

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

**Central Library
Rotary Club of Milwaukee Community Room
814 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53233**

PRESENT: Michele Bria, Teresa Mercado, Michael Morgan, Neil Albrecht, Darryl Jackson, Matthew Kowalski, Ald. Andrea Pratt, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Larresa Taylor, Sup. Kathleen Vincent, Venice Williams, Joan Johnson

EXCUSED: Ald. Milele Coggs

STAFF: Maria Burke, Tim Fluhr, Melissa Howard, Dan Keeley, Yves LaPierre, Tammy Mays Wilder, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Amelia Osterud, Karli Pederson, Rebecca Schweisberger, Kelly Wochinske

OTHER: Milwaukee Public Library Foundation: Sam McGovern-Rowen

President Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:06 p.m. on April 28, 2026 with a quorum present. Trustees Saffold, Vincent, and Williams attended virtually.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was given by patron Rita Maniotis.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes March 24, 2026**
2. **Committee Reports**
 - a. Building & Development Committee – April 2, 2026
 - b. Innovation & Strategy Committee – April 9, 2026
3. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting, April 7, 2026.**
4. **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 3-38 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

REPORTS

5. **MPL Board Nominating Committee Meeting.** Committee Chair Matt Kowalski reported on the March 11, 2026 meeting. The Committee reviewed the nomination process and recommended updating Article V, Section 2 of the MPL Board Bylaws for clarity. The proposed slate was reviewed and the Committee voted unanimously to present the slate at the April Board meeting for additional discussion before the final slate is voted on at the annual meeting in May. The Committee will consider additional nominations before the annual meeting. Nominations should be sent to Library Director Johnson. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual meeting. Informational item.
6. **Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting.** Committee Chair Michael Morgan presented action items from the April 28, 2026 meeting.

Financial Statements and Auditors' Review. Brandon Panka, of Reilly, Penner, and Benton reviewed the auditors' report. The auditors issued an unmodified opinion of the MPL Trust Fund financial statements and all fund balances continue to be positive. MPL is following all accounting procedures as required and Mr. Panka noted the excellent work of the Accounting team, led by Sarah Leszczynski.

Trustee Morgan moved to approve the independent auditors' report of the MPL trust fund for calendar year 2025 as presented. Trustee Albrecht seconded. Motion passed.

Contract Award – Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library and Interlibrary Loan Service.

Library Business Manager Sarah Leszczynski presented two grant agreements from the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for approval. The grant agreements are for the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) and Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service and will fund the respective services for the next year, beginning July 1st. The WTBBL grant total is \$1,214,000 and the ILS grant total is \$234,600.

Trustee Morgan moved to approve the 2026-27 WTBBL and ILS grant agreements. Trustee Albrecht seconded. Motion passed.

7. **Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Update.** Trustee Michele Bria reported on the February 2026 board retreat. ULC is focused on the future of libraries while considering shifting societal expectations, philanthropic trends, and growing pressure on civic institutions. The ULC Board is exploring strategies to build a stronger culture of philanthropy. ULC received \$1.7M in funding from the Carnegie Foundation for Civic Makers Labs for Youth. Libraries can apply for mini grants through this fund. ULC has partnered with More Perfect to launch a pilot program called Libraries & Local News. The program is designed to connect public libraries with local newsrooms and puts community members at the center of local journalism. More Perfect donated \$350,000 for the initiative and mini-grants will be awarded to 6-8 libraries. The ULC Board discussed the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and best practices for AI training models for staff and patrons to remain competitive in the workforce. The ULC Board received a presentation about the current state of e-books and digital content and the option to promote perpetual licensing. ULC continues to support lobbying at the federal level to identify additional federal funding sources that could be allocated to libraries. Informational item.

NEW BUSINESS

8. **MPL 2025 Annual Report.** Melissa Howard, Communications and Community Engagement Director presented the 2025 MPL Annual Report, which is attached at the end of these minutes. The report

design took inspiration from the colors and design of the new Martin Luther King (MLK) Branch Library. The report will be shared publicly and on all MPL social media channels next week. Highlights include library data and statistics, opening of the MLK Branch Library, new early literacy programs, and use of the ULC Business Value Calculator to quantify the economic value of the library. Based on feedback from the Board, some data statistics will be clarified before the final report is released. Trustee Albrecht moved to accept the MPL 2025 Annual Impact Report and Trustee Jackson seconded. Motion passed.

9. **Closing Remarks.** Library Director Joan Johnson shared information about two upcoming events in May and invited all Trustees to attend and share with their networks:

May 20: MPL, in partnership with the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, & Letters, will host 'An Evening with Joy Harjo – In Poetry and Conversation'.

May 21: MPL, in partnership with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, will present 'The Power of Music – An Evening with MSO Principle Pops Conductor Byron Stripling'.

President Bria invited all Trustees to attend the Christian Yelich Home Plate Charity Concert on May 21. The MPL Foundation will be one of the recipients of this year's fundraiser.

With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of April 28, 2026 was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.
