

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

**Mitchell Street Branch
Community Room
906 W. Historic Mitchell Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204**

- PRESENT:** Michele Bria, Michael Morgan, Matthew Kowalski, Ald. Andrea Pratt, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Larresa Taylor, Venice Williams, Joan Johnson
- EXCUSED:** Neil Albrecht, Ald. Milele Coggs, Darryl Jackson, Teresa Mercado, Sup. Kathleen Vincent
- STAFF:** Tim Fluhr, Beth Henika, Melissa Howard, Ha Hoang, Tammy Mays Wilder, Amanda McGillivray, Tara Kron, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Amelia Osterud, Karli Pederson, Chris Schabel, Rebecca Schweisberger, Kelly Wochinske, Jessica Wolf
- OTHER:** Budget & Management Division: Nathaniel Haack
Campbell & Company: Jacquelyn Peters, Nate Groomwald
Changing Our World: Kevin Allan, Raissa Smorol
Mayor's Office: Claire Zautke
Milwaukee Public Library Foundation: Ryan Daniels

President Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:14 p.m. on March 24, 2026 with a quorum present. Trustee Williams attended virtually. Agenda items were taken out of order but are presented here in numerical sequence.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

1. **Mitchell Street Branch Introduction.** Library Services Manager Maria Burke presented a brief overview of Mitchell Street branch, highlighting the building's history, services, and culturally grounded programs. Mitchell Street opened in 2017, replacing the former Forest Home branch. It is located in an historic building and the library space incorporates many original architectural details along with a unique spiral book return slide. The Mitchell Street makerspace offers STEM programming and a recording studio. The Cargill Community Kitchen offers nutritional literacy programming and community meals with resident Chef Sharrie Agee. The Mitchell Street Alley space is used for various programs and has been updated with lighting, furniture, and planters. Ms. Burke thanked the MPL Foundation for providing funding for many programs and enhancements. Mitchell Street partners with several community groups and serves as an early voting location. The annual Unity in the Community event, held jointly with Bay View and Zablocki branches, has been very well attended. The presentation is attached at the end of these minutes. Informational item.

New Staff Introduction. Library Director Joan Johnson introduced Ha Hoang, Associate Library Director – Patron Experience & Strategy. Ms. Hoang shared a brief overview of her professional background, service philosophy, and her excitement to work at MPL. Informational item.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes January 27, 2026**
3. **Committee Reports**
 - a. Finance & Personnel Committee – January 27, 2026
 - b. Services & Programs Committee – March 4, 2026
 - c. 2026 Nominating Committee – March 11, 2026
4. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting, March 17, 2026.**
5. **Administrative Reports**
 - a. Financial Report
 - b. Library Director’s Reports
 - c. Statistics
6. **Updated MPL Board Committee Assignments.**

Chair Bria asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda, presented as attachment A, pages 4-24 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

7. **State Annual Report – System Effectiveness Form.** MPL prepared and submitted the annual report, listed as Attachment B of the agenda, to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). President Bria viewed and approved the report and entertained a motion for the Board to ratify her approval. Trustee Pratt moved to approve the report and Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

8. **Fundraising Feasibility Study Proposals.** Chair Bria gave a brief summary of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for the fundraising feasibility study. A committee comprised of Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, President Bria, Senior Policy Director Claire Zautke, and MPL Foundation Board President Ellen Sexton reviewed the proposals. The two finalists, Campbell & Company and Changing Our World, presented their proposal to the Board. Library Director Joan Johnson thanked Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns for her leadership on this project.

Following the presentations, Chair Bria stated her intention to convene in closed session, pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 19.85(1)(e) “for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session”, for the purpose of discussing award of the fundraising feasibility study contract. Trustee Taylor made a motion to move to closed session and Trustee Morgan seconded. Library Director Joan Johnson, Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Senior Policy Director Claire Zautke, and Administrative Assistant IV Rebecca Schweisberger remained during closed session.

The Board reconvened in open session on a motion by Trustee Kowalski and seconded by Trustee Morgan. Chair Bria announced the Board’s decision to award the fundraising feasibility study contract to Changing Our World. Motion passed.

9. **MCFLS Lease Agreement.** Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns presented the updated lease agreement with Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS). The City Attorneys

Office recently reviewed citywide lease agreements and the MCFLS lease was updated to meet the City's legal standards. The annual lease amount was calculated using comparable rates for corporate space in downtown Milwaukee. The lease has been approved by the MCFLS Board. Trustee Pratt moved to approve the lease agreement as presented and Trustee Taylor seconded. Motion passed.

10. **Contract Awards – Library Books and Media.** Karli Pederson, Associate Library Director - Library Information Technology & Technical Services, and Beth Henika, Library Services Manager – Acquisitions & Serials, presented a contract award request for library materials vendors and referred to the memo listed as Attachment D of the agenda. Following the closure of Baker & Taylor, MPL released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a vendor to provide the library with its books, media, and other library materials. Five proposals were received. A committee made-up of library staff, including: librarian selectors, the Library Services Manager, and Technical Services Supervisor, reviewed the proposals and convened vendor demos when necessary. The committee recommended awarding the Library Books portion of the contract to Ingram Library Services LLC. It also recommended awarding the Library Media portion of the contract to Midwest Tape, LLC. Trustee Saffold moved to accept the award recommendations as presented. Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.

REPORTS

11. **MPL Foundation Report.** MPL Foundation Executive Director Ryan Daniels presented an update on fundraising and events. Director Daniels referred to a handout with information about total funds raised in 2025. In 2025, the MPLF raised \$1,742,798 and funded 103% of the pledged gift. Director Daniels recommended Trustees view MPLF's rating on GuideStar. MPLF was invited to apply for an Impact 100 grant and has progressed to the site visit phase. Upcoming events include:
 - The Friends Spring Literary Luncheon on April 23rd featuring author Christina Baker Kline
 - MPLF has been selected as one of the top three beneficiaries of Christian Yelich's family foundation fundraising event in May
 - The Ben Franklin Awards Ceremony will be held on September 22nd and the honorees will be Jackie Herd and Michael Barber and Baird Corporate

Chair Bria thanked MPLF for their ongoing support of library programs and services. Informational item.

12. **Building & Development Committee Meeting.** Committee Chair Michael Morgan presented the action item from the March 5, 2026 meeting. The Committee received presentations from three firms for the Midtown project architecture and engineering services contract. Each group had time for presentation and a Q&A session from the Committee. Proposals were received from: Engberg Anderson, EUA, and HGA. The presentations were made in open session and the Committee deliberated and reached a decision in closed session. Trustee Morgan moved to approve the selection of Engberg Anderson to provide engineering and architectural services as part of the feasibility study in the first phase of the Midtown development. Trustee Pratt seconded. Motion passed.

With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of March 24, 2026 was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.
