

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
October 09, 2025

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, October 09, 2025. It was called to order by Michele Corazzo, Board President at 7:01 p.m.

Board members present were: Michele Corazzo, Justin Martinson, Abbe Trent, and Kathryn Cochran. Board members absent: Michael Livovich, Rondi Wightman and 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 Kathryn Cochran to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2025 regular session. Justin Martinson seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - Executive Session

A motion was made by Justin Martinson to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2025 executive session. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - Special Meeting

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2025 special meeting. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. Justin abstained as he was absent from that meeting. As a result, this vote was tabled until the next regular meeting, as there were not enough Board members present for a quorum to approve.

Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports for the month of September. Justin Martinson 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 September 11, 2025 through October 08, 2025 as presented. Abbe Trent 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.

FRIENDS BOOK SALE – The Friends volunteers, led by Assistant Director Jessica Bartz, set a new record for the highest sales in a single weekend, totaling \$5,240.70. This achievement reflects the consistently well-organized, welcoming, and enjoyable nature of the sales, which continue to attract loyal bargain hunters. Director Chaddock expressed deep appreciation for the Friends' professionalism and long-standing dedication.

CARPET CLEANING – Director Chaddock reported ongoing efforts to address carpet cleaning challenges at the Library. Despite working with several local companies after the Thomas Branch HVAC project, none were able to remove the glue residue left by duct tape used during the pandemic for social distancing markers. While replacing the carpeting at both the Thomas and Hageman branches would be ideal, budget constraints due to other improvement projects make it unlikely for the near future.

Particularly concerned about the condition of the upstairs hallway carpeting at the Thomas Branch, now a high-visibility area thanks to the Chesterton Art Center exhibits, Director Chaddock tried a new company, Indy Fiber. They were hired to clean only the second floor at Thomas, completing most of the work before opening hours on a Sunday, at a cost of \$1,500. Before-and-after photos were included in the Board documents. Director Chaddock plans to bring Indy Fiber back soon to clean the lower level at Thomas and the Hageman Branch. While full replacement isn't yet feasible, these efforts help improve appearance and extend the life of the existing carpeting.

Michele Corazzo complimented the art installation and suggested that it be updated more frequently. Director Chaddock explained that the Chesterton Art Center rotates the artwork quarterly, noting that a new display had just been installed the previous week.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – Director Chaddock attended the Northwest Indiana Library Board Association dinner at Purdue Northwest with several of the Library's Trustees. The speaker was Mark Shublak from Taft Law, currently the lead lobbyist for the Indiana Library Federation (ILF). He encouraged board members to contact local legislators on behalf of libraries, citing the recent successful efforts to secure funding for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Director Chaddock noted that libraries with an institutional ILF membership can register their board members for legislative update emails, and is working to set this up for the Library's Board once the yearly membership is renewed in early November. In the meantime, Director Chaddock reminded the Board that they can sign up for email updates from Indiana Freedom to Read, a grassroots organization focused on opposing legislation that infringes on First Amendment rights and intellectual freedom, at <https://infreadomtoread.org/>.

BAKER AND TAYLOR – Director Chaddock shared the unfortunate news that Baker & Taylor, the Library’s primary book supplier for many years, is going out of business after a failed sale attempt. Director Chaddock noted that this comes at a particularly challenging time, with the Technical Services Department managing the holiday publishing and purchasing rush while staff are also working in a building undergoing extensive construction. Despite the timing, the Technical Services Manager has been calm and proactive in identifying ways for the Library to continue acquiring new materials. Staff are currently ordering canceled Baker and Taylor items from Amazon as a temporary solution to keep shelves stocked while other options are explored. Director Chaddock acknowledged the limited number of alternative library wholesalers and potential customer service challenges, and will provide a status update next month.

CD MATURITIES – Director Chaddock has been working with the Library’s representatives from Horizon Wealth Management to ensure funds are available for upcoming major renovation projects funded by the Library Improvement Reserve Fund. Their recommendation was to allow CDs to mature, transfer the earned interest to the Operating Fund, and make the capital available for construction expenses. As of the end of September, \$663,770 was available for immediate withdrawal from the money market, with two additional CDs maturing soon totaling \$500,000, bringing the short-term total to \$1,163,770. An additional \$250,000 CD will mature on December 22, and another \$250,000 on January 31, 2026, providing a total of \$1,663,770, sufficient to cover the Additional Appropriation amount for the Exterior Building Projects, which are expected to be completed by May 2026.

Separately, a CD reached maturity from the Rainy Day fund, and was reinvested in Goldman Sachs at a rate of 3.65%.

Michele Corazzo asked how the bank handles funds that are cashed in and where they are held in the interim, suggesting the possibility of reinvesting the money for a short period, such as a three-month CD. Director Chaddock explained that the bank’s instruction was to simply let the funds mature and she expressed hesitation to re-invest them, as they would just need to be sold again to cover the exterior repairs. Director Chaddock added that she was unsure of the available options, but would follow up with Horizon to inquire further.

STATISTICS – In September, 15,123 people visited the Library and 47 in-person programs were created with 747 attendees. The Library answered 88 reference questions and 131 tech help questions. 484 people utilized library meeting rooms, there were 186 reservations for individual study rooms, and the Library registered 127 new library cards.

Included in the Board Meeting documents were graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

STAFF CHANGES – Joined: Diane Krepp, P/T Clerk, Hayley Dwyer, P/T Clerk, Rachel Beard, Sub Clerk
Separated: Ann O’Connell, P/T Clerk, Sharon Smith, P/T Clerk
Other: N/A

OLD BUSINESS

EXTERIOR PROJECTS UPDATE – At its September 23rd regular meeting, the Porter County Council unanimously approved the Library’s request for an additional appropriation of \$1,621,730 from the Library Improvement Reserve Fund. Director Chaddock posted the resolution to Indiana Gateway, which was subsequently approved by the Department of Local Government Finance.

The kick-off meeting with Berglund for these projects took place on October 3, and weekly progress meetings will continue for the next several months. The focus in October and November will be on completing brick and mortar repairs at the Baugher Center and Thomas Branch. Director Chaddock plans to prepare and notify staff and patrons for the associated noise these repairs will bring. Berglund also informed Director Chaddock that power would need to be shut off at both buildings for a period of three to five days during this phase to safely complete masonry work near active power lines. The planned systemwide closure, which will disrupt phones and internet connectivity at all Library locations, is tentatively scheduled for October 30 through November 3 to minimize disruption to programs and meeting room reservations. Further updates will be provided as the schedule is confirmed.

MUSEUM RENOVATION UPDATE – Since the last regular Board meeting, the Museum Committee has held two additional Design Development meetings with representatives from Moake Park, Berglund Construction, and subcontractors including Milles Engineering and Abonmarche Consulting. Agendas and minutes are available in the Design Development folder in the Board Drive for Trustee access. Key updates include refining the site plan and scale of the Carriage House: the third floor has been removed to better match the Mansion’s scale, and the Carriage House is now a separate structure rather than a connected addition, aligning with historical images of the old barn and allowing efficient use of the entry lane and parking lot. Moake Park is also designing a Museum gift shop at the front entryway, operable from the front desk in the exhibit space. 3-D renderings of the building were included in the Board packet, with siding colors and details not yet finalized.

Regarding PR and marketing of the Museum renovation, Director Chaddock reviewed the Grossbauer Group’s original \$28,700 proposal, and a scaled-down \$22,050 version which focused on highest-impact services. Director Chaddock advised that she thought the scaled-down version would work well, but suggested two modifications: replacing the community survey in the Naming Guidance section with a Board-facilitated workshop, and adding the Community Engagement section from the original proposal for an additional \$2,100. These changes would bring the final total to \$24,150, saving \$4,550 from the original plan, while providing professional support for community feedback events and

press releases.

Director Chaddock invited the Board to discuss the adjusted proposal.

The ensuing discussion focused on staffing both buildings, and Kathryn Cochran requested to see the 3-D renderings. Michele Corazzo noted plans to raise the double doors for furnace access and mentioned that some trees would need to be removed. She also suggested naming the new facility The Coach House Museum and Cultural Center, which Director Chaddock said would be added to the list. Michele and Abbe Trent inquired about voting on the Grossbauer Group proposal and Director Chaddock confirmed that a formal vote was not required. Justin Martinson expressed comfort with the revised proposal, particularly the adjusted community engagement component, and Abbe voiced her support as well. The Library Board agreed to move forward with the proposal.

NEW BUSINESS

PLAC – ACTION ITEM – Signature for quarterly Public Library Access Card (PLAC) Statement. A motion was made by Justin Martinson to approve the signature of the PLAC statement. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

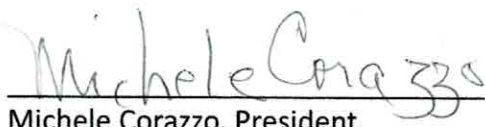
There was no public comment.


OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. —

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Thursday, November 13, 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. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. Michele Corazzo adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.


Michele Corazzo, President


Justin Martinson, Vice-President


Michael Livovich, Treasurer

Abbe Trent
Abbe Trent, Secretary

Kathryn Cochran, Board Member

X

Rondi Wightman, Board Member

Will Scharp, Board Member

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