

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

*Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025*

## Call to Order

### ***Present:***

**Rachel Durso**, President; **John Murphy**, Treasurer; **Erin Counihan**, Secretary; **Clara Rankin**, Trustee; **Bruce Riedel**, 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. Ms. Durso noted that there was one absent trustee. With a quorum present, business could move forward.

### ***Disposition of Minutes of Previous Meeting***

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

### ***Review of Agenda***

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

### ***Public Comment***

One KCPL staff member, Lila Ingersoll, was present as a public attendee. Ms. Ingersoll reintroduced herself to the trustees and explained she was attending to gain a better understanding of the Board. The trustees greeted Ms. Ingersoll and introduced themselves.

## Officer Reports

### ***Treasurer***

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank balances and noted that there was \$107,763 in the PNC Checking account, \$31,246 in the PNC Money Market account, and \$219,210 in the Peoples Bank Savings account.

Mr. Murphy noted that the library ended FY2025 in the positive. Mr. Murphy said that it was likely due to extended position vacancies throughout the year. Mr. Murphy noted that the FY2026 budget was still tentative, as negotiations with the county continue for their appropriation.

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

## *Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025*

### **Secretary**

Ms. Counihan noted that the trustees have Microsoft tools at their disposal, which are currently being unused. Ms. Counihan proposed utilizing these tools for Board-related materials to streamline communication, as well as simplify access to needed documents. The trustees discussed the usage of these resources and agreed to explore these options in the near future.

## Reports of Committees

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Ms. Durso noted that the committee met on Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Durso voiced the committee's goals surrounding the revision of library's values, mission, and vision statement. Ms. Durso stated the committee will be looking to revise the structure and organization of the library's values, with inspiration being taken from nearby library systems. Ms. Durso stated that the next committee meeting be in July.

Mr. Murphy expressed appreciation for the library staff's insightful input into the revision process. Ms. Durso agreed and recalled the committee's discussion of the feasibility of the strategic plan's goals from a staff perspective.

### **Safety Committee**

Ms. Durso noted that the library should receive \$15,000 from the county to upgrade the security system at the Chestertown Branch. Ms. Durso noted that the committee will be organizing a meeting to discuss the next steps now that the library has secured funding for the security cameras. Ms. Durso also noted that the committee will be discussing safety projects for FY2026 and what the next committee goal will be.

Mr. Bell said he's exploring staff training opportunities with the involvement of Chief Dixon.

## Executive Director Report

### **Staff Updates & Upcoming Evaluations**

Mr. Bell noted that library staff will be undergoing performance evaluations soon. Mr. Bell stated that he is currently developing the evaluation criteria and would like feedback from the board. Mr. Bell noted that the evaluations will likely take place in July.

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

## *Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025*

### ***Branch Updates***

Mr. Bell said the branches were operating well. Mr. Bell noted the success of each branch's Summer Reading Kick-Off, as well as the increasing number of registrations.

### ***Safety Updates – 'First Amendment Audit' Preparation***

Mr. Bell stated that he's working to arrange a staff training about 'First Amendment Audits.' Mr. Bell noted his coordination with the County to organize a presenter that will provide training for both library staff and County staff at similar times. The trustees asked for clarification on what a 'First Amendment Audit' is. Mr. Bell went on to answer the trustee's questions and elaborate on the need for library staff to attend this training; the training will concern individuals' rights to film in public spaces, including libraries.

### ***Safety Updates – Staff Training Day Schedule***

Mr. Bell noted that he would like to put together a staff training day schedule. Mr. Bell noted that there are typically three staff training days throughout the fiscal year, one every four months. Mr. Bell asked the trustees if clarification should be added to the staff handbook to create a more structured schedule for trainings. Ms. Rankin expressed caution around specifying the frequency of staff trainings, as issues could arise with scheduling. Ms. Rankin advised keeping the training schedule vague in the handbook, with the staff maintaining their own training schedule.

Mr. Bell asked the trustees if three training days a year felt like enough. Ms. Durso stated that the trainings should be scheduled as needed by the staff. Mr. Durso explained that she felt there should be an emphasis on arranging trainings as issues arise, as opposed to setting a quota for the year. Ms. Durso suggested creating a central focus for the fiscal year that the training schedule can be based on. Ms. Rankin noted that the training needs may vary between positions. Ms. Durso agreed that the language in the handbook around staff trainings should remain loose.

Mr. Bell stated that due to budget concerns moving forward, it may make sense to only send Senior Staff to MLA | DLA Annual Conference. Mr. Bell added that an all-staff training day can follow to allow Senior Staff to share what they've learned with the rest of the staff.

### ***Foundation for the Kent County Public Library – Funding Requests***

Mr. Bell shared news from the County that they will not be providing capital funds to replace the circulation desk at the Chestertown Branch. Mr. Bell stated he was considering asking the Foundation to consider aiding with funding this year; one such request would be

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

## ***Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025***

for the circulation desk. The trustees discussed the possible funding requests they could put before the Foundation. Mr. Bell recommended submitting multiple requests to the Foundation. Mr. Murphy added that doing so would allow the Foundation to give their feedback on what they are willing to fund out of the choices provided.

### ***Chestertown Library, Inc. Building Update***

Mr. Bell reviewed the recent developments around the Chestertown Library, Inc. Building. Mr. Bell shared the upcoming meetings scheduled by Jay Silcox with the Woman's Literary Club of Chestertown, Inc. to discuss the standing MOU and keep them informed moving forward on the project. Ms. Counihan stated that someone from the library should attend the meeting alongside Mr. Silcox. Mr. Bell noted that Mr. Walmsley and himself would be in attendance. Ms. Counihan stated that it may be a good idea for Mr. Murphy and herself to be in attendance for full library representation.

### ***Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) De-funding Update***

Mr. Bell noted that the updates on the defunding of the IMLS has been relatively quiet. Mr. Bell said that the 21 states that filed a lawsuit against the current Administration for the defunding saw a release of their suspended funding for FY2026. Mr. Bell noted that Maryland was included.

### ***Chestertown Branch's Wednesday Extended Hours***

Mr. Bell took a moment to review the success of extending the Chestertown branch's hours on Wednesday from 6pm to 7pm. Mr. Bell explained that between 12/30/2024 and 6/22/2025, 477 patrons have utilized this extra hour. Mr. Bell noted that the number of individuals coming in during this time has been increasing. Mr. Bell noted that he would be monitoring this trend to advise on the potential for more extended hours in the future.

## Old Business

### ***Senior Staff Hour Reduction – Detail Clarification***

Ms. Counihan stated that after reviewing the paperwork provided, the trustees voted to clarify that the Executive Director would not be considered a senior staff member. Ms. Counihan continued that since the Executive Director was classified as an exempt employee, the Senior Staff hour reduction ruling would not apply.

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

## *Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025*

### ***Executive Director Evaluation - Next Steps***

Ms. Counihan noted that the evaluation form would be sent out to the trustees and library staff in the next few days. Ms. Counihan stated that both the Friends of the Library and the Foundation would receive feedback forms as well. Ms. Counihan noted there was still ongoing discussion on how to distribute the evaluation form to the public.

### ***Operations Manual Update***

Mr. Bell noted that the Operations Manual was complete after a rigorous revision process. Mr. Bell noted that the manual would be updated on the website in the coming days.

### ***Staff Handbook Update***

Mr. Bell stated that the revisions to the Staff Handbook would not be completed by the end of FY2025. Mr. Bell noted that the trustees needed to vote to approve of the handbook before the revisions could be finalized. Mr. Bell added that he had sent the trustees a revised version of the handbook for feedback. The trustees proceeded to discuss and revise the handbook.

The trustees' revisions to the Staff Handbook are as follows:

- Removed the section referencing staff allotted breaks, as it is covered under Maryland law.
- Added a 6-month probation period to the eligibility of telework.
- Added language to clarify that all costs accrued by professional training and development must be pre-approved by the director.
- Removed the internal job posting procedure, requiring library staff to apply for position vacancies with the same procedure as external applicants.
- Clarified the expectations around staff appearance.
- Clarified the details about travel and training cost reimbursement.
- Clarified the restrictions around smoking.
- Revised the language around Holidays and Open Enrollment.
- Revised the language surrounding Compensatory Time.
- Clarified the terms for Administrative Leave.

Ms. Counihan moved to approve the Staff Handbook with the slated revisions. Ms. Durso seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Ms. Durso proposed discussing the review of library policies at the July board meeting. Ms. Counihan suggested designating Trustees to organize editing of individual policies.

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

## ***Board Meeting Minutes of: June 30th, 2025***

Ms. Durso noted that the trustees should choose two policies to take priority in the discussion at the next meeting.

### New Business

#### ***Master Gardener Request to use Library Property to Host Fundraiser***

Ms. Durso asked for clarification about the nature of the Master Gardener Request. Mr. Bell explained that the Master Gardener Organization requested permission to use library property to host a fundraiser for their organization. Mr. Bell continued that the library's Meeting Room policy identifies the Board to grant permission on the use of the space. Mr. Bell suggested designating the Executive Director to make this decision moving forward. Ms. Durso agreed with the idea and proposed revising the policy in the future.

The trustees further discussed the details around the fundraiser. Mr. Bell explained that the proposed fundraiser would be held on library property, during operating hours, and would be collecting funds. Mr. Bell noted that the Meeting Room Policy does not allow the use of library property for events that involve financial transactions. Ms. Durso proposed receiving more clarifying details about the fundraiser before making a final decision. Mr. Bell agreed, and the decision was pushed to the next board meeting.

#### ***Clarification on Executive Director's Eligibility for Compensatory Time***

Mr. Bell asked for clarification about whether the Executive Director would be eligible for compensatory time when working weekend hours. Ms. Durso suggested the trustees discuss this subject in closed session.

### Closed Session

Ms. Counihan moved to close the meeting. Ms. Rankin seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting went into closed session at 5:59pm.

### Adjournment

The closed session ended at 6:30. No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Counihan moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Rankin seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:32.

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

**Instructions to presiding officer:** To meet in a closed session under the Act, the public body must first meet in open session, after providing proper notice. Make sure that the open session is attended by a member designated to receive open meetings training. If a designated member cannot attend, complete the Compliance Checklist.<sup>1</sup> If the public body has never designated a member for training, it must do so **before closing the session**.

*Before* closing the session, take two steps: (1) conduct a recorded vote on a motion to close; and (2) make a written "closing" statement. If the public body might return to open session afterwards, be sure to tell the public that. *During* the closed session, keep the discussion topics within the confines of the closing statement. *After* the closed session, the events of the closed session must be disclosed in the next open-session minutes.

The top part of this form is a model closing statement. **It has two sides. Before closing the open session, complete items 1 through 4 on this form or in any writing with the same information.** If someone pre-prepared the form for you, make sure it reflects the public body's own intended topics and reasons for closing the meeting. A member of the public may inspect the closing statement at the time of the closing and may object to the decision to close the meeting. Once the meeting is closed, the closing statement sets the agenda and may not be changed.

The bottom part of the form is a worksheet that provides a checklist of the disclosures that must be made in the next open-session minutes. The worksheet is not part of the closing statement.

**1. Recorded vote to close the meeting:** Date: 6-30-25; Time: 5:59; Location: RH branch ;  
Motion to close meeting made by: Erin Cownihan ; Seconded by Clara Rankin ;  
Members in favor: all ; Opposed: none ;  
Abstaining: none ; Absent: Melissa Walters

**2. Statutory authority to close session (check all provisions that apply):**

**This meeting will only be closed under the provision or provisions checked below, all from General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b):**

- (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

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/OpenGov%20Documents/Openmeetings/COMPLIANCE\\_CHECKLIST%20.pdf](http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/OpenGov%20Documents/Openmeetings/COMPLIANCE_CHECKLIST%20.pdf)

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,” such as information that is related to passwords, personal ID numbers, access codes, encryption, security devices, or vulnerability assessments or that a governmental entity collects or maintains to prevent, detect, or investigate criminal activity; or (iii) “deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices.”

3. For *each* provision checked above, the corresponding topic to be discussed and the public body’s reason for discussing that topic in closed session, in as much detail as possible without disclosing the information that may be discussed behind closed doors:

Citation (insert # from above)	Topic <i>We expect to discuss these matters:</i>	Reason for closed-session discussion of topic - <i>We are closing the meeting to discuss this topic because:</i>
§ 3-305(b)(1)	Compensation, employment, duties	We discussed compensation for senior staff & the executive director in relation to their hours & duties.
§ 3-305(b)(2)	Privacy	Our staff is small and we did not want to discuss compensation publicly as a matter of staff privacy.
§ 3-305(b) ( )		
§ 3-305(b) ( )		

4. This statement is made by RACHEL M. DUNSO, Presiding Officer.

\*\*\*\*\*

**WORKSHEET FOR OPTIONAL USE IN CLOSED SESSION: INFORMATION THAT MUST BE  
DISCLOSED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT OPEN SESSION (§ 3-306)(c)(2) or § 3-104**

**For meetings closed under an exception, as disclosed above:**

Time of closed session: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Members who voted to meet in closed session: \_\_\_\_\_

Persons attending closed session: \_\_\_\_\_

Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session (see chart above): \_\_\_\_\_

Topics actually discussed: \_\_\_\_\_

Each action Taken: \_\_\_\_\_