

THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
April 22, 2025

Present:

Board Members: E. Bromley (Chair); M. Mays Green (Vice Chair); R. Mercede (Secretary); A. George; A. Livingston; T. Lucero; L. Meyer; S. O’Shea

Citizen Advisors: S. Fitzgerald; S. Frederick; J. Freeman; R. Granata; W. Hill; R. McManus, M. Metwally; M. Moore; S. Perry; A. Riehl; D. Stein

Staff: A. Knapp; C. Harper; C. Hubbard; S. LaPerla; L. Avellar; J. Fulcher Anderson; D. Lyles; A. Marrocolla; A. Baily; C. Herrera

Board Chair Ellen Bromley called the meeting to order at 4:32 pm.

Minutes

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

Treasurer’s Report

Cheryl Harper, Director of Administrative Services, provided a brief overview of the library’s budget. She noted that pay-to-print expenses have exceeded projections, while passport revenue is performing favorably at \$54,918 above budget. Two unbudgeted items were mentioned: the continued salary of a staff member on FMLA since last June, who has since retired, and the overtime costs required to prepare the temporary South End Branch. The South End move alone resulted in an overage of \$25,064. Despite these minor setbacks, the library remains in a strong financial standing.

CEO Reports

For March’s CEO Report, Alice Knapp introduced Connie Hubbard, Director of Human Resources, who shared insights into the launch of the staff’s Professional Development Day, titled “*The Power of We*”. The event focused on fostering an inclusive environment. In support of that theme, two library staff members were invited to speak at today’s board meeting to share their perspectives: Anastasia Bailey, Development Specialist in the Development & Communication Department, and Carlos Herrera, Library Assistant in both the Circulation and Materials Management departments.

Ms. Bailey discussed the Town Hall meetings held with staff—without the presence of the Leadership Team—where employees were encouraged to openly share their views and experiences regarding the library’s workplace environment. Mr. Herrera shared a meaningful interaction with a newly arrived immigrant to Stamford, whom he assisted in navigating local services.

As part of the event, staff participated in a library-wide reading of *Subtle Acts of Exclusion*, which sparked cross-departmental discussions and reflections. Both Ms. Bailey and Mr. Herrera also highlighted the Spanish language instruction sessions that were offered to staff, with plans underway for future classes.

Susan LaPerla, Director of Public Services, spoke about the February CEO report and gave an updated progress on the strategic framework dashboard.

Executive Committee

On April 21, 2024, the Executive Committee met and discussed the agenda for today's board meeting.

Building Committee

The Building Committee met on April 1, 2025, and discussed the recent relocation of the South End Branch to 78 Southfield Avenue – a move that was completed in just two weeks. Building & Land Technology generously provided the library with six months of free rent at this new location. Numerous other in-house projects were also discussed: the creation of a staff lactation room at the Main Library, an upgrade to the AV booth, and renovations to the decade's old third floor kitchen. And the Quinta Room walls were reinforced to house the numerous school yearbooks. The contact with Daisy AV Company is being reviewed for the AV upgrade at both the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch.

Personnel Committee

At the March 25, 2025 Personnel Committee meeting, items were discussed that will be reviewed at the upcoming union negotiations.

Foundation Library Board

The Foundation Board meeting, held on March 4, 2025, reviewed their budget for FY 2025-2026.

Friends of Ferguson

Margaret Metwally, President of the Friends of Ferguson, is collaborating with the library's IT Department to modernize the Friends' technology. Following today's board meeting, the Friends' Freedom to Read Committee will host a documentary screening and panel discussion titled *The ABCs of Book Banning* in the Main Library Auditorium. Also, the Friends will participate with Alice Knapp in a panel discussion, titled *Intellectual Freedom: A Little Help from Your Friends* at the Connecticut Library Council's Annual Conference on April 28, 2025. Ms. Metwally also highlighted two highly anticipated upcoming events: the Friends 40th Annual Literary Competition Awards Ceremony May 4, and the Mystery Writers of America CrimeCONN Conference May 17. Margaret also concluded her remarks by announcing that this will be her final meeting as President of the Friends.

Old Business

2026-2032 Capital Budget, 2025-2026 Operating Budget

The City's Board of Finance has approved a 4% budget increase for the library. The proposed increase will now go before the Board of Representatives for final approval at their budget meeting on May 1, 2025.

Eastside Branch

Alice Knapp is working with the Parks & Recreation Department on moving forward with plans for an East Side Branch. This initiative is being made possible thanks to the outstanding support of Mayor Simmons.

RFP For AV – Main Library & Bennett Branch

The RFP for the AV upgrades in the Main Library Auditorium and the Bennett Branch, was awarded to Daisy Company, of Norwalk, CT. The project includes upgrading the AV equipment, the installation of acoustical panels at both locations, along with lighting enhancements in the Main Library Auditorium. The Daisy contract is currently with the library's legal team for review.

HVAC Update at Main

All State Construction's contract has been with the City's legal department since December, 2024. The cost for phase one came in below budget. We will be going out to bid for phase two soon. Both phases will complete the Main Library's HVAC system on the second, third, and fourth floors. Bennett Branch's HVAC system upgrade will be part of the Capital Request for FY-2025-2026.

New Business

Novel Affair

Linda Avellar, Director of Development & Communication, reported on the success of A *Novel Affair*, honoring Eileen Rosner. This year's event raised \$320,000 compared to \$263,000 last year. Due to the difficulty in hearing the honoree's ceremony held in the lobby in past years, this year's VIP reception and ceremony were held in the Main Library Auditorium, prior to the main event.

Annual Appeal

Linda Avellar reported on the Annual Appeal noting that we are up 5% over last year at \$310,000. We are gearing up for our digital fiscal year-end push.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 4:30 pm. Alice Knapp mentioned that the June board meeting may be held at the South End Branch at 78 Southfield Avenue.

The meeting was called to an end by Chair Ellen Bromley. With a favorable vote, the meeting ended at 5:15 pm.

RJ Mercede
Secretary