

Board of Trustees
Minutes
December 12, 2024

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Westchester Township History Museum located at 700 W. Porter Avenue, Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, December 12th, 2024. It was called to order by Rondi Wightman, Board President at 7:00 pm.

Board members present were: Michele Corazzo, Abbe Trent, Kathryn Cochran, Justin Martinson, Michael Livovich, and Rondi Wightman.
Board members absent: Will Scharp

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Heather Chaddock, Library Assistant Director Jessica Bartz, and Library Attorney Lisa Baron attended virtually via Zoom.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the minutes from the November 14th, 2024 regular session. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports as presented. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Justin Martinson to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of November 14th, 2024 through December 12th, 2024, as presented. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Librarian's Report

Service highlights were relayed from the past month featuring positive feedback and gratitude expressed by patrons regarding their Library experiences.

STAFF HOLIDAY PARTY –

The staff holiday party was well-received, featuring a catered breakfast from Third Coast Spice Café (\$1,370.40) and individual gifts of motivational tea jars (\$9.98/person). Staff expressed appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate and boost morale. The Board's support in making this event possible was acknowledged.

YEAR END EVALUATIONS - Managerial staff have completed self-evaluations and evaluations with their teams. Final meetings with the Director and her direct reports are scheduled to conclude next week, focusing on reviewing goals and recognizing their dedication and teamwork, specifically highlighting the continued delivery of high-quality core services during the unexpected renovations of the Baugher Center and expanded efforts of community collaboration.

STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS AUDIT – Board President Rondi Wightman, Treasurer Abbe Trent, and Director Chaddock attended an exit meeting with the State Board of Accounts following their two-week audit. While findings cannot yet be shared publicly, a draft was provided to Board members. An Executive Session may be scheduled to discuss the findings before their expected publication in 45 days if the Board deems it necessary.

Director Chaddock asked if the Board wanted to schedule an executive session, but all members agreed this wasn't necessary.

STATISTICS – In November, 13,270 people visited the Library; WPL hosted 45 in-person programs with 648 attendees; 52 reference questions and 106 tech help questions were answered; 165 people utilized library meeting rooms and 112 people reserved individual study rooms. 113 new library cards were registered.

Staff Changes

Joined: N/A

Separated: N/A

Other: N/A

Old Business

MUSEUM RENOVATION – A discussion was held regarding potential dates for an upcoming meeting with Moake Park architects next month. Director Chaddock presented meeting options of Wednesday 01/15, 01/22, or 01/29 at 6:00 p.m. The board members present had no conflicts.

BAUGHER CENTER RENOVATION – ACTION ITEM - Roof inspectors reviewed the Baugher Center roof and identified minor seam issues, which Korellis has addressed. Final inspection and a 10-year warranty are pending. Change Order #7 (\$15,890) addressed overlooked items, including window coverings, pipe supports, and attic ventilation. Payments #3 (\$445,185.20) and #4 (\$81,307.65) were processed. Carpeting and flooring in staff offices are near completion, and art and furniture selections are being finalized for installation before Christmas.

The meeting room renovations include a gallery wall featuring photographs from local artists, with 12 selected works. The Board was invited to consider hosting an artist reception with wine, cheese, and community engagement activities to celebrate the renovations, showcase the space, and promote volunteer opportunities at WPL. Approval for alcohol service and event logistics would be required. Dates of January 25th or February 8th were presented as options.

The Board agreed to host the artist reception event. Board President Wightman inquired about the permanence of the gallery wall and Director Chaddock confirmed it would be permanent. Abbe Trent raised questions about liquor licensing, and Assistant Director Bartz asked about the need for a police officer. Director Chaddock will investigate these requirements and provide updates.

Director Chaddock asked for an official vote and motion on serving alcohol at the event. Member Abbe Trent moved to allow alcohol for the event and Micheal Livovich seconded the motion. All members present agreed and the motion passed.

SALARY SCHEDULE - At the November 14 regular Board meeting, the Board adopted a new salary schedule based on an anticipated federal minimum salary for exempt employees. Although a federal judge blocked this ruling on November 15, Director Chaddock recommended retaining the adopted schedule for the following reasons:

1. The 2025 WPL budget was built to accommodate the new salaries, and reverting would route unspent funds into already robust reserves.
2. The adopted starting salary of \$58,656 will keep WPL competitive for hiring and retaining talent, particularly compared to local entities like Duneland School Corporation, which starts its teachers at \$54,000.
3. Local library salary comparisons, such as within the Crown Point library system, align with WPL's approved schedule, ensuring competitive compensation across roles.

Director Chaddock emphasized that the schedule aligns with the goal of providing a middle-class standard of living for staff, and remains appropriate despite the federal minimum being struck down.

Board Vice President Michele Corazzo agreed with this assessment, as did Treasurer Abbe Trent and Secretary Justin Martinson. Kathryn Cochran mentioned that librarians' jobs may become more difficult in the coming years due to rising censorship efforts. Michael Livovich stated that the board had made a decision a couple of months ago and his recommendation would be to follow through with that decision, though he would abstain if it came to a vote, as he did previously. President Wightman stated she is comfortable keeping what was planned for and agreed that the incoming administration may provide a difficult future for librarians.

New Business

2025 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE – ACTION ITEM —The 2025 proposed schedule of Board Meetings was made available in the Board documents for review and adoption. Director Chaddock elected to schedule the majority of the 2025 meetings in the new Thomas Branch Board Room to allow for additional availability of the Baugher Center for use by patrons, staff and for library programs.

Member Justin Martinson moved to approve the board meeting schedule, Kathryn Cochran seconded. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

CHESTERTON ART CENTER EXHIBIT SPACE – Chesterton Art Center (CAC) Executive Director

Hannah Hammond-Hagman proposed hosting some of the CAC's art exhibitions at WPL, due to their extensive waitlist for display venues. After a site visit with CAC staff, the upstairs hallway at the Thomas Branch was selected as the primary display area, with the possibility of future use of a display case at the Hageman Branch for 3-D art. CAC will handle installation and removal of artwork quarterly, with no sales conducted at WPL. An adapted CAC Exhibition Contract will release liability for both organizations. The partnership offers increased visibility for local artists and additional foot traffic for WPL. If approved, a Memorandum of Understanding between WPL and CAC will be drafted to formalize the collaboration.

There was some discussion regarding loss of the tv screen upstairs and its current usage; it was ultimately determined that it would not be a significant loss for the library, given that the tv screen near the front entrance will remain.

END-OF-YEAR TRANSFERS – ACTION ITEM – AVC prepared end-of-year billings and reconciliations, and transfers to be made within Operating were made available for the Board to review and approve.

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the end-of-year transfers. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Director Chaddock commented that the Librarian's report would not need to be approved at this meeting, as there were no staff changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

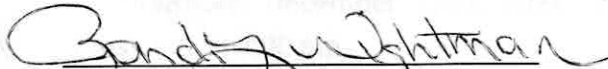
Board members praised Director Chaddock for her strong leadership and efforts to foster new partnerships, with unanimous agreement on her excellent performance. Director Chaddock also commended IT Manager Dan Hatch, Assistant Director Jessica Bartz, and Maintenance Manager Ron Horton for their ongoing support over two years of renovation projects.

Kathryn Cochran expressed appreciation for the museum displays and discussed potential improvements for open spaces at Hageman and the Museum. Michele Corazzo suggested exploring a meeting space at the Museum, and there was a brief discussion about opening up meeting spaces to for-profit groups with the possibility of charging for the space. Director Chaddock stated that she preferred not to allow for-profit groups, or implement charges for meeting spaces, and the Board expressed general agreement.


Abbe Trent raised questions about bid submission standards, recommending a review of the Town of Chesterton's recently adopted practices to ensure a modern approach. She also inquired about usage of the Baugher Center meeting space; Director Chaddock, Administrative Assistant Carissa Domonkos, and Assistant Director Bartz all confirmed the space is being frequently utilized. Additionally, President Wightman suggested evaluating alternative uses for the often-empty parking lot across from the Baugher Center.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Thursday, January 9th, 2024 at 7:00 PM at the Baugher Center, located at 700 W. Porter Avenue in Chesterton.

Justin Martinson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. Rondi Wightman adjourned the meeting at 7:46 PM.


Rondi Wightman, President


Justin Martinson, Secretary


Michele Corazzo, Vice-President


Kathryn Cochran, Board Member


Abbe Trent, Treasurer


Michael Livovich, Board Member


Will Scharp, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,
Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Justin Martinson, Secretary