



MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order and Roll Call.

President Fishman called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Trustee Di Lorenzo called the roll.

PRESENT: Trustees Di Lorenzo, Fishman, Nealon, O'Keefe, Sommer, Director Auston

ABSENT: Trustees Cox, Sennett

VISITORS: Liz Seager – League of Women Voters; resident Bob Lepkowski

STAFF: Marti Bellefontaine, Cathleen Blair, Sandra Discepolo, Andrea V. Johnson, Ethan Herdrich, Christine Hightower, Marcos Levy

II. Review draft of March 18, 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes. Trustee O'Keefe moved approval of the March 18, 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes, as presented. Trustee Sommer seconded the motion. There was no discussion.

Aye- Di Lorenzo, Nealon, O'Keefe, Sommer, Fishman

Nay- None

Absent or not voting – Cox, Sennett

MOTION CARRIED.

III. Public Comment. 29-year resident Bob Lepkowski expressed his support of library staff's decisions regarding collections that are needed for our community.

IV. Presentations. None.

V. Treasurer's Report.

A. Financial Reports for March 2025. Trustee Sommers reported:

- As expected, the library received a large disbursement of its property taxes totaling \$1,990,145. Of this, \$1,796,894 represents General Fund property tax revenue and this line item is at 98.2% of budget
- There was a check to Computer View in the amount of \$21,615 which is the regular quarterly payment to them.
- There were no Special Reserve Fund expenses during the month.
- In total, please note General Fund income is at 99.2% of budget while only being at ¾ of the way through the year. Therefore, it is likely that General Fund income will beat its budget numbers. This is not surprising as there are several line items in the income section which are already over 100% of budget.
- Also, it is noted in the Financial Reports that the General Fund expenses are at 70% of budget even though we are through 75% of the year.

- As we are nearing the end of my time as a Trustee and Treasurer of the board, I wanted to give you some additional thoughts about the current and future financial position of the library:
 - First, I want to look ahead to the end of the fiscal year, 06/30. I did some analysis and averaged the monthly General Fund expenses for the last nine months and estimated the library spends approximately \$525,000 per month. Therefore, it has roughly \$1,575,00 left in General Fund expenses. As of the end of March, the General Fund had YTD net income of \$1,565,755. Using these assumptions, I estimate the library should be at least at break-even at the end of the year and the General Fund may possibly end in a positive position. This is excellent news as we budgeted \$355,652 deficit spending for the General Fund.
 - In reviewing the General Fund income statement, this is due to two things; the fact investment income is almost double what was budgeted as well as the fact General Fund expenses, in total, are at 70% while we are through 75% of the year.
 - I strongly encourage the library to hold onto these savings. This potential income should be used as a cushion for future years as this year is likely an anomaly due to the current year's investment income. The budgeting for next year and future years will be difficult. Under the current political climate there are many unknowns such as the effects of inflation, tariffs, federal cutbacks, and the elimination of certain federal agencies. Anything the library can do now to protect the financial future should be done.
 - I also urge the board to aim toward a balanced budget either this year or in the near future.
 - Lastly, this will be my last regular meeting of the full Board of Trustees. I am unable to attend the regular monthly meeting in May when we swear in the new trustees. It has been an honor to serve our community and support the exceptional library staff. I want to thank the other trustees for volunteering their time and dedication to our library. This is a group of very smart, dedicated individuals most of whom I did not know before serving on this board and now consider friends.

B. Bills and Salaries Check Detail for March 2025. Trustee Di Lorenzo moved approval of the March 2025 Bills and Salaries Check Detail, as presented. Trustee Nealon seconded the motion.

Aye- Di Lorenzo, Nealon, O'Keefe, Sommer, Fishman

Nay- None

Absent or not voting – Cox, Sennett

MOTION CARRIED.

VI. Action Items.

- A. Establish Nominating Committee to determine slate of WPLD Board of Trustees Officers to serve through spring 2027. At the April 1, 2025 consolidated election, Eric Bederman, Jennifer L. Mullman, and Matthew Thomas Pasko were elected to the Wilmette Public Library Board of Trustees. All the positions are for full four-year terms expiring in April 2029. Trustees Cox and Sennett will serve as the Nominating Committee to recruit/prepare a slate of the following officers for the board through the next election in spring 2027: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The slate will be presented at the Tuesday, May 20 Regular Meeting following the administration of the Oath of Office to the newly elected trustees.

VII. Director's Report. Director Auston noted the following from his report:

- The library saw 21,997 visitors in March, averaging over 710 users each day.
- The library welcomed 207 new patrons in March. Our registered users total received a bump thanks to our partnership with Wilmette School District 39, who sent us library card applications for 110 students who did not have an existing card in the system.
- With over 17,000 registered cardholders, over 85% of households in Wilmette have at least 1 library card, and over 2/3 of those library cards have been actively used in the last 6 months.
- March's monthly physical circulation statistics continue to average over 1,800 items checked out each day, with over 55,000 items checked out this month.
- Digital circulation continues to boom, and accounts for 30% of our total circulation. March 2025 OverDrive circs totaled over 21,000 checkouts.
- In March, Digital & Maker Services Manager Lauren Kelly deployed our planned upgrade to New York Times Online All Access, which includes The Athletic, Wirecutter, Games, and more.

Strategic Goal Activities for the month included opportunities to grow and strengthen partnerships, such as:

- New Local Business: Assistant Manager Rachel Garcia established an initial connection with Lorenza Amiga, the owner of Pink Couch Books, a new romance bookstore opening this spring in downtown Wilmette. They discussed potential partnered programming and other collaborations of mutual benefit, and enthusiasm is high.
- Wilmette/Kenilworth Chamber of Commerce: Coffee & Business Connections recorded its highest attended networking and learning event since launching the series in 2024. In addition to the connections made among participants, Business Librarian John Amundsen offered instruction outlining best practices for prospective library presenters.
- New Trier High School: Teen Services Librarian Krista Hutley deepened her connections with both New Trier High School book clubs: the early morning Breakfast and Books and the afternoon Bookworks meetings. In addition to investing in developing relationships, Krista promoted the Summer Reading Club teen volunteer program opportunity.
- On Wednesday, March 12, Youth Services hosted another teacher meeting for Wilmette District 39 classroom teachers. 70 Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers met in the Auditorium to collaborate and hear a presentation from YS staff on the many library services that support their work and students.

We received incredibly charming thank you letters from Harper kindergarteners and Central School second graders following their recent visits to the library as well.

Summer Reading Club Teen Volunteer recruitment began on March 15 and applications are due by April 15. Our Summer Reading Club booth is staffed daily by high school students in grades 9-12.

In March, we launched our latest newsletter for April/May, as well as our new Let's Learn Together initiative for 2025, focusing on neurodiversity.

We recently hired Lydia Hanchett as our new Digital & Maker Services Assistant Manager. Lydia comes to us from the CPL Harold Washington Library where she worked as a Librarian in their Business, Science, Technology, and Government Documents Department. Previously, as a Readers Advisory Assistant at Des Plaines Public Library, Lydia served on the committee to launch their upcoming makerspace, The Canvas. Lydia also honed her maker tools and technology skills as a costumer, props person, milliner, and designer for several Chicago theaters. She transferred those skills into hands-on sewing classes and drop-in maker sessions for the library. Lydia's first day at the library will be April 21.

We also recently hired Allison Blaetz as our new Youth Services Associate. With over 10 years of public library experience, Allison has worked at Batavia Public Library and Highland Park Public Library. In her most recent position as Youth & Teen Services Librarian at Niles-Maine District Library, Allison developed a collection of circulating STEAM kits called Wonder Boxes and created video content for the library blog and Makerfest event. Allison's first day was March 4.

On April 4, the library was closed for its annual Staff Development Day. This year's theme was "Serving With Heart," and included an inspirational in-person keynote presentation from Dr. Michael Stephens, Professor in the School of Information at San Jose State University. Staff prepared a wonderful retreat with team-building exercises and breakout sessions in the afternoon, and the director's annual staff celebration, "renewal of purpose", and goal-setting presentation to start to the day - all built around the theme of living our mission and values with compassionate service. Our Staff Day 2025 Planning Committee put together a successful event:

- June Bowe, Circulation
- Ethan Herdrich, Digital and Maker Services
- Krista Hutley, Adult Services
- Emma Standard, Technical Services
- Andrea Vaughn Johnson, Youth Services (Chair)
- Rebecca Vrana-Naquin, Circulation

VIII. Committees – Report on Meetings.

- A. ILA/RAILS Update. In the absence of Trustee Sennett, who provided information from RAILS about the recent federal executive order to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Director Auston read a prepared statement to the board and community encouraging advocacy and support for libraries and museums affected by these cuts:

"On April 11, 2025, the executive leadership of the Illinois Library Association, Association of Illinois School Library Educators, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, and the Illinois Heartland Library System and our own Reaching Across Illinois Library System published a Joint Statement on Changes at the Institute of Museum and Library Services Library Types.

While many of you are following the latest developments with the changes affecting the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent government agency that is the primary source of federal funding for the nation's museums and libraries, for those who are uncertain about what is happening, I'd like to take this opportunity to share their

perspective in an effort to help you make sense of the changes, clarify the impacts to the Illinois library community (along with my perspective on the local impacts here in Wilmette), and share ways that library supporters can advocate.

The IMLS was established by the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) in 1996 to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. IMLS promotes improvements in library services; facilitates access to resources in libraries; encourages and supports resource sharing among libraries; supports museums in fulfilling their public service and educational roles; encourages leadership and innovation to enhance museum services; assists museums in the conservation of America's heritage; supports museums in achieving the highest standards of management and service to the public; and supports resource sharing among museums, libraries, and other organizations. IMLS also publishes analyses of the impact of museum and library services.

The most recent annual budget for IMLS was \$313 million out of the \$6.75 trillion federal budget, or 0.003% of the total federal budget.

On March 14, the Trump administration issued an executive order to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and similar entities to the fullest extent allowed by law. On the same day, the Senate passed and the president signed a continuing resolution for FY2025, securing IMLS funding through September 2025.

Following the executive order, Keith Sonderling was appointed acting director of IMLS, and the entire IMLS staff of 70 employees were placed on administrative leave, with all grants and contracts suspended. Responses have been swift with the American Library Association (ALA), the National Museum and Library Services Board, and members of Congress urging for the continuation of IMLS funding and the reinstatement of staff.

Despite the certainty that funding was guaranteed under the FY2025 continuing resolution, Acting Director Sonderling notified several states, including California, Connecticut, and Washington that their grants were cancelled on April 3. Several grants to Illinois have also recently been terminated.

How does all of this affect Illinois? In Illinois, federal funding to libraries is distributed by the Illinois State Library through the IMLS Grants to States program, with funding totaling \$5.7 million in FY 2024—the sixth-highest amount in the country. This funding supports resources, grants, public library programming, professional development, and operations for various types of libraries, with a focus on underserved areas.

The \$5.7 million Illinois received this year goes to all Illinois public, school, academic and special libraries and includes providing computer access to kids in high-risk communities, books to people in prison, and the cost of the online library catalog system and online programs.

Monies are also allocated to the Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) and the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) under the System Area & Per Capita Grant Program. Wilmette Public Library receives approximately \$40,000 in Per Capita Grant funding, Kenilworth receives approximately \$4,000. This statewide-funding also facilitates the delivery of books and library materials across Illinois through interlibrary loan services.

Illinois spends about \$2.5 million of its funding on one of the country's largest intralibrary loaning systems, which allow libraries to keep their collections small and borrow from one another. Last fiscal year, 11 million items were transferred among more than 1,700 public, school, academic, and special libraries in Illinois.

Losing IMLS funding will significantly impact Illinois libraries, having serious consequences for the communities and people who rely on them (particularly those in rural and underserved areas). It will also hinder the programming, resources, and professional development our organizations offer— free of charge, in most cases— to all libraries, members and non-members.

Recent actions such as lawsuits filed by a coalition of 21 attorneys general, including Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, and the American Library Association offer some hope and shine a spotlight on this critical issue.

Raoul said, "The Institute of Museum and Library Services helps to ensure that art, culture, history and literacy are accessible for all. Attempting to dismantle agencies created by Congress is a continuation of this administration's unconstitutional and unlawful overreach."

Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Alexi Giannoulias said the dismantling of the institute would be "devastating." "This is not just the dismantling of an agency," he said. "It's a downright assault on our core values as a democracy that is going to have long-lasting consequences for every community in America. Eliminating the IMLS is going to negatively impact literacy, education, and equal access to knowledge."

The American Library Association, which is based in Chicago, disputes Trump's categorization of the federal agency as wasteful. "Libraries are strong, trusted institutions, and it's really unfortunate to hear that the federal government would think otherwise," said Cindy Hohl, the association's president. "We have 125,000 libraries in this country, and that's more libraries than McDonald's restaurants. That's how prevalent and important they are. And so when we see that attacks on libraries are happening, it doesn't make a lot of sense. Americans love their libraries."

Illinois organizations — including the Illinois Library Association, Illinois Association of Museums, and Museums in the Park — also support preserving the institute. They say its elimination threatens valuable cultural and educational programming and also access to

books and the internet. They say they are especially concerned about smaller museums and libraries, including those in rural and other underserved areas, saying those would suffer most from the cuts.

As library advocates, we applaud Attorney General Raoul, Secretary of State Giannoulas, the coalition, and the American Library Association for their commitment to defending IMLS and their efforts to preserve library funding.

We need you and those you know, including friends, family members, and all library supporters, to call their members of Congress and urge them to protect federal funding for libraries. Phone calls only take a couple minutes and send a strong message to elected officials that their constituents care enough to take time out of their day to make their voices heard. ALA's Show Up for Our Libraries initiative can help you contact your member of Congress.

Please consider contacting your congressional representation and ask them to protect and fully fund IMLS at levels that protect both discretionary and statutory programs.

As we face these changing times, we stand together to support Illinois libraries."

- B. Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee update. President Fishman stated the committee will meet again in May.

IX. Information Items.

- A. Communication. Comments from the suggestion boxes were distributed at the meeting.
- B. The Board of Library Trustees Finance Committee will meet on Friday, May 9, 2025 at 1:00pm in the Auditorium. The purpose of the committee meeting is to discuss the draft budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026). Finance Committee members are Trustees Sommer (chair), Di Lorenzo, Fishman, and O'Keefe. All trustees and trustees-elect are encouraged to attend. Director Auston will present the draft budget at the meeting.

- X. Adjournment. Trustee Sommer moved to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE. The meeting adjourned at 7:09pm.

President
Board of Library Trustees of the
Wilmette Public Library, Cook County, IL

Secretary
Board of Library Trustees of the
Wilmette Public Library, Cook County, IL