

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees  
Minutes  
March 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, March 12, 2026. It was called to order by Michele Corazzo, Board President at 7:00 p.m.

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

Board members absent: N/A

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Heather Chaddock, Library Assistant Director Jessica Bartz, and Children’s Department Manager, Cindy McCormack. Library Attorney Lisa Baron attended virtually via Zoom.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2026 regular session. Justin Martinson 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 February. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Corrected Financial and Statistical Reports for 2025/2026

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the corrections to the Financial and Statistical Reports as presented. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of February 13, 2026 through March 12, 2026 as presented. Will Scharp 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 CINDY MCCORMACK, NEW CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT MANAGER** – Director Chaddock reported that the Library recently hired Cindy McCormack as the new Children's Department Manager. She began work on March 2. Cindy previously served as head librarian for Valparaiso Community Schools while managing the Ben Franklin Middle School Library, and brings experience coordinating author visits, hosting book clubs, and developing diverse student collections. She is especially excited for this new opportunity to have a meaningful impact in supporting early education for children ages 0–5 in the community.

Director Chaddock introduced Cindy to the Board and she told the Board members a little bit about herself. The Board members in turn introduced themselves and welcomed Cindy aboard.

**LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT UPDATE** - The Indiana State Library announced that the new interface for reporting annual public library statistics is now functional. The new deadline for submission of the Library Annual Report will be Monday, May 4, 2026.

**NEW FURNITURE** - Director Chaddock reported that the Library has continued replacing worn furniture at the Thomas and Hageman Branches as time and budget allow. At Thomas, 45 new plastic chairs were purchased for the reading room and computer lab at a cost of \$2,050.02, replacing older, more cumbersome chairs. The new chairs are easier to move, clean, and stack, and support up to 600 pounds. The IT Manager anticipates using them for Tech Help sessions with local seniors. At Hageman, new tables on casters with adjustable heights are being ordered for the Emily Peterson meeting room to support a variety of programs for both children and adults. Recent updates to public spaces in the Baugher Center and Teen Space have been well-received and Director Chaddock is happy to have the opportunity to make similar updates to enhance patron comfort at the other branch locations as well.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE** – Director Chaddock reported that the recent Indiana Statehouse session concluded with unexpected changes impacting public libraries. Although earlier bills affecting library budgets (SB 8 and SB 4) appeared unlikely to pass, similar language was ultimately inserted into SB 1406 at the last minute and approved. Questions remain regarding the legality of this process and how the new law will interact with existing legislation, including SEA 1. Advocacy efforts by the ILF and library supporters generated significant response, though the final outcome was not in the Library's favor.

Director Chaddock explained that SEA 1 established a Maximum Levy Growth Quotient (MLGQ) of 4% for budget increases in the coming years. Previously, libraries with high reserve balances, including the Library, could be subject to an optional binding review by their fiscal body, though this option has not been exercised.

Under SB 1406, any library that increases its budget by more than 49.9% of the MLGQ will automatically undergo binding review, with no clear limits on potential reductions. This creates a difficult decision for the Library: pursue the full allowable increase and risk review, or accept a significantly reduced growth rate that may have compounding effects over time.

Director Chaddock noted that while the Library is in a stable financial position and has not historically spent its full annual budget, the reduced growth option would still present challenges given rising costs. The Library will evaluate potential areas to reduce spending and plans to participate in upcoming ILF trainings to better navigate the 2027 budget process. Updates will be shared with the Board as more information becomes available.

Kathryn Cochran asked whether the legislation included any provisions related to private donations to the Library. Director Chaddock clarified that it did not, noting that the legislation applies specifically to tax levies.

Abbe Trent inquired about the potential for legal challenges to the legislation. Director Chaddock responded that such challenges are possible and noted there is ongoing confusion regarding the passage, including whether the new law or SEA 1 will take precedence, given the manner in which the legislation was finalized.

**AVC/AFR SUBMISSION** - Director Chaddock reported that the decision to outsource the Library's bookkeeping to AVC following the departure of the full-time Bookkeeper in 2024 has not been successful. Despite bringing to their attention repeated concerns regarding errors, delayed responses, and unmet deadlines, AVC's performance has not improved.

The issue came to a head with the Annual Financial Report (AFR), which was not completed by AVC until just before the March 1 submission deadline. This required the Board Treasurer to submit the report on short notice, without adequate time for review. Director Chaddock acknowledged her own responsibility for not prompting earlier action but noted that AVC failed to meet clearly defined contractual deadlines.

Additional concerns arose from submission warnings within the AFR, for which AVC had to be prompted multiple times to provide adequate explanations. Ongoing communication and timeliness

issues have also impacted the Library's operations, with WPL staff being required to mediate late or incorrect payments to vendors.

While Director Chaddock does not believe these issues indicate financial misconduct, they reflect poor time management and communication. As a result, Director Chaddock recommends ending the Library's relationship with AVC. The transition will require careful coordination due to AVC's current access to financial systems and responsibilities.

Director Chaddock shared that Carissa Domonkos has demonstrated strong performance and will transition into the full-time Bookkeeping/Administrative Assistant role. Carissa is currently completing a public library bookkeeping certification to prepare for these responsibilities. The Library plans to begin the transition process with the goal of fully disengaging from AVC within 90 days.

**STATISTICS** – In February, 15,498 people visited the Library, and 27 in-person programs were created with 654 attendees. The library answered 59 reference questions and 114 tech help questions; 420 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 270 reservations for individual study rooms. The Library registered 94 new library cards. Included in the Board Meeting documents are graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

**STAFF CHANGES** – Joined: Izumi Akiyama, P/T Library Clerk, Cindy McCormack, Children's Department Manager

Separated: N/A

Other: Carissa Domonkos, transferred from P/T Administrative Assistant to F/T Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**MUSEUM RENOVATION UPDATE** – Director Chaddock reported that the Museum Committee continues to meet regularly with project partners to advance construction planning for the restoration and building project. Relevant documents have been provided to the Board for review.

The Library received approval at a preliminary Board of Zoning Appeals hearing on February 26, allowing the project to move forward to a public hearing scheduled for March 26. Required notifications to nearby residents have been completed. Community response has been positive, including favorable feedback shared on local social media.

Director Chaddock also noted that draft press materials outlining the restoration project and upcoming Museum name change have been approved. The Library plans to begin broadly sharing this information with the public in the near future.

**EXTERIOR PROJECTS UPDATE** – Director Chaddock reported that with winter weather subsiding, Berglund plans to resume the next phase of the exterior projects on March 16. This includes window replacements and installation of new ADA-accessible entrances at the Baugher Center, Thomas Branch, and Hageman Branch. Biweekly progress meetings will resume and continue through the anticipated project completion this summer. A & C for Payment #4 in the amount of \$56,518.32 was included in the Board documents, and includes the purchase and storage of materials for this final phase.

**APPROVAL TO SOLICIT QUOTES FOR OFFICE PROJECTS – ACTION ITEM –**

Director Chaddock requested Board approval to move forward with soliciting quotes for office renovation projects at the Hageman and Thomas branches. These projects include front desk and office improvements at Hageman, and updates to the Thomas Children’s Department office. Project blueprints have been completed and provided to the Board.

Due to the estimated cost, the Hageman project (under \$150,000) will require a public quote process, while the Thomas project (under \$50,000) will follow a standard quote process. Director Chaddock outlined the proposed schedules and asked the Board to approve proceeding with the quote solicitation process as outlined.

A motion was made by Will Scharp to approve the solicitation of quotes for office projects. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS** – The current terms for Trustees Rondi Wightman and Will Scharp are set to expire this month. Rondi Wightman expressed interest in serving a fourth and final term, and Director Chaddock submitted a letter of support for her reappointment to the Porter County Commissioners.

The Commissioners’ office subsequently requested clarification regarding term length and limits. After providing that information and not receiving further communication, Director Chaddock reviewed the Commissioners’ publicly posted March 10 meeting agenda, which indicated that the position is being publicly posted and applications are being accepted. This information was shared with Rondi Wightman, and she was encouraged to submit an application for consideration. The Commissioners have indicated that the appointment will be announced at their March 31 meeting.

Will Scharp has elected not to seek reappointment at the conclusion of his current term. As a result, Westchester Township Trustee Suzanne Philbrick has appointed resident Chirag Patel to fill the vacancy. Mr. Patel is familiar with the Library through prior program participation and is scheduled to attend the April 9 Board meeting. Director Chaddock has provided him with orientation materials and prior Board minutes, and Mr. Patel expressed enthusiasm about serving on the Board.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS – ACTION ITEM** – Following Michele Corazzo’s decision to vacate the role of President, Justin Martinson agreed to take on the position. Director Chaddock and the Board thanked

Michele for her service as Board President over the past year. A brief discussion followed regarding the election of the remaining new roles. Abbe Trent accepted the role of Vice President, Kathryn Cochran agreed to serve as Secretary and Michael Livovich will continue serving as Treasurer.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to accept the slated role changes of officers. Will Scharp seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Kathryn Cochran asked about the duties of the secretary position. Director Chaddock outlined the specific duties.

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**

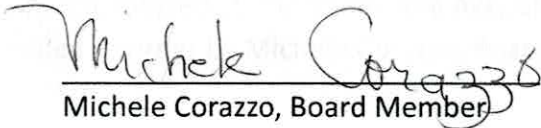
**DEPARTURE OF TRUSTEE WILL SHARP FROM WPL BOARD** – Director Chaddock expressed appreciation for Trustee Will Scharp, who had completed five years of dedicated service on the Board. Trustee Scharp served as a sounding board during Director Chaddock's early tenure as Interim Director, and the Library has benefited from his business insight and good nature. He played an instrumental role in advancing the Museum project, attending meetings with the YMCA and the Duneland School Corporation. The Library extended its thanks to Trustee Scharp for his volunteerism and stewardship of Library resources and looks forward to his continued involvement, including the future Museum ribbon-cutting celebration.


The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Thursday, April 9, at 7:00 p.m. at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 W. Indiana Ave, Chesterton.


Kathryn Cochran made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Justin Martinson seconded the motion. Michele Corazzo adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.


  
Justin Martinson, President

  
Michael Livovich, Treasurer

  
Michele Corazzo, Board Member

  
Chirag Patel, Board Member

  
Abbe Trent, Vice President - *at hand*  
*virtually*

  
Kathryn Cochran, Secretary

  
Rondi Wightman, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,

Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Kathryn Cochran, Secretary