

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Board Meeting Minutes of: May 27th, 2025

Call to Order

Present:

Rachel Durso, President; **Melissa Walters**, Vice President; **John Murphy**, Treasurer; **Erin Counihan**, Secretary; **Clara Rankin**, Trustee; **Bruce Reidel**, Trustee; **Deborah Westerland**, Trustee; **Robert Bell**, Executive Director; **Chris Walmsley**, Director of Office Administration; **Tobi Brown**, Executive Secretary

Ms. Durso called the meeting into order at 4:31pm. All trustees were present.

Disposition of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Ms. Rankin requested an adjustment to the language of her suggestion regarding trespass notices under Safety Updates. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes with Ms. Rankin's amendment. Mr. Riedel seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Review of Agenda

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

Public Comment

One public attendee was present, who introduced himself as Mr. Chris Braver. The trustees introduced themselves and provided an overview of the operations of the KCPL Board of Trustees. Mr. Braver expressed his appreciation for the library's services and his interest in being more informed on the library's current state.

Officer Reports

Treasurer

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank balances and noted that there was \$120,405 in the PNC Checking account, \$31,246 in the PNC Money Market account, and \$229,196 in the Peoples Bank Savings account.

Mr. Murphy noted the status of the library's 3-Month Operating Reserve, an emergency reserve created to cover up to 3 months of library operation expenses. Mr. Murphy noted that the reserve was accounted for, and the sum matched the necessary estimated funds.

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Secretary

Ms. Counihan informed the trustees that the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL) would be looking for a new board representative near the end of the calendar year. Ms. Counihan noted that she had previously been on the ESRL board and that the next board meeting would provide an opportunity to express interest in joining.

Ms. Counihan reminded the trustees that the United for Libraries Virtual Conference will be held at the end of July. Ms. Counihan encouraged the trustees to consider attending and asked they notify both the other trustees and Ms. Annie Woodall of their interest.

Ms. Counihan noted that the formal evaluation of KCPL Executive Director, Mr. Bell, would be taking place at the end of FY2025. Ms. Counihan shared that the Executive Committee was working on a form to gather feedback based on the director's predefined position description. Ms. Counihan explained that, once finished, the trustees and staff will receive this form to evaluate the director's performance. Ms. Counihan added that the Friends of the Library, the Foundation, and the public would receive their own form to provide further input. Ms. Counihan said she'd be sending out the current draft of the evaluation form and the Executive Director position description to the trustees soon. Ms. Counihan requested the trustees' feedback on the form within the next two weeks. Ms. Counihan noted the forms will be sent out at the end of June.

Reports of Committees

Strategic Planning Committee

Ms. Durso noted that the committee met on Thursday May 22nd to review the current strategic plan and discuss the approach when crafting the new one. Ms. Durso noted that the committee was collaborating with Mr. Paul Sautter of the Friends of the Library, who has much experience creating strategic plans. Ms. Durso shared the committee's discussion of the weaknesses and impracticality of the current strategic plan. Ms. Durso expressed the committee's goal to establish clearly defined goals and deliverable objectives when crafting the new plan.

Ms. Durso reviewed the committee's current action items. Ms. Durso noted that the committee would be meeting at the end of June and would continue to draft the new strategic plan throughout the summer.

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Safety Committee

Mr. Murphy noted that the Safety Committee had not met yet. Ms. Durso said the meeting would be called following the finalization of the FY2026 Budget. Ms. Durso reiterated the need to wait for the budget's outcome, as it dictates the committee's goals and focus.

Executive Director Report

Staff Updates

Mr. Bell noted the KCPL staff evaluations will be taking place at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Bell noted the KCPL staff is at full capacity and performing well.

Branch Updates

Mr. Bell reported that both branches are running smoothly. Mr. Bell noted that the new shelving for the Rock Hall branch has arrived and is currently being installed.

Safety and Security Update

Mr. Bell expressed his effort to maintain regular communication with Chief Dixon of the Chestertown Police Department (CPD). Mr. Bell noted the KCPL staff's ongoing work to revise the Trespass Policy and recounted the incident that initiated the revision. Mr. Bell reviewed the policy's revisions. Mr. Bell noted that CPD officers are continuing their occasional walkthroughs of the library, which has been received well.

Summer Reading Program Update

Mr. Bell noted that the Summer Reading Program begins on June 1st, which is being heavily promoted by staff.

IMLS Update

Mr. Bell briefly reviewed recent developments surrounding the defunding of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Mr. Bell provided a supplemental article regarding recent developments and said the situation seems to be leaning in the favor of libraries.

MLA | DLA Takeaways

Mr. Bell stated he felt the KCPL staff's visit to the MLA | DLA Annual Conference was productive. Mr. Bell shared that the KCPL staff will be working to compile shareable notes and presentations to broaden the positive impact of the conference on staff.

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Rock Hall Friends of Main Street & Lions Club Connection

Mr. Bell shared that he had recently attended a Friends of Main Street Rock Hall meeting, which he will be aiming to regularly attend. Mr. Bell informed the trustees that the Rock Hall Branch would likely be unable to obtain a crosswalk in front of the building due to state regulations. Mr. Bell also informed the trustees that due to the Rock Hall branch being on a state road, the library will likely be unable to place a permanent ground sign in front of the building. Mr. Bell said he is currently exploring alternative signage options but noted that some patrons stated the current identifying signage was sufficient.

Mr. Bell said he's been in contact with the treasurer of the Rock Hall Lions Club. Mr. Bell explained that the Rock Hall Lions Club has expressed interest in assisting with the Rock Hall branch's operations and possibly its funding. Mr. Bell said that though the Rock Hall branch is relatively well funded, he will be reaching out to have further discussion about the Lions Club's assistance in the future.

KCPL Budget Update

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that the County Commissioners provided an approved KCPL FY2026 Budget of \$842,691. Mr. Bell noted that this amount was approximately 15% less than his proposed amount; however the sum is an increase from the \$793,960 budget from FY2025. Mr. Bell noted that the proposed amount would cover the cost of staff salaries and benefits, with around \$20,000 left over for other FY2026 expenses.

Mr. Murphy asked about the 'one-time' money request mentioned in past meetings. Mr. Bell stated that this 'one-time' money did not appear to be incorporated into the County's budget amount. Ms. Rankin asked if the 'one-time' money request was still outstanding. Mr. Bell said he was unsure since the amount had not been incorporated into the budget. Mr. Bell stated he will be attending the next County Commissioners' meeting on June 3rd.

Mr. Bell shared his recent discussion with the head of Public Works about the potential for reducing the overall cost to replace the roof. Ms. Durso noted that encouraging individuals to be present during the next Commissioners meeting may aid the advocacy of the library and the need for the requested funds.

MSLA State Capital Funding

Mr. Bell shared that the library was recently awarded a \$299,000 grant through the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) to replace the roof of the Chestertown branch. Mr. Bell stated that the grant was applied for in conjunction with the county and requires the

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county to match the grant amount rewarded. Mr. Bell noted the grant was submitted with a quote to replace the current shingle roof with a metal roof. Mr. Bell said the County has allocated \$80,000 in Capital funds for the roof replacement, as they were hoping to reduce the full cost of the roof by replacing it with another shingle roof. Mr. Bell stated that the grant requires a 50% match between County and the Library, and with only \$80k from the County, this puts the library in a difficult financial situation.

Mr. Bell reiterated that the County proposed reducing the cost of the replacement by changing the grant request to cover a shingle roof. Mr. Bell stated he informed the County that option was unavailable, as MSLA is unwilling to revise the scope of the grant due to the short life span of the current roof. Mr. Bell noted that MSLA had previously funded a roof replacement for the Chestertown branch in 2009; a grant that was altered in a similar fashion to fund a shingle roof.

Mr. Bell elaborated on the benefits of having a metal roof on the Chestertown branch library as opposed to a shingle roof. The trustees discussed the validity of requesting a change in the library's FY2026 funding at the same time as the funding for the roof. Ms. Durso asked if there was a need to call an emergency Finance Committee meeting to discuss funding concerns. The trustees agreed that an emergency meeting seemed appropriate. The trustees discussed their options when addressing the MSLA grant and what solutions could be presented.

KCPL State Funding Allocation

Mr. Bell noted that the state allocation has been decreased this fiscal year. Mr. Bell also noted that the state budget is still tentative, but that it will be solidifying in the near future.

Old Business

Director Evaluation Process Update

Ms. Durso noted that the Executive Director's Evaluation had been previously discussed during the Secretary's Officer Report.

Circulation Manual & Staff Handbook

Mr. Bell noted that the new Operation's Manual was in its final stages of revision. Mr. Bell said the Operation's Manual will be sent to the Trustees for feedback in early June. Mr. Bell

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noted that the Staff Handbook was still in its early stages of revision and would be sent to the trustees for revision at the end of June.

Action Items

Mr. Bell recalled the trustee's approval of the extension of the Rock Hall and North County branches' service hours until 5pm on Fridays. Mr. Bell requested a vote to set the start date for July 1st. Mr. Murphy moved to approve July 1st as the effective start date for the changes in branch hours. Ms. Rankin seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bell recalled the board's approval of the reduction of Senior Staff's work hours from 40 to 37.5 hours a week. Mr. Bell requested a vote to set the start date for July 1st. Mr. Reidel moved to approve July 1st as the start date of the Senior Staff's change in hours. Mr. Murphy asked for further clarification on the vote, which the trustees elaborated on. The trustees moved to a vote, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bell requested clarification on whether the salaries of Senior Staff would remain the same after the reduction of hours. Ms. Durso noted that previously in a closed session, the trustees agreed to keep the Senior Staff's salary the same, thus indicating a slight raise in their hourly pay. Mr. Murphy moved to approve Senior Staff's salary remaining the same after the reduction in hours on July 1st. Mr. Reidel seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Ms. Westerland asked if there was a need to reduce salaries in order to meet budget concerns. Mr. Walmsley answered no, as the FY2026 budget accounted for the current salaries and will be seeing an increase in total funds from the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Bell asked the trustees if the Executive Director's position would be included in the Senior Staff's reduction in work hours. Ms. Durso asked if all staff were paid hourly. Mr. Bell confirmed that all staff were compensated hourly except for the Executive Director. The trustees discussed whether the Executive Director should be included in the hour change. Ms. Durso suggested further discussion in closed session.

New Business

No New Business was discussed.

Closed Session

Ms. Rankin moved to close the meeting. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting went into closed session at 5:27pm.

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Adjournment

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Rankin moved to adjourn the meeting from closed session. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR CLOSING A MEETING ("CLOSING STATEMENT")
UNDER THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT (General Provisions Article § 3-305)**

This form has two sides. *Complete items 1 – 4 before closing the meeting.*

1. **Recorded vote to close the meeting:** Date: 5-27-25; Time: 5:27 p.m. - 6:00; Location: KCPD Chestertown
Motion to close meeting made by: Clara Rankin Seconded by John Murphy;
Members in favor: all; Opposed: none;
Abstaining: none; Absent: none.

2. **Statutory authority to close session (check all provisions that apply).**
This meeting will be closed under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b) only:

(1) ☒ "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals"; (2) ☒ "To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to public business"; (3) ☐ "To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto"; (4) ☐ "To consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State"; (5) ☐ "To consider the investment of public funds"; (6) ☐ "To consider the marketing of public securities"; (7) ☐ "To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice"; (8) ☐ "To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation"; (9) ☐ "To conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations"; (10) ☐ "To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including: (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans"; (11) ☐ "To prepare, administer, or grade a scholastic, licensing, or qualifying examination"; (12) ☐ "To conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct"; (13) ☐ "To comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter"; (14) ☐ "Before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, to discuss a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process." (15) ☐ "To discuss cybersecurity, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to: (i) security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology; (ii) network security information . . . or (iii) deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices."

Continued →

3. For each provision checked above, disclosure of the topic to be discussed and the public body's reason for discussing that topic in closed session.

Citation (insert # from above)	Topic	Reason for closed-session discussion of topic
§3-305(b) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	Executive Director performance	Personnel
§3-305(b) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	evaluation summary weekly hour discussion	" "
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		

4. This statement is made by _____, Presiding Officer.

WORKSHEET FOR OPTIONAL USE IN CLOSED SESSION: INFORMATION FOR SUMMARY TO BE DISCLOSED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT OPEN MEETING. (See also template for summary.)

- For a meeting closed under the statutory authority cited above:

Time of closed session: _____

Place: KCPD Chestertown branch

Purpose(s): Personnel

Members who voted to meet in closed session: all present

Persons attending closed session: Board of Trustees

Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session: _____

Topics actually discussed: _____ motion

Actions taken: Board voted that reduced weekly hours applies only to

Each recorded vote: _____

hourly workers.
(senior staff)

- For a meeting recessed to perform an administrative function (§ 3-104): Time: _____

Place: _____

Persons present: _____

Subjects discussed: _____