

## Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees

### Minutes

June 12, 2025

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Hageman Branch, located at 100 Francis St, Porter, Indiana on Thursday, June 12, 2025. It was called to order by Michele Corazzo, Board President at 7:00 p.m.

Board members present were: Michele Corazzo, Michael Livovich, Kathryn Cochran, Rondi Wightman, Justin Martinson and Will Scharp. Abbe Trent attended virtually via Zoom.  
Board members absent: N/A

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

Jeff Berglund from Berglund Construction was in attendance as a member of the public.

#### Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the minutes from the May 08, 2025 executive session. Justin Martinson seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed. Rondi and Will abstained due to absence.

#### Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Michael Livovich to approve the minutes from the May 08, 2025 regular session. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

#### Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Justin Martinson to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports for the month of May. Will Scharp seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

#### Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of May 07, 2025 through June 11, 2025, as presented. Justin Martinson 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.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATES** – Director Chaddock reported a concerning development regarding the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). She shared a recent article from *Publisher's Weekly*, which stated, in part, “In a decision that may prove catastrophic for the American library community, a federal judge has denied a preliminary injunction in *American Library Association v. Sonderling*, a case seeking to halt the demolition of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. [...] ALA declared that the decision allows the Trump administration to proceed with efforts to destroy the IMLS. ‘The extent to which some libraries have already canceled services and programming—and even lost staff in some cases—is evidence of the importance of IMLS,’ said ALA president Cindy Hohl, in a statement. ‘ALA will not rest until libraries in every state receive the funding promised and IMLS is back in full force to meet the information needs of all Americans.’” Director Chaddock will continue to provide updates regarding the future of IMLS funding as they are reported.

At the state level, the Indiana legislative session has concluded. The Department of Local Government Finance is currently working to interpret numerous budgetary changes and develop guidance for local government entities for the 2026 budget cycle. While the Board is scheduled to discuss the 2026 Draft Budget at the July 10th meeting, Director Chaddock will be unable to present the draft at that time, due to the Indiana Library Federation Budget Workshop being scheduled for July 11th. The draft budget will instead be presented at the August 14th meeting. Typically held in late June, this year’s workshop was delayed due to the volume of legislative changes. Director Chaddock expressed appreciation for the Board’s understanding.

Board member Will Scharp emphasized the importance of Director Chaddock attending the budget workshop, noting the potential need for budget adjustments in the coming year.

**STATISTICS** – In May, 15,155 people visited the Library; 25 in-person programs were created with 391 attendees. The Library answered 48 reference questions and 132 tech help questions; 450 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 243 reservations for individual study rooms; 130 new library cards were registered. Included in the Board Meeting documents are graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

**CDs REINVESTED** – In May, two Rainy Day Fund CDs matured and were reinvested as follows: Morgan Stanley at 4.9% and Queensborough National Bank at 4.85%.

**STAFF CHANGES** – Joined: Megan Ozdyck, P/T Programming Clerk  
Separated: Aaron Drew, P/T Programming Clerk  
Other: N/A

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**EXTERIOR PROJECTS** – Following the Board’s decision at the previous regular meeting, Director Chaddock contacted CSK Architects to proceed with advertising the proposed exterior improvement projects for the Hageman Branch, Thomas Branch, and Baugher Center. Tom

Kuhn, President of CSK, reported that as of last week, CSK was still working on the necessary architectural drawings, therefore the projects have not yet been officially advertised for bids.

**MUSEUM RENOVATION – ACTION ITEM** – The Museum Committee conducted interviews with three firms for the role of Construction Manager as Constructor on June 3. All firms that responded to the public request for proposals were invited to present. Materials from the process, including the compiled score sheets prepared by Jeff Schroeder of Moake Park Architecture, and the interview questions used, were provided for reference. In addition to prepared questions, the Committee asked each firm about the feasibility of the estimated \$5.3 million project budget, and their plans for safeguarding the Museum’s artifacts and paperwork during construction.

The Museum Committee was impressed with all three firms interviewed; however, Berglund Construction stood out as the clear choice. Berglund was the only firm to provide a realistic assessment of the extensive rehabilitation needed, particularly in the basement, and demonstrated exceptional experience in historic preservation and artifact care. The Committee was especially impressed by Berglund’s approach to “delicate demolition,” which involves hand-removal of the building connection points, to prevent further damage to fragile plasterwork on the upper floors. Based on their expertise and thoughtful planning, the Museum Committee recommended that the WPL Board award the Construction Manager as Constructor contract to Berglund Construction. Director Chaddock invited further discussion from the Board prior to a formal vote.

Michael Livovich asked for clarification on whether the Board would be voting on the entire project, or solely on the Construction Manager as Constructor contract. Director Chaddock confirmed that the vote was only for the Construction Manager as Constructor, and that project details would be addressed in future phases.

Michael also inquired about potential cost increases. Justin Martinson noted that Berglund anticipated a 3–5% rise due to market conditions. Director Chaddock added that a 10% contingency fund was built into the budget to cover unforeseen issues.

Jeff Berglund further explained that after an initial six-month period of investigation and planning, the project would proceed phase by phase, with competitive bidding for subcontractors.

Abbe Trent expressed her support for Berglund Construction, noting that their proposal was the most realistic and thorough.

A motion was made by Will Scharp to award the bid to Berglund Construction. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Related to the Museum renovation, and the YMCA Healthy Living Campus as a whole, Director Chaddock included in the Board documents the official plan for traffic flow around the Museum and the YMCA this summer.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**MUSEUM NAME** – As part of the interview process for selecting a Construction Manager as Constructor, several candidates asked the Museum Committee to articulate the goals and long-term vision for the Museum. Committee members emphasized the importance of preserving the historic building and its archival collections, improving accessibility, and creating a more welcoming and visible presence in the community. The Committee recognized the need for focused messaging around the renovation to clearly communicate the value of the project to taxpayers, and to build community support. Director Chaddock expressed interest in leading the Committee in developing social media content, and possibly hosting events to generate excitement and share updates about the renovation process.

Director Chaddock also raised for consideration the possibility of changing the Museum's name. The current name—**Westchester Township History Museum**—may no longer reflect the full scope of its collections or its broader potential. In a prior conversation, Museum Curator Serena Ard expressed support for a name change, noting the frequent confusion around the term "Township" and the resulting need to explain local government structures to visitors.

Director Chaddock noted that state-level discussions have raised the possibility of dissolving township government structures, and there has also been ongoing legislative interest in redistricting Indiana's public library systems. A name change could help ensure the Museum's continued relevance and success regardless of future governance changes.

With the upcoming renovation offering a natural opportunity for transformation, Director Chaddock suggested inviting community input on a new name as part of the broader engagement strategy. Serena Ard has been asked to reflect on the most-used research materials, most valuable resources, and most popular programs to help inform the Museum Committee's discussion.

Additionally, the Museum's Collection Development policy has not been reviewed in over a decade, and may warrant future consideration by the Board. Director Chaddock invited the Board to discuss the concept of the name change.

Will Scharp asked if an online poll might be used to gather community input. Director Chaddock stated she would support a public vote using pre-approved naming options. Kathryn Cochran suggested using focus groups, which received agreement from the Board. Michael Livovich expressed support for the idea, noting that Director Chaddock's rationale was thoughtful and well-articulated.

Justin Martinson raised the topic of possibly renaming the library system itself. Director Chaddock responded that such a change would be better timed in response to potential future

legislation, if it ever comes to pass. Assistant Director Bartz noted that the need for a name change is supported by the Museum staff's broad professional reach, projects, and collaborations. Will Scharp expressed support as well, stating that a name change could enhance the Museum's recognizability.

Rondi Wightman asked whether the Brown Mansion would remain affiliated with the Museum. Director Chaddock confirmed that it would, with a continued emphasis on accurately reporting the known details of the life of the original owner and his family.

**CLEVELAND CLIFFS ASSESSMENT – ACTION ITEM** – Director Chaddock shared that she received an email from Porter County Assessor Sue Neff on Friday, May 23. It stated, in part, “As you may or may not know, Cleveland Cliffs steel mill has the statutory right to ask for the State of Indiana (DLGF) to assess their property. They have made this request for the past 24 years with no opposition to the assessment findings. Unfortunately, for the 2025 assessment, they have chosen to appeal the assessment. Although their assessment has remained relatively static in the past few years, the jump from 2024 to 2025 is over 12%.” Director Chaddock included a spreadsheet reflecting an estimate of the revenue this assessment increase would mean to the Library's taxing unit. Alternatively, the total revenue loss, if the appeal is accepted, was estimated to be approximately \$348,029 for all of the entities who receive property tax dollars from Cleveland Cliffs.

Assessor Neff's email continued to explain, “The appeal was filed with the Indiana Board of Tax Review (IBTR) and at this level, an appraisal is necessary to defend [the DLGF's] AV numbers. There are only a few appraisers with the qualifications to be able to do this work and I am working to find one with availability as well as working out the cost estimate.” She further reported that the DLGF has no budget available for conducting property appraisals. Although the County Assessor's office has an appraisal budget, the complexity and scale of the business in question exceeds what that budget can support. As a result, the Assessor is asking the Town of Burns Harbor, the Duneland School District, and the Westchester Public Library to consider sharing the cost of an independent appraisal, including expenses related to securing expert witness testimony before IBTR, such as travel and lodging in Indianapolis.

Sue Neff proposed that each entity contribute a portion of the total cost based on the percentage of tax revenue each stands to lose.

After sharing the Assessor's email request with the WPL Board, and receiving the WPL trustees' questions in return, Director Chaddock met with the Assessor and her staff to gather additional details. As a result of that meeting, Director Chaddock expressed support for the request and recommended that the Library contribute up to \$10,000 toward the appraisal and related expert witness costs. She confirmed that these expenses can be paid from the “Other Professional Services” (3.14) line of the Library's 2025 Operating Budget. Director Chaddock also reached out to Duneland School Corporation Superintendent Chip Pettit, and he confirmed that the DSC will also be financially supporting this initiative, and they plan to advise the Burns

Harbor Town Council of this decision, as well. Director Chaddock then invited the Board to discuss.

Will Scharp expressed full support for contributing to the appraisal costs. Abbe Trent asked whether the Assessor believed these types of re-appraisals typically succeed. Director Chaddock stated that the Assessor was confident in the accuracy of her valuation.

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the Library paying the recommended \$10,000 towards the cost of the assessment. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**HAGEMAN KITCHEN** – Director Chaddock provided background on the need to establish WPL’s own internet connections for the Museum and Hageman Branch. Following the Brown Mansion’s purchase, Duneland School Corporation informed the Library that it could no longer use the school district’s fiber connection, a service provided since 1999. In response, Dan Hatch, WPL’s IT Manager, has been working with vendors to secure new high-speed internet service, leveraging ENA’s eRate subsidy to help offset the costs. While unplanned and expensive, creating independent fiber connections will enhance network security and operational efficiency.

Dan has collaborated with Bucher Tech and Ellis Electric to develop a plan to install servers and network switches at the Hageman Branch, Baugher Center, and Museum. Installations are scheduled to begin this summer, with a goal of transitioning off the DSC network by the agreed-upon summer deadline.

At the Hageman Branch, space constraints present a challenge. ENA and Comcast recommended installing the new server rack in the storage closet adjacent to the staff kitchen, the same space currently used as an informal break area due to space constraints in the Branch. Director Chaddock proposed converting the underutilized kitchen area into a true break room by removing existing cabinets and creating a more functional layout, allowing the closet to be used solely for secure server storage.

Quotes were solicited from three local contractors. Of those, only New Dynamics Construction submitted a complete proposal. Their quote of \$8,381.10 includes demolition, painting, and installation of new cabinets, countertops, sink, and furniture. Barring any strong objections from the Board, Director Chaddock stated her intention to move forward with this renovation during the month of July. She also shared that construction is expected to take approximately one week, and invited the Board to discuss.

Will Scharp asked if the Library was aware of Bucher Tech’s technology grant available for local non-profits. Director Chaddock stated she would have Dan ask them about it.

After viewing the kitchen and break area, all Board members agreed to the necessity of moving forward with the plan to renovate the kitchen.

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the Librarian's Report. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Michele Corazzo asked if the committee for the Museum renovation would need to meet in the coming month. Director Chaddock stated she would need to notify Moake Park of the Board's decision to select Berglund, and let the other competing companies know of the Board's decision as well. She further stated that it wouldn't be necessary to gather until after that was done, and all parties were ready to proceed with a kick-off meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

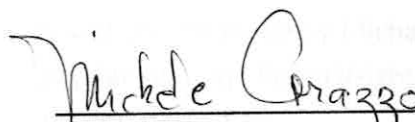
There was no public comment.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

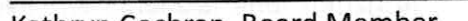
The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Thursday, July 10, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 W. Indiana Ave, Chesterton.

Kathryn Cochran made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. Michele Corazzo adjourned the meeting at 7:53 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