

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes

May 14, 2026

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, May 14, 2026. It was called to order by Justin Martinson, Board President at 7:00 p.m.

Board members present were: Denise Barkow, Kathryn Cochran, Michele Corazzo, Michael Livovich, Justin Martinson, Chirag Patel, and Rondi Wightman.

Board members absent: N/A

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Heather Chaddock and Library Assistant Director Jessica Bartz.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the minutes from the April 09, 2026 regular session. Kathryn Cochran seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Michael Livovich to approve the minutes from the April 28, 2026 special 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 April. Chirag Patel 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 April 10, 2026 through May 14, 2026 as presented. Chirag Patel 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 DENISE BARKOW, NEW WPL BOARD MEMBER – With the departure of Board Member Rondi Wightman last month, the Porter County Commissioners appointed new Trustee Denise Barkow, who was in attendance for her first meeting. Director Chaddock invited Denise to share a brief introduction which she did, sharing some personal details and stating she felt she was joining a very special group and was humbled and happy to be here. The other Board members and Library staff introduced themselves and welcomed Denise.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY SPRING BOOK SALE - The Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale generated \$6,685.75, making it the highest grossing sale on record for the organization. Director Chaddock credited the success to the efforts of Assistant Director Jessica Bartz and the Friends Board in continuing to improve the sale experience for patrons. Director Chaddock also reported that the Friends Board has begun selling select items online, allowing for increased sales revenue from specific buyers. The Library received positive feedback from patrons regarding the event, and the Friends donated \$5,366.20 to the Library following the sale.

STATISTICS – In April, 16,289 people visited the Library, and 36 in-person programs were created with 512 attendees. The library answered 71 reference questions and 98 tech help questions; 342 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 275 reservations for individual study rooms. The Library registered 88 new library cards. Included in the Board Meeting documents were graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

STAFF CHANGES – Joined: Fiona Martin, P/T Clerk, Ella Callahan, P/T Cleaner
Separated: Joanne Nault, P/T Clerk
Other: N/A

OLD BUSINESS

MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION PROPOSAL – ACTION ITEM – Director Chaddock reported that the Board held a special meeting on April 28 to review the Guaranteed Maximum Price proposal from Berglund Construction for the Duneland History Center construction and Brown Mansion restoration project. At that meeting, the Board approved Director Chaddock’s recommendation to pursue an Additional Appropriation of \$6,602,414.93 from the Library Improvement Reserve Fund (LIRF).

Following the meeting, Director Chaddock received clarification that \$641,452.75 in the LIRF was encumbered, reducing the maximum amount available for appropriation from that fund to \$5,980,215.80. As a result, Director Chaddock adjusted the proposed funding sources and recommended an Additional Appropriation request totaling \$6.6 million, consisting of \$5.5 million from LIRF and \$1.1 million from the Rainy Day Fund. Director Chaddock noted that this adjustment would leave \$480,215.80 remaining in LIRF for future projects and \$2,007,335.61 remaining in the Rainy Day Fund. Director Chaddock recommended the Board approve a new resolution for the revised appropriation request to fund the Museum renovation and expansion project.

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the new resolution to make an Additional Appropriation request of \$6.6 million as presented. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

EXTERIOR PROJECTS UPDATE – The remaining work to be done on the Exterior Projects checklist is slowly moving forward. After initially promising to be finished by May 1st, this project has been hamstrung by a lack of available crews from the subcontractor Trout Glass, who have been tasked with replacing the windows and doors at the Hageman Branch, Baugher Center, and the Thomas Branch. As of May 11th, the windows at the Hageman Branch and the Baugher Center are complete, the front doors at Hageman are finally being replaced after weeks of rerouting patron traffic while replacement hardware had to be ordered and fabricated, and work at the Thomas Branch had not been started yet. The updated completion date is now June 26th. Director Chaddock shared disappointment that this work will now be taking place during the busy summer reading season; Library staff are adjusting as well as they can, and looking forward to the end. Change Order #3 for this project was included in the Board documents, in the amount of \$11,210, which represents the cost of additional replacement bricks that needed to be ordered and placed during the extensive brick repair work completed on the Baugher Center and the Thomas Branch in the fall.

NEW BUSINESS

LIBRARY OF THINGS POLICY CHANGES AND WAIVER – ACTION ITEM – Director Chaddock presented draft documents for the Board to review as the Library prepares to expand its Library of Things collection. Based on research into other libraries' policies, recommendations from Library staff, and legal counsel, Director Chaddock proposed implementing a patron waiver to be signed the first time a patron borrows from the collection. The waiver would be retained at the Circulation Desk and noted on patron Polaris accounts. Director Chaddock stated that the waiver acknowledges potential risks associated with borrowing items from the collection. Library attorney Lisa Baron reviewed and edited the draft waiver included in the Board documents.

Director Chaddock also proposed revisions to the Collection Development Policy to further explain the Library of Things collection and selection process. Additionally, based on recommendations from frontline staff, she proposed increasing the borrowing limit for Library of Things items from one item to two, as reflected in the proposed Circulation Policy revisions.

Director Chaddock reported that a Library of Things patron survey was distributed through the Library newsletter, service desks, and social media to gather feedback on requested items. Survey data is being compiled to help guide future collection purchases.

A discussion followed regarding Library of Things policies and procedures, including late fees and replacement costs for lost or damaged items, potential item value limits, the possibility of increased fines for higher-value items in the future, and storage considerations for the collection. Director Chaddock also discussed plans to determine item selections based in part on available storage space and noted a preference for storing items in a visible area near the front of the Library, to help advertise

them to the public.

Discussion then returned to the ongoing construction projects. Chirag Patel asked about the cause of the lengthy delay related to the Hageman doors beyond subcontractor staffing shortages. Director Chaddock explained that the architect had initially ordered the incorrect type of doors and locking mechanisms, and that the six-week lead time for replacement doors further contributed to the delay. Assistant Director Bartz noted that the new doors are wider and provide improved ADA accessibility.

Michele Corazzo also asked about the timeline for the new Hageman front desk and manager's office project. Director Chaddock stated that work is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-June following completion of the Thomas Branch Children's Department project.

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the Library of Things Policy Changes and Waiver. Chirag Patel seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

Director Chaddock stated she received confirmation that the Library's Additional Appropriation request will be on the agenda for the Porter County Council regular meeting on Tuesday, May 26th at 5:30 PM, in the County Administration Center, located at 155 Indiana Avenue, Room 205 in Valparaiso, Indiana. She encouraged all trustees to attend this public meeting if available to show support for this project.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Thursday, June 11, at 7:00 p.m. at the Hageman Branch, located at 100 Francis St, Porter.

Abbe Trent made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chirag Patel seconded the motion. Justin Martinson adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

Justin Martinson, President

Abbe Trent, Vice President

Kathryn Cochran, Secretary

Michael Livovich, Treasurer

Michele Corazzo, Board Member

Chirag Patel, Board Member

Denise Barkow, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,

Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Kathryn Cochran, Secretary