

# MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

East Branch  
2320 N. Cramer Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53211  
Community Room, Gift of Lucile Krug

**PRESENT:** Mark Sain, Michele Bria, Ald. Milele Coggs, Matthew Kowalski, Michael Morgan, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Scott Spiker, Ald. Larresa Taylor, Sup. Kathleen Vincent, Venice Williams, Joan Johnson

**EXCUSED:** Teresa Mercado, Michael Morgan

**STAFF:** Chantel Clark, Kristina Gomez, Melissa Howard, Dan Keeley, Yves LaPierre, Sarah Leszczynski, Tammy Mays Wilder, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Amelia Osterud, Karli Pederson, Rebecca Schweisberger, Tiffany Thornton, Kelly Wochinske, Jessica Wolf

**OTHER:** Budget & Management Division: Nathaniel Haack  
MPS Board: Darryl Jackson

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Vice-President Michele Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:07 p.m. on June 24, 2025. Trustees Coggs, Sain, Vincent, and Williams participated by phone/virtual conference.

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Vice-President Bria acknowledged MPS Board appointee Darryl Jackson.

Chantel Clark, Associate Library Director - Strategic Initiatives and Public Services, introduced staff members Kristina Gómez and Tiffany Thornton. They each gave brief overviews of their professional background and goals at MPL. Ms. Gómez is currently serving as the temporary Public Services Manager for Central Library. She has served in several positions with MPL, most recently as Manager of Business, Technology, Science, and Periodicals. Ms. Thornton is the new Library Services Manager of Martin Luther King branch. As a teen, she worked at Marin Luther King branch, which inspired her to pursue a career in librarianship. Informational item.

### BOARD EDUCATION

1. **East Branch Introduction.** Library Services Manager Amelia Osterud presented a brief introduction of East branch. The presentation is attached at the end of these minutes. East branch was redeveloped and reopened in 2012. Most of East branch patrons live within three zip codes that, combined, hold 16% of all library cards in Milwaukee County. East is also the branch with the highest traditional circulation, which totaled 77,628 in 2024 and is on pace to exceed those numbers in 2025. It is also the only MPL location with materials pick-up locker service. The long-running Romance Readers Book Club introduces readers to the romance genre and subgenres with a focus on diverse voices. Donations are accepted for the seed library, which allows patrons to “borrow” seeds in spring and return seeds during harvest season. East branch also has a large selection of puzzles, cards, and board games for use in the building. Informational item.

ATTACHMENT A - P. 1 of 48  
MPL CONSENT AGENDA

2. Regular Board Meeting Minutes - 06/24/2025

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## **SPECIAL COMMUNICATION**

2. **Budget Outlook.** Budget & Management Special Assistant Nathaniel Haack presented an overview of the 2026 requested budget. The presentation is attached at the end of these minutes. As part of the operating budget, City departments requested a total of nearly \$840M, with the majority of funding used for staff salaries. For 2026, the operating budget gap is over \$100M. Use of city reserves is considered a stop-gap measure and there are restrictions for its use. All City departments have been asked to submit budget requests with at least 5% cuts. Informational item.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

3. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes May 27, 2025**
4. **Special Board Meeting Minutes, June 5, 2025**
5. **Committee Reports**
  - a. Building & Development Committee Meeting Minutes – June 5, 2025
6. **Administrative Reports**
  - a. Financial Report
  - b. Library Director's Reports
  - c. Statistics

Chair Bria asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as attachment A, pages 3-21 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

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## **NEW BUSINESS**

7. **Annual Report.** Library Director Joan Johnson presented the 2024 annual report, which is attached at the end of these minutes. The report highlights MPL's mission and goals and will be used to share information about the library's impact in the community. Going forward, the report will acknowledge the library's generous donors. Director Johnson thanked Melissa Howard, Communications and Community Engagement Director, and all MPL staff who contributed to the report.
8. **Funding for the MPL Hotspot Lending Program.** Library Director Joan Johnson presented a request to use money from the MPL trust fund to sustain the hotspot lending program for the remainder of 2025. The request was detailed in the memo listed as Attachment B of the agenda. MPL has not received the anticipated amount of private funding needed to sustain the program. Director Johnson reviewed the annual trust fund request process and shared examples of additional requests that have been made to fund special projects as needed. She also gave a brief overview of ongoing efforts to provide broadband access to underserved populations. MPL will continue to explore alternative funding sources to sustain the hotspot program in the future. Hotspots are a funding priority, but the program will likely be terminated if a reliable funding source is not identified. Trustee Spiker moved to authorize MPL to expend up to \$295,000 from the Milwaukee Public Library Trust and Gift Funds to support the hotspots program through December 31, 2025. Trustee Saffold seconded. Motion passed.

## REPORTS

9. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting.** Library Director Joan Johnson reported on the June 9, 2025 meeting.
- MCFLS Executive Director Steve Hesel shared an update on the statewide library advocacy campaign to support the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) and the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding. Nationwide, the library community is mobilizing to lobby elected officials to vote against a budget that eliminates IMLS funding. Wisconsin libraries are participating in a postcard campaign to support library funding. MCFLS will collect and mail the postcards this week in an effort to reach elected officials before the congressional subcommittee meeting to discuss IMLS. Postcard collection will continue through July.
  - Hoopla: MCFLS is no longer funding the digital resource Hoopla. Director Hesel presented year-to-date data on usage and cost which showed usage is robust. Hoopla operates on a pay-per-use model and libraries are charged a fee each time a user borrows an item. As such, the resource is not sustainable for some member libraries who are paying for the service. MPL currently offers Hoopla but has reduced the check-out limits.
  - The MCFLS annual member retreat will be held in mid-July. MPL will send three administrators.
10. **MPL Board Executive Committee.** Vice-President Bria presented the action item from the June 11, 2025 meeting. Director Johnson requested authorization to conduct a fundraising feasibility study for the MPL Foundation major gifts campaign. Trustee Saffold moved to authorize Director Johnson to proceed with a fundraising feasibility study. Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.
11. **Closing Remarks.** Library Director Joan Johnson invited Trustees to view the Black Arts Movement Project at Central Library. This art exhibit highlights pieces from the MPL collection that were created by Black artists in Milwaukee. A webpage has been developed to share the collection digitally. MPL staff members who created the exhibit will present to the Board at a future meeting.

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With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of June 24, 2025 was adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

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