

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the March 31, 2025 Meeting

Present: Rachel Durso, President; John Murphy, Treasurer; Bruce Reidel, Trustee; Deborah Westerland, Trustee; Robert Bell, Executive Director; Annie Woodall, Director of Public Services Chris Walmsley, Director of Office Administration

Ms. Durso called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Ms. Durso noted that there were three absent trustees, but there was a quorum present, so business could move forward.

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed. No changes were made.

Ms. Durso noted that no members of the public were present.

Officer Reports

Treasurer

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank balances noting that there was \$138,985 in the PNC Checking account, \$31,246 in the PNC Money Market account, and \$219,167 in the Peoples Bank Savings account. Mr. Murphy continued that the cash flow looked good and that the library was in good financial shape overall.

Secretary

Ms. Durso shared that Ms. Counihan was absent but had encouraged trustees to create Microsoft accounts to access the trustee portal if they had not already done so.

Friends of the Kent County Public Library

Ms. Durso shared a report provided by Ms. Rankin. Ms. Durso noted that the Friends of the Kent County Public Library were interested in having a liaison participating as a non-voting member of the safety committee. Ms. Durso asked the trustees how they felt about this inclusion. Mr. Murphy stated that he thought it would be great. The trustees discussed the open meetings act and if this would necessitate the meetings being open meetings.

Ms. Durso further noted that the Friends of the Library would like to participate in the strategic planning process. Ms. Durso continued that the strategic planning committee should meet to discuss what will be needed from the process.

Ms. Westerland shared that she was interested in the strategic planning committee. The trustees discussed committee members and the strategic planning committee.

Foundation for the Kent County Public Library

Mr. Murphy noted that the next meeting of the Foundation would be at the end of April. Mr. Murphy shared that he would provide information to Ms. Westerland and give an introduction to the Foundation.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Bell reviewed a recent training day for all staff, noting that preparation for the summer reading program, circulation manual updates, updates related to some materials request processes, incident report procedures, and interactions with the police had been reviewed.

Mr. Bell discussed library staff procedures for interactions with the police, noting that staff were not to discuss specific patrons unless there was a documented reason. Mr. Bell shared that he was working with the police chief to establish an understanding on both sides of the issues.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that two offer letters had been sent, one which started today, and another would be starting in two weeks. Mr. Bell noted that both of the new hires had previous experience with the organization, either professionally or as a volunteer.

Mr. Bell shared that all staff had been registered for the MLA/DLA annual conference which was scheduled for the beginning of May in Ocean City.

Mr. Bell reviewed updates for the Rock Hall and North County branches including that new cash registers had been ordered for both branches, and that shelving had been ordered for the Rock Hall branch covered by the Hedgelawn Foundation grant funds. Mr. Bell continued that the Lions Club had not yet provided support for the Rock Hall branch and seemed hesitant at this point.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that there were significant changes coming to one online resource provided through the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL) due to the cost of the service. Mr. Bell noted that costs related to Hoopla were significantly higher than budgeted, so ESRL had requested the return of some of the funds from the member libraries. Mr. Bell shared that there were other measures taken to control costs, like instituting a daily cap on checkouts. The trustees discussed the impacts of the changes to the Hoopla service.

Mr. Bell noted that he had shared a message from Ms. Morgan Miller, the Maryland state librarian, related to the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Mr. Bell stated that all IMLS staff had been placed on administrative leave. Mr. Bell shared some of the ways that the IMLS provided support for libraries and museums, but that a lot of the impacts would not be known soon.

Mr. Bell introduced Ms. Woodall to the trustees and stated that she would be sharing information about staff development and training with the trustees.

Ms. Woodall noted that there had been a miscommunication at the previous meeting, and that there was no expectation of a committee, but stated that it would be helpful for trustee to have some information about staff training requirements. Ms. Woodall noted that there were 23 library systems across Maryland, and that every system had a staff development coordinator. Ms. Woodall said that all the staff development coordinators met quarterly to share resources and identify needs. Ms. Woodall continued that the coordinator meetings were organized by the Maryland State Library Agency, which also provided many different training resources.

Ms. Woodall shared the certification and recertification requirements for library directors and librarians within Maryland, with the initial qualification of achieving a master's degree in library science, and recertification requiring 90 hours of training over a five-year period.

Ms. Woodall noted that library associates are also required to be certified with initial certification obtained through MSLA's Library Associate Training Institute and ongoing recertification requirements of 90 hours every five years.

Ms. Woodall continued that due to the requirements, support in securing training would be needed at the local library level, and that while there were a lot of training opportunities available for free, attendance at conferences or larger opportunities would be more difficult without the current federal support. Mr. Murphy asked if the current librarian staff would be able to maintain certifications without funding for the next several years. Ms. Woodall said that it would be difficult to say since there are several training resources provided by the MSLA utilizing funding from the IMLS, and it is currently unknown what resources would be cut if the IMLS funding was not restored.

Ms. Westerland asked if there was any pressure on staff to complete recertifications before resources were discontinued. Ms. Woodall reviewed upcoming certification needs with the trustees.

Old Business

Volunteer Policy

Mr. Bell noted that the volunteer policy had not received a vote yet from the Board, though it had been discussed at previous meetings. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the volunteer policy as presented. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion. Ms. Durso called for discussion. Mr. Murphy asked if there were currently volunteers. Ms. Woodall stated that there were not due to the policy not being approved. The trustees discussed the risks and commitments required by a volunteer program. Ms. Durso called for a vote following discussion, and the policy was approved unanimously.

Telework Policy Updates

Mr. Bell noted that he had discussed reworking the telework policy previously, and that he would like to revise it before the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Bell identified clarifying who can or cannot grant ad hoc arrangements and potentially removing some of the requirements from the current policy.

Ms. Durso stated that equity was a primary driver behind the current policy and that not all staff are able to perform position functions remotely, and asked if employees may see this as a benefit that is not usable by them. Mr. Bell noted that this was addressed within the current policy by the statement about telework not being an entitlement or a benefit of employment. Mr. Murphy asked if any employees were currently teleworking. Mr. Bell answered no, but there had been occasional ad hoc arrangements, and there may be a need in the future for a longer arrangement.

Holiday Closures

Mr. Bell reviewed the current holiday schedule for the library noting that there were three partially staffed holidays: Presidents' Day, Indigenous Peoples Day, and Veterans Day. Mr. Bell proposed that the library should be closed on Presidents' Day since there were approximately half the regular visits on that day. Mr. Bell continued that the library should be fully open on Indigenous Peoples Day as that day is comparable to other Mondays within the month, and fully open on Veterans Day due to the floating nature of the holiday.

The trustees discussed ways to address the reduction in overall closures to be equitable to staff.

Ms. Durso requested a list of all current holidays. Mr. Walmsley said that one could be provided for the next meeting.

New Business

Staffing Updates

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that Karen Dower, part-time branch services clerk, had left the organization. Mr. Bell noted that the full-time branch services position had filled this need, so he would like to create a part-time youth services position. Ms. Durso asked if this position was contingent on funding for the next fiscal year. Mr. Bell noted that the library would need funding beyond the original request to finance this position. Mr. Murphy stated that it seemed reasonable to move the position, but also to defer hiring until funding was secured. Mr. Bell noted that he would be meeting with the County Administrator to discuss the budget.

American Library Association Annual Conference

Mr. Bell requested permission to attend the American Library Association Annual Conference which was scheduled for the end of June in Philadelphia. Ms. Durso stated that it made sense to take advantage of the proximity of the event.

New Business

Trustee Introduction

Mr. Bruce Reidel was introduced to the trustees as an oncoming member. The trustees and staff present introduced themselves.

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 pm.