

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
February 12, 2026

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, February 12, 2026. It was called to order by Michele Corazzo, Board President at 7:02 p.m.

Board members present were: Michele Corazzo, Justin Martinson, Michael Livovich, Will Scharp and Kathryn Cochran.

Board members absent: Abbe Trent and Rondi Wightman

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the minutes from the January 15, 2025 regular session. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

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

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Michael Livovich to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of January 09, 2026 through February 12, 2026 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.

WELCOME MICHAEL KNOLL, NEW SYSTEMWIDE FACILITIES MANAGER – Following the retirement of Maintenance Manager Ron Horton, Director Chaddock and Assistant Director Bartz coordinated the recruitment and interview process to fill this and other open positions. The Library has hired Michael Knoll as the new systemwide Facilities Manager, and he began working on Monday, January 26. Michael brings extensive experience, including roles as a Facilities Engineer at the University of Miami, business owner, and most recently as Maintenance Director for The Willows life care facility in Valparaiso.

Michael introduced himself and told the Board members a little bit about himself. The Board members in turn introduced themselves and welcomed Michael aboard.

NEW PRIMARY BOOK VENDOR - The Library's Technical Services Manager has worked over the past several months to research and coordinate onboarding with a new primary book vendor following the sudden closure of Baker & Taylor in October. The Library's account has been established with Ingram Library Services, staff have completed training on the new interface, and the first shipment of materials has been received. Ingram will serve as the Library's primary source for new materials moving forward, with Amazon and other vendors retained as secondary options to supplement inventory as needed.

LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT UPDATE - Public libraries typically compile the previous year's statistics in January and February for submission of the required Library Annual Report (LAR). Baker & Taylor previously hosted the reporting interface; however, following the company's closure, the Indiana State Library has been working to secure a new host for uploading the report. Updates indicate the new site is still in development. While the Library will be required to submit its 2025 statistics later this year, the report will not be ready by the usual March 1 deadline. As a result, the LAR and a signed attestation originally scheduled for submission at this meeting will be delayed. Director Chaddock will provide an update once a new vendor and revised deadlines are announced.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – Director Chaddock attended the Indiana Library Federation's Statehouse Day on February 3 in support of ILF's efforts to oppose Senate Bill 8: Library Budgets, which has passed the Senate and moved to the House Ways and Means Committee. During the event, Director Chaddock met with district Senator Rodney Pol and Representative Randy Novak. Director Chaddock thanked Senator Pol for his opposition to the bill and encouraged Representative Novak to consider its potential negative impact on libraries statewide. While both legislators expressed support, they noted concern about the bill's growing momentum.

Director Chaddock shared the WPL impact statistics included in the Board packet and discussed the Library's plans for the History Museum, emphasizing that the Library's ability to responsibly grow its budget over time has allowed for savings and investment of reserve funds to support such initiatives.

Director Chaddock expressed concern that Senate Bill 8, in addition to the effects of SEA 1, would significantly limit that capacity for public libraries in the future. An updated ILF position statement on SB 8 and photos from Statehouse Day were included in the Board materials.

OFFICE PROJECTS - Director Chaddock has been working with Tom Kuhn of CSK Architects to develop plans to renovate the Circulation Desk at the Hageman Branch, identified as an A-level priority in the Library's facilities Needs Assessment. The current desk was not designed to support modern technology, lacks adequate space for operations, and its countertop material is deteriorating. Plans include replacing the desk and constructing a private Branch Manager's office in the nook near the bay window by the front entrance, while retaining the existing display case. This change would relocate the Branch Manager from the current storage closet office to a more functional space with a window and improved proximity to the Circulation Desk for better oversight and support.

At the Thomas Branch, following the resignation of the Children's Department Manager, Director Chaddock evaluated the office layout and gathered staff input. Identified needs include additional flat workspace and storage. Proposed adjustments would reconfigure the existing layout to create a private office for the Manager, add a long countertop workspace for program preparation, and install a window facing the rear alley to provide natural light.

CSK Architects is preparing bid documents for both projects. Director Chaddock is hopeful the work can be funded within the Library's regular operating budget, pending bid results. Additionally, installation of the wall for the future HR Office has been completed, and once the Children's Manager position is filled, the new HR position will be posted.

STATISTICS – In January, 12,822 people visited the Library, and 39 in-person programs were created with 692 attendees. The library answered 64 reference questions and 105 tech help questions; 362 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 232 reservations for individual study rooms. The Library registered 120 new library cards. Included in the Board Meeting documents are graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

STAFF CHANGES – Joined: Michael Knoll, Facilities Manager
Separated: Justine Carlotta, Children's Department Manager
Other: Stephanie Cingrani, transferred from P/T Clerk to P/T Cleaner

OLD BUSINESS

MUSEUM RENOVATION UPDATE – The Museum Committee has continued meeting biweekly with Moake Park, Berglund, and subcontractors to review progress on construction documents for the restoration and building project. Meeting minutes and supporting documentation are available in the Board Drive.

Berglund provided an updated Design Development budget of \$6,165,549.00, along with a detailed explanation of changes and increased labor costs contributing to the higher total. At the most recent Committee meeting, it was indicated the project is nearing the end of the conceptual phase and no significant additional cost increases are expected.

Director Chaddock, with assistance from Moake Park Architect Jeff Schroeder and Library Attorney Lisa Baron, assembled and submitted required materials to the Chesterton Board of Zoning Appeals on February 6. The requests include variances for the height of the cupola, the number of parking spaces, permission to add a second structure to the parcel, and rezoning the property from Residential to Museum use. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for February 26, followed by a public hearing on March 26. Jeff Schroeder is expected to attend the preliminary hearing to assist with questions from the BZA.

Kathryn Cochran asked whether it would be helpful for Board members to attend the public hearing. Director Chaddock explained that the decision would likely be made at the preliminary hearing and that while Board members were welcome to attend either hearing, their attendance was not necessary.

Michele Corazzo commended Director Chaddock for her hard work in compiling the information for the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Michael Livovich inquired about the amount of the increase to the Berglund DD budget. Director Chaddock stated she had provided the original figures via email but did not have the exact amount available at the meeting. She estimated the increase to be approximately \$700,000, and other Board members agreed that estimate sounded accurate. *Editor's Note: The actual increase over the original estimate was \$794,554.00.

NEW BUSINESS

CONGRATULATIONS TO SERENA ARD, PORTER COUNTY HISTORIAN – Director Chaddock announced that WPL's History Museum Curator, Serena Ard, has been appointed as the official historian of Porter County, Indiana. This recognition highlights Serena's longstanding contributions to preserving local history and archival materials. Director Chaddock expressed great pride in Serena and the Museum staff and looks forward to continued growth and enhancement of the Museum's facilities in the coming year.

RENAMING THE WESTCHESTER TOWNSHIP HISTORY MUSEUM – ACTION ITEM – The Library engaged the Grossbauer Group to facilitate a discovery workshop aimed at renaming the Westchester Township History Museum, in order to increase visitation and better communicate its mission. On January 28, Director Chaddock met with Serena Ard, Susan Swarner, Michael Livovich, Abbe Trent, Justin Martinson, and Michele Corazzo via Zoom to review suggested names. Following some discussion, the group recommended “Duneland History Center” for the Museum’s new moniker, citing strong local recognition of the word “Duneland,” the continuity provided by the word “History,” and the use of “Center” to convey an active, participatory space for the public. The recommendation was presented to the Board for discussion and vote.

The Board members discussed some variations of the recommended title, including the Duneland Historical Center or the Duneland Community History Center, but ultimately all agreed upon the recommended name of the Duneland History Center.

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the name “Duneland History Center” for the Museum. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS - The current terms of Trustees Rondi Wightman and Will Scharp will conclude on March 31, 2026. Rondi Wightman has expressed interest in serving a fourth and final term, and Director Chaddock submitted a letter of support to the Porter County Commissioners for her reappointment. Will Scharp will regrettably be stepping down next month, and Director Chaddock has contacted the Westchester Township Trustee to initiate the process of identifying a replacement. Updates will be provided as the appointment processes move forward.

A motion was made by Kathryn Cochran to approve the Librarian’s Report. Will Scharp 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, March 12 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. Michele Corazzo adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Michele Corazzo
Michele Corazzo, President

Justin Martinson
Justin Martinson, Vice-President

Michael Livovich
Michael Livovich, Treasurer

Will Scharp
Will Scharp, Board Member

Abbe Trent
Abbe Trent, Secretary

Kathryn Cochran
Kathryn Cochran, Board Member

Rondi Wightman
Rondi Wightman, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,

Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Abbe Trent, Secretary