

# MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Martin Luther King Branch  
Community Room  
2901 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

- PRESENT:** Michele Bria, Ald. Milele Coggs, Darryl Jackson, Matthew Kowalski, Michael Morgan, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Scott Spiker, Ald. Larresa Taylor, Venice Williams, Joan Johnson
- EXCUSED:** Mark Sain, Teresa Mercado, Sup. Kathleen Vincent
- STAFF:** Maria Burke, Jenna Harte-Wisniewski, Melissa Howard, Dan Keeley, Yves LaPierre, Mary Lopez, Tammy Mays Wilder, Amanda McGillivray, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Amelia Osterud, Karli Pederson, Rebecca Schweisberger, Tiffany Thornton, Emily Vieyra, Kelly Wochinske, Jessica Wolf
- OTHER:** Budget & Management Division: Nathaniel Haack  
Common Council: Ald. Mark Chambers, Ald. Sharlen Moore  
Department of City Development: Lafayette Crump  
Milwaukee Public Library Foundation: Antoine Carter

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Acting Chair Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:08 p.m. on October 28, 2025. Trustees Coggs and Williams participated by phone/virtual conference. Agenda items were taken out of order but are presented here in numerical sequence.

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Kelly Wochinske, Public Services Area Manager (EOS and CLCR) introduced Jenna Harte-Wisniewski, Library Services Manager – Education & Outreach Services (EOS). Ms. Harte-Wisniewski gave a brief overview of her professional experience.

### BOARD AGENDA

1. **Martin Luther King Branch Introduction.** Library Services Manager Tiffany Thornton presented a brief introduction of the new Martin Luther King (MLK) branch. The presentation is attached at the end of these minutes. For over 50 years, the MLK branch has provided a space for learning, connections, and growth in the Harambee community. Artwork from the original MLK branch has been incorporated into the new space. Intentional color design is used throughout the new location to signify connection areas or reflection spaces and in honor of Dr. King's affiliation with the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Over 1,300 guests attended the grand opening celebration. The new branch has become a community hub with diverse community use and engagement. Informational item.

### CONSENT AGENDA

2. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes September 23, 2025**
3. **Committee Reports**
  - a. Building & Development Committee Meeting Minutes – October 2, 2025

ATTACHMENT B - P. 1 of 44  
MPL CONSENT AGENDA

3. Regular Board Meeting Minutes - 10/28/2025

4. **Administrative Reports**
  - a. Financial Report
  - b. Library Director's Reports
  - c. Statistics
5. **Updated MPL Board Committee Assignments.**
6. **Revised MPL Board Meeting Schedule.**

Chair Bria asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as attachment A, pages 3-27 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

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## REPORTS

7. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting.** Library Director Joan Johnson reported on the September 9, 2025 meeting.
  - Materials vendor Baker & Taylor has closed. MCFLS member libraries reported inconsistencies in service leading up to the closure. Libraries need to identify new vendors and sources for materials. MCFLS members are using a combination of alternate vendors to source materials to minimize the impact to the community. The closure has significantly impacted all member libraries and created a disruption in the MPL acquisitions department workflow. MPL Board Trustees will receive a report of MPL's Baker & Taylor expenditures in the last 5 years.
  - The MCFLS Board voted to approve the 2026 system budget. The budget is \$5.7M. MCFLS received a 4% increase in state aid. MPL receives 6% of the allocated state aid as compensation for serving as the Resource Library. In 2026, MPL will receive an increase of \$11,000 in 2026 for a total of \$278,000
  - The MCFLS Board approved the 2026 system plan, which outlines how the system will meet its statutory obligations to member libraries. This includes contracts and agreements, delivery services, technology services, continuing education, and collaborative initiatives with county partners.
  - Steve Hesel, MCFLS Executive Director, reported on the partnership with the Community Reintegration Center and the new Welcome Card pilot project.

Director Johnson asked for a volunteer to serve as the MPL Board liaison on the MCFLS Board. Trustee Jackson requested an informational meeting with Director Johnson and Director Hesel.

Informational item.

8. **Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting.** Trustee Coggs presented the action items from the October 28, 2025 meeting. The July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting minutes were accepted and approved. The quarterly review of fund investments and quarterly report of the internal control of the MPL Trust and Gift funds were received as informational items.
  - **The 2026 Library Trust & Gift Fund Expenditure Request.** Library Director Joan Johnson presented Library Administration's request to expend funds from the MPL investment fund in 2026. Trustees received a copy of the memo related to the request. Based on Board policy, MPL can request to withdraw 4-5% of the fund each year. Unrestricted funds will be used for

programming, marketing, and professional development. Restricted funds will be used for materials purchases. The 2026 request is \$327,000.

Trustee Spiker moved to approve the request to expend up to \$327,000 from the MPL Trust and Gift Funds for operational support in 2026. Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.

- **Gift Acceptance – Estate of Dorothy Finazzo.** Library Director Joan Johnson shared information about a gift to MPL from the estate of Dorothy Finazzo. MPL was notified earlier this year that it had been a beneficiary of Ms. Finazzo's estate. The library was bequeathed a generous gift of \$100,000, with no restriction to its use. The full amount was received in October and is currently being held in the Library's investment account.

Trustee Spiker moved to approve the request to accept the gift of \$100,000 from the estate of Dorothy Finazzo. Trustee Taylor seconded. Motion passed.

## **OLD & NEW BUSINESS**

9. **2026 Budget.** Library Director Joan Johnson presented an update on the 2026 budget and presented a memo outlining Sunday hours options; the memo is attached at the end of these minutes. MPL managers have been applying new staffing models to better understand the impact on scheduling. MPL is working collaboratively with the Mayor's team and the Common Council's Finance & Personnel Committee to find a compromise on Sunday hours and locations. MPL is using new tools to identify innovative and creative scheduling models. The Board discussed various service models and the potential impacts to staff and community. The proposed 2026 operating hours will be presented for approval at the November 25<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. Informational item.
10. **MPL Foundation Funding Priorities.** Due to loss of quorum this item was held for the October 5, 2025 Services & Programs Committee meeting.
11. **Capitol Branch Redevelopment.** Library Director Joan Johnson introduced Lafayette Crump, Commissioner of City Development, to discuss a potential mixed-use development. The City has an opportunity to partner with a developer, Gorman and Company, and a property owner, AFS Milwaukee, LLC, in a mixed-use development project that could incorporate a new library to replace the Capitol branch. The development would include other City services onsite and space for early voting. The project would also offer opportunities for new housing construction. The location is about 1.5 miles east of the current Capitol branch, in the former Walmart building at Midtown. The Mayor has allocated \$200,000 in the proposed municipal budget for MPL to engage a consultant to assess the facility and location to ensure the site is suitable and can meet MPL specifications for a new library. The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee (RACM) has been in discussion with the developer and property owner; however, this will be a joint project among several City departments. The City could be gifted 50,000 sq. ft. for municipal uses, of which, 18-19,000 could be allocated for the library. This would allow the City to save approximately \$3.5M on the white box and a potential \$1M grant for build-out funds could be awarded. This location offers MPL more square footage than the current Capitol branch, ample parking, and high visibility. The project timeline for a mixed-use branch is accelerated as the building, parking lot, and utilities are already in place. In addition to being a hub for civic amenities and community events, the project would support the local economy with increased foot traffic and support city development in the area. The location meets several components of the last Request for Proposal (RFP) issued for the Capitol branch redevelopment. The property was purchased by a private development team that is working with a housing developer on options for entity leases with the City. The housing developer's

application for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits specifically mentioned a library; however, that should not have been included until the project was further vetted and confirmed. The housing developer's application for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits specifically mentioned a library; however, that should not have been included until the project was further vetted and confirmed. The next steps are community engagement/listening sessions and issuing RFPs. Interested Trustees are invited to tour the space. Informational item.

12. **Summer Reading Program Update.** Kelly Wochinske, Library Public Services Area Manager (EOS and CLCR), presented a report on the 2025 Summer Reading Program. The children, teen, and adult Summer Reading programs have been unified as Summer with MPL, which celebrates the theme of growing through reading and learning together. The programs have the same look and feel, with fewer print pieces and a focus on participating in summer reading whether in library buildings or in the community. MPL Marketing and Communications Coordinator Fawn Siemsen-Fuchs created all of the artwork for the marketing pieces. Summer with MPL had a total of 23,086 participants: 5,113 in the library and 17,973 at 205 outreach sites. MPL distributed over 21,000 books to the community. Programming was varied and included Black Cowboys and Buffalo Soldiers, Summer Skate Parties, Elements of Hip Hop with Chess from Your Move MKE, and bicycle tune-ups from the Wisconsin Bike Federation. Outreach focused on providing resources and building the capacities of partners by sharing materials, providing lesson plans, and deposit collections. MPL participated in many events, including National Nights Out, the UNCOM Walk for Wellness celebration, and various festivals. Story times were held at Betty Brinn Children's Museum, Westlawn, and Alice's Garden. MPL is now the 'rainy day' location for Alice's Garden story times. MPL held a Youth Bookmark Contest for children and teens. The winning bookmarks were printed and are being distributed at each MPL location. Ms. Wochinske thanked all MPL staff and MPL Foundation for making this a successful summer. Informational item.
13. **Closing Remarks.** Chair Bria reminded Trustees about the upcoming Board meeting and holiday gift exchange. Trustee Taylor presented the book *'Invisible Generals'* as a gift to MPL.

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With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of October 28, 2025 was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

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