

# Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

*Board Meeting Minutes of: July 28th, 2025*

## Call to Order

### ***Present:***

**Rachel Durso**, President; **John Murphy**, Treasurer; **Erin Counihan**, Secretary; **Clara Rankin**, Trustee; **Bruce Riedel**, Trustee; **Deborah Westerland**, Trustee; **Robert Bell**, Executive Director; **Annie Woodall**, Director of Public Services; **Tobi Brown**, Executive Secretary; **Sara Richards**, Public Services Librarian

Ms. Durso called the meeting into order at 4:31pm. Ms. Durso noted that there was one trustee absent.

### ***Disposition of Minutes of Previous Meeting***

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Mr. Riedel requested grammatical fixes within the minutes. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as submitted, with the grammatical fixes. Ms. Rankin seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

### ***Review of Agenda***

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed. No changes were made to the agenda.

Ms. Durso noted that trustees would not be meeting in August 2025.

### ***Public Comment***

Ms. Durso noted that there were no members of the public present.

## Officer Reports

### ***Treasurer***

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank balances and noted that there was \$122,075 in the PNC Checking account, \$31,247 in the PNC Money Market account, and \$219,225 in the Peoples Bank Savings account.

Mr. Murphy noted that the FY2026 budget was finalized with the County, and the library has received its appropriation. Mr. Murphy explained that the final appropriation from the County saw a 6% increase from FY2025, but fell short of the requested funding by about \$40,000. Mr. Murphy assured the trustees that the library remained in good standing and was maintaining its reserve funds.

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### ***Secretary***

Ms. Counihan noted that the Executive Director evaluation was upcoming. Ms. Counihan informed the trustees that there are ongoing efforts to implement Microsoft tools for the trustee's use.

Ms. Counihan stated that the feedback process for the Executive Director's evaluation was ongoing. Ms. Counihan noted they were currently collecting feedback forms from the public, which were available at all three library branches in both digital and physical form. Ms. Counihan stated that once they have finished collecting public feedback, they will be analyzing it all to compile the Executive Directors evaluation.

### ***Friends of the Kent County Public Library***

Ms. Rankin reported that the Friends are doing well. Ms. Rankin stated that she expected to hear more activity from the Friends leading up to the Fall Book Sale.

### ***Foundation for the Kent County Public Library***

Ms. Westerland said that she was working to improve communications with the Foundation. Ms. Westerland noted that the library now had access to a template that can be used when putting in funding requests to the Foundation.

## Reports of Committees

### ***Strategic Planning Committee***

Ms. Durso noted that the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting was in June. Ms. Durso stated that the committee planned to meet in August and September to finish the brainstorming phase and construct the foundation of the strategic plan.

### ***Safety Committee***

Ms. Durso stated that she met with Mr. Bell to plan a meeting for the Safety Committee in August. Ms. Durso explained that with the finalization of the FY2026 budget, the committee could move forward with creating a plan for the fiscal year. Ms. Durso noted that the FY2026 budget did not include the \$15,000 required to replace the security cameras at the Chestertown branch. Ms. Rankin quoted the agenda and asked if the library would be requesting funding for the cameras from the Foundation. Ms. Durso said yes but noted that the funding was not guaranteed.

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Mr. Riedel asked if the library scheduled regular fire drills and evacuation drills. Ms. Woodall answered yes and explained that the library coordinated with the County to schedule occasional drills.

Ms. Durso noted the Finance Committee did not meet in July, but plan to meet in August.

### Public Services Department Report – CollectionHQ Data

Ms. Richards provided a presentation to the trustees on CollectionHQ; a collection management software that analyzes the physical collection of the library and provides data on the diversity of the collection. Ms. Richards explained that CollectionHQ was funded for the past few years through the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL). Ms. Richards noted that ESRL discontinued its funding of CollectionHQ at the start of FY2026. Ms. Richards elaborated on how the library used this software and what benefits the collection saw during its use.

Ms. Woodall said that CollectionHQ was incredibly valuable for collection development. Ms. Westerland asked if library staff intended to continue tracking this type of data without the software. Ms. Woodall said no and explained that there was no optimal way to collect this data manually. Ms. Woodall added that though we would not be tracking this data, the staff still had a better sense of the state of the current collection and were actively using collected data to improve the collection. Mr. Bell noted that when looking at CollectionHQ usage in the consortium, ESRL's data showed KCPL as one of the heaviest users.

The Public Service Department concluded their presentation and departed the meeting.

### Executive Director Report

#### ***KCPL Operations Update***

Mr. Bell stated he would be meeting with the landlord of the Rock Hall Branch to renegotiate the terms of the lease. Mr. Bell explained that he would be requesting the landlord's removal of several unutilized sink fixtures in the library. Mr. Bell also said he would be looking to add snow and ice removal to the terms of the lease.

Mr. Bell noted that the Summer Reading Program was going well and that the library was seeing an increase in library card signups that coincided with the program.

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Mr. Bell provided an update on the status of several patron trespass notices set to expire by the end of 2025. The Trustees discussed the details of each trespass and the possible courses of action following the end of their trespass notices. Mr. Bell stated that his priority is to maintain safety in the libraries for both patrons and staff.

### ***Foundation for the Kent County Public Library – Funding Requests***

Mr. Bell informed the Trustees that he was working on three funding requests to propose to the Foundation: a patio enclosure at the Chestertown branch, a new circulation desk, and the replacement for the security cameras. Mr. Bell said he intended to have multiple requests prepared to allow the Foundation to have options.

### ***Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) De-funding Update***

Mr. Bell shared that the 21 states that filed a lawsuit against the current Administration for the defunding of IMLS saw a release of their suspended funding for FY2026. Mr. Bell also said that the Maryland State Librarian seemed positive about their odds moving forward.

### ***KCPL Budget Update***

Mr. Bell noted that to cover the cost-of-living increase in staff salaries, the FY2026 budget saw a cut in the collection materials budget. Mr. Bell stated that the library would be exploring ways to cut costs to address this year's budget restrictions and went on to elaborate on a few current options.

Mr. Bell asked if the Trustees thought the library should add CollectionHQ to their list of Foundation funding requests. The Trustees discussed the benefits of this and alternative ways to fund CollectionHQ. Ms. Counihan stated that she would further investigate the costs of CollectionHQ with ESRL following the meeting.

### ***Public Records Requests and Library Unionization Efforts in MD***

Mr. Bell noted that there have been several emails being sent to Eastern Shore library systems requesting public records and inquiring about unionization. Mr. Bell noted that unionization efforts in library systems have been popping up around the state. Mr. Bell stated that this uptick in union activity was likely the result of the passing of the *Library Workers Empowerment Act* in Maryland (effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024). Ms. Counihan asked if there was interest among staff to unionize. Mr. Bell stated he was unsure but noted that union efforts would likely be ineffective in the KCPL system due to its organizational size. The Trustees discussed the union activity among other Eastern Shore library systems.

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## Old Business

### ***Proposal to Improve Management of KCPL Reserve Funds***

Mr. Murphy stated that the Finance committee has been exploring financial account options to improve the management of KCPL Reserve Funds. Mr. Murphy noted that at present KCPL has three bank accounts: a PNC Money Market account, a PNC Checking account, and a Peoples Bank Savings account. Mr. Murphy added that the accounts are set up to stay below the standard maximum deposit insurance amount. Mr. Murphy stated that after researching local financial institutions he believes that a Money Market account with Truist will be a better alternative to the Peoples Bank Savings account. Mr. Murphy said that after moving the funds to the new account, the library will likely see a higher return of about \$7,000 – \$8,000 per year.

Ms. Durso supported the proposal, stating that an increase in return could potentially plug holes in the operation expenses budget. Ms. Rankin asked if switching from a savings account to a money market account was for liquidity. Mr. Murphy said yes. Ms. Durso stated that the increased liquidity would allow easier access in case of emergency and would be easier to manage after a president or treasurer change.

Mr. Murphy moved to improve management of the KCPL Reserve Funds by using a Truist Money Market account with better interest yield. Mr. Riedel seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The Trustees discussed library donation procedures and proposed further exploring donation options.

### ***Staff Handbook Overview and Update***

Ms. Durso noted that the trustees made edits to the KCPL Staff Handbook at the June meeting. The trustees reviewed the previously made edits to the handbook and discussed further revisions.

The trustees' revisions to the Staff Handbook are as follows:

- Streamlined the information surrounding travel and training costs.
- Further clarified the expectations around staff appearance and how to best convey and regulate those expectations.

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## ***Meeting Room Policy Revisions***

Ms. Durso requested the trustees review the revised draft of KCPL's Meeting Room Policy. Ms. Durso noted that the revision broadened the policy's reach, making it pertain to all library spaces an applicant may request to use. Mr. Bell noted the change mostly occurred in the policy's definition of "Meeting Room."

Ms. Counihan expressed concern about the following phrase in the Meeting Room Policy: "Meeting rooms may not be used for... commercial activities involving sales of financial transactions." Ms. Counihan stated she was concerned the library would contradict this statement by allowing library affiliates to collect funds. The trustees discussed alternative language for the policy and requested a revision to address this concern.

Ms. Rankin moved to approve the updates to the Meeting Room Policy with the revisions discussed. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

## ***Chestertown Library, Inc. Building Updates***

Mr. Bell asked the Trustees what the official name of the Chestertown Library Inc. Building was. The trustees discussed what the official name was and why. The trustees discussed adopting the name 'Hearse House' when referring to the building officially.

Mr. Bell reviewed the recent developments in the historic rehabilitation of the Chestertown Library, Inc. Building. Mr. Bell noted that the closing day for bids would be August 7<sup>th</sup> 2025. Ms. Durso noted that Jay Silcox proposed the blueprints for the rehabilitation to the Women's Literary Club of Chestertown Inc. Ms. Durso stated that at this time, there were no pressing concerns regarding the project.

Ms. Durso stated that Mr. Silcox assured them that the project would not take long from a contracting perspective. Ms. Rankin asked if, once the project concludes, this building would be subject to the Meeting Room Policy. Ms. Durso answered, yes.

## **New Business**

### ***New Board Member Scouting for Next Calendar Year***

Ms. Durso stated that Ms. Counihan would be departing from the KCPL Board of Trustees at the end of the calendar year. Ms. Durso proposed starting the scouting process for a replacement board member in mid-August. Ms. Durso said that this would allow the

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trustees to review and appoint the new member by late October. The trustees discussed who would be on the Appointment Committee.

Ms. Westerland stated she felt the 5-year KCPL trustee term was long. Ms. Westerland explained that many Eastern Shore libraries have 3-year trustee terms that line up with the fiscal year. Ms. Counihan stated that a 3-year term may attract a wider range of candidates, as the terms would be less intimidating and easier for individuals to commit to. Mr. Murphy agreed and said he supported a 3-year term with the option to renew.

### ***New Subcommittee Proposal – KCPL Fundraising***

Ms. Durso expressed concern about the status of the library's FY2026 budget and the future of KCPL's funding. Ms. Durso proposed the creation of a KCPL Fundraising Subcommittee to collaborate with staff and affiliates to assist in addressing shortfalls in the library budget. Mr. Murphy agreed with the notion and added that the subcommittee should include members of the KCPL Board, staff, Friends, and Foundation. The Trustees discussed details around the subcommittee's operation and focus.

### ***Queen Anne's County Library – Permission to Service Millington***

Mr. Bell stated that the Executive Director of Queen Anne's County Library (QACL) reached out to request permission to service Millington with their bookmobile. Ms. Counihan expressed support for the notion, stating it would assist with KCPL's struggle to adequately serve smaller communities in Kent County. The Trustees discussed the impact of allowing QACL to service Millington.

Ms. Rankin moved to support QACL providing library services to Millington. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

## **Closed Session**

Ms. Rankin moved to close the meeting. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting went into closed session at 6:38pm.

## **Adjournment**

The closed session ended at 7:00pm. No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Rankin moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Westerland seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02pm.

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR CLOSING A MEETING ("CLOSING STATEMENT")  
UNDER THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT (General Provisions Article § 3-305)**

This form has two sides. *Complete items 1 – 4 before closing the meeting.*

1. **Recorded vote to close the meeting:** Date: 7/28/25; Time: 6:38; Location: Chester town  
Motion to close meeting made by: Clara Rankin Seconded by Debbie Westerland  
Members in favor: all; Opposed: none;  
Abstaining: none; Absent: Bruce Riedel, Melissa Walters

2. **Statutory authority to close session (check all provisions that apply).**  
**This meeting will be closed under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b) only:**

(1) ☒ "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals"; (2) ☒ "To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to public business"; (3) ☐ "To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto"; (4) ☐ "To consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State"; (5) ☐ "To consider the investment of public funds"; (6) ☐ "To consider the marketing of public securities"; (7) ☐ "To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice"; (8) ☐ "To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation"; (9) ☐ "To conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations"; (10) ☐ "To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including: (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans"; (11) ☐ "To prepare, administer, or grade a scholastic, licensing, or qualifying examination"; (12) ☐ "To conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct"; (13) ☐ "To comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter"; (14) ☐ "Before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, to discuss a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process." (15) ☐ "To discuss cybersecurity, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to: (i) security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology; (ii) network security information . . . or (iii) deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices."

Continued →



3. For each provision checked above, disclosure of the topic to be discussed and the public body's reason for discussing that topic in closed session.

Citation (insert # from above)	Topic	Reason for closed-session discussion of topic
§3-305(b) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	Executive director annual review	personnel matter
§3-305(b) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	initial report	
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		
§3-305(b) <input type="checkbox"/>		

4. This statement is made by , Presiding Officer.

Rachel M. Durso

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**WORKSHEET FOR OPTIONAL USE IN CLOSED SESSION: INFORMATION FOR SUMMARY TO BE DISCLOSED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT OPEN MEETING. (See also template for summary.)**

- For a meeting closed under the statutory authority cited above:

Time of closed session: 6:30 - 7:00

Place: Chester town

Purpose(s): personnel

Members who voted to meet in closed session: all (see p. 1)

Persons attending closed session: Rachel Durso, John Murphy, Erin Cunningham, Clara Rankin

Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session: Deborah

Topics actually discussed: ED evaluation westernland

Actions taken: none

Each recorded vote: \_\_\_\_\_

- For a meeting recessed to perform an administrative function (§ 3-104): Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Persons present: \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects discussed: \_\_\_\_\_