

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes

September 10, 2026

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 Indiana Ave. in Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, September 10, 2026. It was called to order by Justin Martinson, Board President at 7:01 p.m.

Board members present were: Abbe Trent, Michael Livovich, Michele Corazzo, and Justin Martinson.

Board members absent: Chirag Patel, Denise Barkow, and Kathryn Cochran

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Heather Chaddock and Library Assistant Director Jessica Bartz. Library Attorney Lisa Baron attended via Zoom. There was one member of the public in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the minutes from the August 20, 2026 regular session. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - Executive Session

A motion was made by Abbe Trent to approve the minutes from the August 20, 2026 executive session. Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports for the month of August. Abbe Trent 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 periods of August 21, 2026 through September 10, 2026 as presented. Michael Livovich 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.

AUGUST 11 DERECHO – Director Chaddock reported on the effects of the August 11 derecho on library service. Winds of up to 100 mph caused widespread damage and power outages throughout Chesterton and Porter. All Library locations were closed from 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 11 through August 13, with limited service offered at Hageman on August 14 and Thomas on August 15

as power was intermittently restored. A fire alarm and evacuation at Thomas on Saturday, August 15 resulted from storm-related damage to the alarm system, which was subsequently repaired by Per Mar. All locations resumed normal service hours on Monday, August 17. Recognizing the negative mental health impacts of this disaster on the community, staff created “Creative Moments for Calm Minds” stations at Thomas and Hageman, offering craft activities for patrons of all ages throughout August.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE ADULT LEARNING CENTER – Director Chaddock informed the Board she had received feedback from staff that patrons are interested in English Language Learning classes at the Adult Learning Center. She contacted Neighbors’ Educational Opportunities (NEO), which currently holds adult education classes at the Library, to discuss the possibility of reinstating local ELL classes. NEO reported that changes to federal eligibility requirements and reductions in adult education funding have resulted in a significant decrease in ELL offerings. NEO is exploring grant-funded virtual learning opportunities for students who are no longer eligible for its in-person programs. Director Chaddock shared the information with the Library’s management team and will provide staff with additional information about virtual learning opportunities as it becomes available.

DOLLY PARTON – Director Chaddock was touched to report that following Dolly Parton’s passing on August 25, donations to the local Imagination Library chapter totaled \$773 over a two-week period. Staff from the Imagination Library were quick to inform local partners that the Foundation has prepared for this transition and that the Imagination Library program and free books for children will continue. Additional donations are welcome, and donors can choose to directly support children in Porter County. More information is available at donate.imaginationlibrary.com.

OFFICE PROJECTS UPDATE – The Library’s two office projects with Hasse Construction are progressing. Work on the Thomas Branch Children’s Department workroom and manager’s office is expected to be completed this week. Demolition at the Hageman Branch was completed at the end of August, and a temporary service desk has been installed while work continues. The Branch and its collections remain open and accessible to the public. Although the new front desk casework has been delayed, Hasse estimates the new office will be completed soon, with the entire project currently projected for completion by the end of October.

STATISTICS – In August, 15,200 people visited the Library, and 16 in-person programs were created with 166 attendees. The library answered 70 reference questions and 120 tech help questions; 308 people utilized library meeting rooms, and there were 288 reservations for individual study rooms (nearly double the typical usage, owing to continued power outages from the derecho). The Library registered 118 new library cards. Included in the Board Meeting documents were graphs showing materials circulation statistics from the past month.

STAFF CHANGES – Joined: Diane Michaels, P/T Sub Clerk
Separated: Dianne Zato, P/T Sub Clerk
Other: N/A

OLD BUSINESS

EXTERIOR PROJECTS UPDATE – Exterior work at all three Library buildings is substantially complete, with the exception of the Hageman Branch front doors. The Library is awaiting confirmation from Trout regarding the timeline for replacing the doors so they can be properly secured.

NEW BUSINESS

eRATE CONSORTIUM RESOLUTION - ACTION ITEM – Director Chaddock presented the Annual Resolution to renew participation in the Indiana State Library Consortium for Public Library Internet Access (otherwise known as e-Rate), which is the discount telecommunications program available to libraries from the federal government, that grants discounts for following CIPA (Children’s Internet Protection Act) protocol on our public computers.

Michele Corazzo moved to approve the renewal of participation in the e-Rate Consortium and Abbe Trent seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

2027 BUDGET – ACTION ITEM Additional budget information requested by the Board was presented by Director Chaddock, including comparisons of salaries at neighboring library systems and several potential staff compensation scenarios for 2027. She reported that the Library’s current wages and salaries are competitive with neighboring systems, but not outlandish, and discussed information gathered from other Indiana library directors regarding recent and planned staff raises. Director Chaddock recommended increasing the starting rate for clerical staff to \$15 per hour and increasing other clerical starting rates by \$1 per hour to remain competitive with local employment opportunities. Three compensation scenarios were presented for consideration: a 3% increase for all staff; a 3% increase for full-time staff and \$1 per hour for part-time staff; or a 4% increase for full-time staff and \$1 per hour for part-time staff. The additional costs for each scenario would be offset from the \$175,000 Furniture and Equipment allocation. Director Chaddock then invited the Board to discuss the options.

During the subsequent discussion, Michael Livovich asked what increase Director Chaddock had supported at the previous month’s meeting. Director Chaddock stated that she had recommended a minimum 3% raise for all staff. Michael indicated that he would support a 3% increase, and Michele and Justin also expressed support for 3%. Abbe Trent spoke in favor of a 4% increase, noting that in the past, the Library had fallen behind other libraries where wages and salaries were concerned, and that she would like to see the Library take a more proactive approach. Justin agreed with Abbe’s reasoning and indicated his support for 4%, referencing his comment during the August meeting that Library staff are the Library’s greatest asset and should be compensated accordingly. He also noted some trepidation given the effects of SEA 1 on public library funding. Director Chaddock noted that funding the increase from the well-funded Furniture and Equipment budget line would have a negligible impact, utilizing approximately an additional \$10,000 of that line’s budget. Michael also agreed to

support the 4% increase.

Abbe Trent moved to approve the 2027 budget as presented, with the agreed-upon changes to Personal Services, and Michael Livovich seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

2027 BUDGET HEARING – Director Chaddock stated that the 2027 Westchester Public Library budget is available online at www.budgetnotices.in.gov and the Board President opened the meeting to hear public comment on the budget.

There was no public comment regarding the budget.

Abbe Trent moved to approve the Librarian's report and Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the public asked about volunteer opportunities at the Library, stating they wanted to give a helping hand to their community. Director Chaddock extended her thanks for the person's offer to volunteer. Assistant Director Bartz explained that the WPL volunteer application can be found on the the library's website at wpl.lib.in.us, or a paper application can be acquired at the front desk at the Thomas or Hageman Branches. She then described the volunteer application and onboarding process.

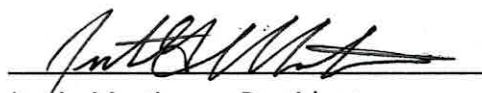
OTHER BUSINESS

Director Chaddock stated that the ILF Trustee Training that was previously scheduled for Sunday, September 27 in South Bend is in the process of being rescheduled, and said she will keep the Board apprised of any updates.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is a special meeting for the 2027 Budget Adoption on Thursday, September 24, at 7:00 PM at the Thomas Branch.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Thursday, October 08, at 7:00 p.m. at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 W. Indiana Ave, Chesterton.

Michael Livovich made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. Justin Martinson adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.


Justin Martinson, President


Kathryn Cochran, Secretary


Michele Corazzo, Board Member


Denise Barkow, Board Member



Abbe Trent, Vice President



Chirag Patel, Board Member



Michael Livovich, Treasurer

Respectfully submitted,

Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Kathryn Cochran, Secretary