

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the January 28, 2025 Meeting

Present: John Murphy, Treasurer; Erin Counihan, Secretary; Clara Rankin, Trustee; Deborah Westerland, Trustee; Robert Bell, Executive Director; Chris Walmsley, Director of Office Administration

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Mr. Murphy.

Disposition of Minutes

The minutes of the November 2024 meeting were reviewed. Ms. Rankin asked for clarification related to the appointment discussed in the minutes. The trustees discussed the language related to the appointment of trustees. Ms. Counihan moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Ms. Counihan, Mr. Murphy, and Ms. Westerland voting in favor of the motion. Ms. Rankin abstained.

Ms. Rankin moved to approve the January 2025 minutes as submitted. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Ms. Counihan, Mr. Murphy, and Ms. Westerland voting in favor. Ms. Rankin abstained.

Review of Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Officer Reports

Treasurer

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank accounts, noting that the PNC Checking account balance was \$71,814, the PNC Money Market account was \$31,245, and the Peoples Bank Savings account was \$219,138.

Mr. Murphy reviewed the budgeted revenues for fiscal year 2025. Ms. Westerland requested to see the expense budget.

Mr. Murphy noted that he would be meeting with the County Finance Office related to the next budget cycle in February.

Secretary

Ms. Counihan informed the trustees that at the beginning of every calendar year, there was previously a binder of trustee information shared but this information had been moved to an online portal. Ms. Counihan asked if the new trustees felt comfortable accessing this portal with written instructions or if they would prefer an in-person instruction. Both of the new trustees indicated that they would be comfortable with written instructions.

Ms. Counihan reported that the Executive Committee had met with Mr. Bell related to his evaluation and review process, and that Ms. Durso and Ms. Counihan would be meeting with the senior team related to the review and feedback with the intent to return to a formal evaluation process. Ms. Counihan noted that the formal evaluation would result in a brief report back to the trustees in closed session. Ms. Westerland asked if Mr. Bell would complete a self evaluation as part of the review process. Ms. Counihan confirmed that he would, and that it would be incorporated into the results.

Ms. Counihan shared as the ESRL liaison that due to the executive order that some LSTA grants and other federal funding were on hold, but that there was still a significant amount of uncertainty related to the executive order. The trustees discussed if purchases should continue or if they should be placed on hold.

Committee Appointments

Mr. Murphy noted that there were two standing committees; the Executive committee and the Finance committee. Mr. Murphy noted that there was a need to recruit a citizen representative to the Finance committee. The trustees discussed different options for recruitment of a citizen representative to the finance committee.

Ms. Counihan proposed the continuation of the Safety committee, noting that there had been some discussion of shifting the responsibilities of this committee to the Executive Director, but that the committee should continue for now. Ms. Counihan noted that Ms. Durso would like to be on the committee.

Ms. Counihan stated that there was a need for a new strategic plan, and that the trustees should have some involvement in that process, so a Strategic Planning committee would be necessary.

Ms. Counihan noted that the Chestertown Library, Inc. Building should have trustee involvement in the process since the previous board representative was no longer a trustee. Ms. Counihan stated that she would be happy to be a part of the committee for the Chestertown Library, Inc. Building.

Ms. Westerland expressed interest in the Strategic Planning committee.

Ms. Rankin stated that she was interested in the Safety committee.

Ms. Counihan said that additional committees may be brought up at a later meeting, and that the committees should get staff involvement as they were an important part of the discussions. Mr. Murphy noted that some of the committees may need more board or staff involvement.

Ms. Counihan discussed the Friends of the Kent County Public Library and Foundation for the Kent County Public Library representative positions with the trustees, noting that it gave new members the opportunity to get more involved with the Board and learn more about some of the supporting organizations. Ms. Rankin expressed interest in being the representative to the Friends of the Kent County Public Library. Mr. Murphy discussed the role of the Foundation representative. Ms. Westerland expressed interest in the position of Foundation representative.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Bell reported to the trustees about the North County Branch, noting that some minor lighting issues were being addressed and that programming and circulation were going well.

Mr. Bell stated that the Rock Hall Branch was still a work in progress, and that he was working with the landlord related to lighting issues outside the building and in the parking lot. Mr. Bell noted that some improvements had been made inside the branch such as installing a changing table in the bathroom. Mr. Bell shared that the Lions Club had been discussing making a contribution in support of the Rock Hall Branch, which may be used for additional furniture.

Mr. Bell discussed the lease for the Rock Hall facility with the trustees, noting that the landlord was happy to have the library there, but when it was time to renew the lease that snow removal should be discussed, and ideally the period of the lease would be more than one year. Mr. Murphy asked if there was any discussion of paving the parking lot. Mr. Bell said that he did not know as this was before his time as executive director.

Mr. Bell reported that the volunteer program in Chestertown would be launching in February, and would potentially expand to the branches later depending on interest.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that the Director of Branch Services position had been filled with Alexia Garvin accepting the position. Mr. Bell shared that the positions of Branch Services Assistant and Information Services Assistant had been posted and would accept applications until February 28.

Mr. Bell stated that he had attended the MAPLA meeting the previous week, and that while some issues did not pertain to KCPL directly, some of the legislative news was important. Mr. Bell said that there was a possibility of someone from the Maryland State Library attending to train staff related to intellectual freedom.

Mr. Bell reviewed upcoming meeting and conference attendance including meeting with the Foundation, attending Legislative Day, and the Public Services Conference.

Mr. Bell shared that the new schedule had been discussed at the previous all staff meeting and that staff and patrons seemed to be adjusting.

Mr. Bell noted that revisions to the staff handbook would be presented prior to July 1, including a reevaluation of the telework policy, partial service openings, and standardizing employees at 75 hours per pay period.

The trustees discussed the current vacant trustee position and advancing with a previous candidate.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that one employee had expressed an issue that there had not been a bonus paid to staff during the 2024 holiday. The trustees discussed compensation, the possibility of a more substantial increase, and the challenges of a bonus compared to a raise. Mr. Murphy stated that comparable salary information from other counties would be useful in making decisions about salaries.

Mr. Bell stated that there would be a trial of some new security cameras, and that he was working with the County IT department, the Kent County Police, and ESRL to support the project. Mr. Bell noted that funding for this project was not currently available, but that the police department and the IT department had indicated that they would help appeal to the County Commissioners if the trial was successful.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that he had been invited to join the Chestertown Rotary Club, and that he would like the library to pay for the membership. Mr. Murphy moved to approve \$400 annual payment for Mr. Bell to be a member of the Chestertown Rotary Club. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion. Mr. Murphy called for discussion, noting that it was a relatively small expense. Mr. Murphy called for a vote and the motion was approved unanimously.

New Business

Meeting Schedule 2025

Mr. Murphy noted that the previous schedule had been the last Monday of the month at 4:30 pm. The trustees discussed the meeting schedule, eventually deferring to the next meeting to set the full schedule of meetings, noting that the full Board was not present.

The trustees scheduled the next meeting of the Board of Trustees for Tuesday, February 25 at 4:30 pm.

Volunteer Duties

Ms. Westerland asked what volunteers would be doing at the library. Mr. Bell noted that there had not been a volunteer program at the library for a number of years, but that volunteers would be helping with some programming, shelving, and minor material processing. Mr. Bell stated that there would be some activities which volunteers would not perform, such as anything with access to personal information to preserve patron privacy. Mr. Murphy asked if there would be an interview process for volunteers. Mr. Bell confirmed that there would be an interview process.

Additional Board Representation

Ms. Westerland asked if there had been a discussion about having a student representative at the Board of Trustees meetings. Mr. Walmsley noted that there was a discussion about creating a student representative position, but that the conversation had not created any action. The trustees discussed having a student representative at the trustee meetings.

Federal Funding for KCPL

Ms. Westerland asked how much federal funding was received by the library. Mr. Walmsley stated that there was no operational federal funding, but the library did receive two grants through the Library Services and Technology Act. The trustees discussed various supporting organizations of the library.

Grant Updates

Mr. Walmsley informed the trustees that the library had received \$7,500 in funding through the Hedgelawn Foundation in support of the Rock Hall Branch of the library.

Mr. Walmsley informed the trustees that the library's capital grant request for funds to replace the roof was part of the draft budget for the Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget.

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Counihan moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 pm.