

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes

March 13, 2025

DRAFT

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Thomas Branch located at 200 W. Indiana Ave, Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, March 13th, 2025. It was called to order by Rondi Wightman, Board President at 7:01 p.m.

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

Board members absent: Will Scharp

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2025 regular session. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the minutes from the February 27, 2025 special meeting regarding the decision to join the Indiana Digital Library consortium. Justin Martinson 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 for February 13, 2025 through March 12, 2025. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of February 13, 2025 through March 12, 2025, 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.

Director Chaddock thanked the Trustees for a positive and productive special meeting held on February 27th. The meeting provided an opportunity for public engagement, and attendees

expressed appreciation for the transparency and thoughtfulness of the discussion. Several community members also shared positive feedback on social media following the meeting. Comments highlighted the Board's responsiveness, the depth of information provided, and the professionalism of Library staff.

Director Chaddock and Assistant Director Bartz continue working with IDL representatives to ensure the successful transfer of MARC records from the Library's existing collection. Next steps include public notifications regarding the transition and staff and patron education on navigating the new system.

ANNUAL REPORT – The Library Annual Report and Financial Report were submitted to the State Library and Indiana Gateway by the March 1st deadline. Key statistics from the 2024 report indicate positive growth across several service areas:

- Total number of annual visits grew by 2.6%, from 158,884 in 2023 to 163,046 in 2024.
- There were increases in tech help questions answered, reference questions answered, and public computer usage.
- Total program attendance increased by 11.6%, from 10,754 attendees in 2023 to 11,997 attendees in 2024.

These positive trends highlight the impact of ongoing efforts to enhance collections, update meeting spaces, and expand programming and outreach, resulting in measurable growth for the library.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATES – WPL's IT Manager has been overseeing the rollout of new technology for both patrons and staff. A new smart board was purchased from Pulse Technology for \$9,050.00 (Operating Fund) to improve hybrid virtual meetings and programs. Staff training is underway to ensure effective use of the equipment.

Looking ahead, 18 replacement patron computers were approved for purchase from Bucher Tech at a cost of \$17,428.00 (Operating Fund). Once installed, the next priority will be replacing the aged microfilm reader at the Thomas Branch, which has been experiencing connectivity issues. Staff computer replacements are planned for the latter half of 2025, following the Summer Reading season.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES – All bills that passed out of their respective committees have now switched houses for the second half of the legislative session. Director Chaddock attended an ILF legislative update virtual meeting on March 12 and shared relevant information with the Board.

SB 1, now referred to as HB 1402, still includes significant funding cuts for libraries and schools, with no replacement revenue sources outside of the referendum process. The Bill is being

revised and the House is hearing testimonies, including from the President of ILF, on the estimated financial impact on municipal organizations. Westchester Public Library is projected to lose approximately \$50,000 in funding in 2026, with increasing losses in subsequent years. Director Chaddock emphasized that the budget has not been finalized.

STATISTICS – In February, 13,006 people visited the Library; staff created 38 in-person programs with 602 attendees, and 1 live virtual program with 13 attendees. Staff answered 28 reference questions and 92 tech help questions; 256 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 133 reservations for individual study rooms; 99 new library cards were registered. Included in the Board Meeting documents were graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

STAFF CHANGES – Joined: Marilyn Peterson, Page
Separated: Zoey Egolf, Page
Other: N/A

OLD BUSINESS

PURCHASING POLICY AND RESPONSIBLE BIDDING PRACTICES AND

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS – ACTION ITEM – This month’s Board documents included a draft of an updated WPL Purchasing Policy and Responsible Bidding Practices and Submission Requirements. The previous Small Purchase Policy, last reviewed in 2012, was expanded to become a more comprehensive Purchasing Policy.

Key updates include:

- A new section addressing purchases over \$50,000.
- Addition and adaptation of the recently adopted Town of Chesterton Ordinance regarding bidding and submission requirements for purchases of \$150,000 or more.

The draft policy was reviewed by WPL Attorney Lisa Baron, who confirmed its compliance with all cited provisions.

Director Chaddock then confirmed that she had addressed Michele Corazzo’s emailed question, and agreed that removing the second sentence of Section VI was the best solution. Abbe Trent expressed appreciation to Director Chaddock and Attorney Lisa Baron for their detailed work adapting this policy. Director Chaddock emphasized the importance of finalizing these updates before the Library begins accepting bids for the Museum renovation.

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the Purchasing Policy And Responsible Bidding Practices and Submission Requirements. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

MUSEUM RENOVATION – The Museum renovation Request for Proposals (RFP) will be posted following the passage of the updated submission requirements.

In preparation for the YMCA’s planned renovation of the Brown Mansion entrance from Porter Avenue, expected to begin in April, Director Chaddock has been coordinating with Museum and Maintenance staff to establish a temporary access plan for patrons.

Temporary adjustments include:

- Re-designating the exit lane as both an entrance and exit, requiring restriping, directional signage, and a permit from the Town.
- Maintaining handicapped parking and additional spaces directly behind the Museum.
- Encouraging street parking on Porter Avenue for larger events such as Trivia Night.
- Removing angled parking spots on the side of the building to prevent confusion.

These measures will remain in place until WPL’s Museum renovation project is complete.

NEW BUSINESS

TRUSTEE REAPPOINTMENT – In March, the Duneland School Corporation Board reappointed Trustee Kathryn Cochran for a four-year term. This marks Kathryn’s third consecutive term. Director Chaddock and the Board congratulated Kathy Cochran, and the Board expressed great appreciation for her continued service and dedication.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS – ACTION ITEM – Director Chaddock and the Board thanked Rondi Wightman for her service as Board President over the past year. A brief discussion followed regarding the election of new roles. Because Abbe Trent had served as treasurer for two years, President Wightman asked for volunteers for the role. Michael Livovich agreed to take on the position of treasurer. After further discussion, President Wightman proposed the following slate of officers:

- Michele Corazzo as Board President
- Abbe Trent as Secretary
- Justin Martinson as Vice President
- Michael Livovich as Treasurer

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the election of officers as proposed by President Wightman. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the Librarian’s Report. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Thursday, April 10th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton.

Justin Martinson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. Rondi Wightman adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Michele Corazzo, President

Abbe Trent, Secretary

Justin Martinson, Vice-President

Kathryn Cochran, Board Member

Michael Livovich, Treasurer

Rondi Wightman, Board Member

Will Scharp, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,
Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Abbe Trent, Secretary