him for his dedication to the Baltimore County Public Library for over 27 years. The Board also emphasized their support of Ms. Baker and Ms. Beegle during this time of transition and recognized the additional reports they will be presenting during the process of hiring the Chief Operating Officer position and Executive Director.

CLOSED SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cruz called for a motion to close the public portion of the meeting at 9:09 am under General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) (1) to consider personnel matters related to a specific employee or employees and to adjourn from closed session (**Walsh David/Netzer**). Aye: Cheikh, Cruz, Netzer, Walsh David. Absent: Ms. Ganguly, Dr. Lin-Chen, and Ms. West. Ms. Baker, Ms. Beegle, and Mr. Cooke were present for the closed session.

A statement about the closed session will be provided at the next regular meeting of the Board.

Submitted by

Claudia Cruz

Secretary to the Board of Library Trustees