



Rochester Public Library

More Than You Think

115 South Avenue | Rochester | New York | 14604

Meeting of the RPL Board of Trustees Central Library, Rundel Memorial Building January 28, 2026 Minutes

RPL Trustees Present: Donna Benjamin, Marcus Cooper, James Kraus, Matt McDermott (VP), Sarah Murphy Abbamonte (Secretary), Jeffrey Tucker, Mark Wyand (Treasurer) (quorum present)

RPL Trustees Excused: Gary Brandt (MCLS Liaison), Ellen Brenner (President), Sharon Salluzzo

Staff and Guests: City Council Liaison Mitch Gruber; City Administration Liaison Barbara Pierce; City Law Department Liaison Allison Bartlett; FFRPL Liaison Donna Borgus; staff members, Emily Clasper, Katy Hasselwander, Sarah Lehman, Debi Mansour, BJ Scanlon, Geraldine Scott, Jennifer Smathers

Vice President McDermott called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., welcomed trustees, staff, and guests, and confirmed a quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were present who wished to address the board.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the November meeting were approved as presented.

Introduction

Director Clasper introduced Geraldine Scott as the new Human Resources Coordinator for Rochester Public Library. Scott has many years of experience working in Human Resources at the City of Rochester and joined the RPL team at the end of December 2025.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Human Resources Coordinator Scott called attention to the personnel changes and staffing levels for November 8, 2025, through January 9, 2026, and offered to answer questions. Trustee Wyand MADE A MOTION to approve the personnel changes. Trustee Cooper seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Library Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the financial reports with the trustees and offered to answer questions. Trustee Tucker MADE A MOTION to approve the monthly financial reports as presented and approved by the RPL Finance Committee. Trustee Murphy Abbamonte seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

FFRPL Library Grant for Circulating Materials Report

Director Clasper reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Kraus MADE A MOTION to approve the 2025 Report for the FFRPL Library Grant for Circulating Materials. Trustee Cooper seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Trustee Benjamin joined the meeting at 9:14 a.m.

RPL FY 25 Audit

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Tucker MADE A MOTION to accept EFPR's audit of the 2024-25 fiscal year. Trustee Benjamin seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Professional Services Agreement, Raising a Reader Consultant

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Murphy Abbamonte MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with Sarah Spano to develop materials and training curriculum for the Raising a Reader program, with maximum compensation of \$6,000 and a term through June 30, 2026. Trustee Cooper seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Professional Services Agreement, Children's Staff Training

Associate Director Smathers reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Benjamin MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement for staff training services with Sensational Inclusion, LLC, with maximum compensation of \$3,330 and a term through December 31, 2026. Trustee Wyand seconded. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REPORTS & DISCUSSION

Liaison from the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) Board

Director Clasper reported on the recent MCLS board meeting and related system work. She said MCLS approved youth brain-development training for system youth and teen staff and noted that this was the board's only action item at that meeting. Clasper explained that MCLS has begun developing its required five-year Plan of Service: it must follow strict State Library/Department of Education guidance, include representation from MCLS membership and trustees, collect and document member feedback, and record how goals were developed and revised. The plan is underway, will involve RPL as part of the system, and must be approved by the MCLS board before submission to the state by the October 1 deadline. She characterized the document as compliance-driven (not a strategic plan, but "strategic-plan adjacent") and said RPL's board will be kept informed as the process progresses.

Liaison from the Friends & Foundation of RPL (FFRPL)

Executive Director Borgus reported that the Tuesday Topics programs have been well attended, and recordings will be posted at ffrpl.org; presenters included Director Clasper on Beyond Books, Finance Manager Hasselwander on The History of the Rundel Library, and Deputy Director Scanlon on the Maplewood renovation and the new Northeast branch.

Next, she shared that the Friends & Foundation is planning the spring Books Sandwiched In series, kicking off March 10 with *Every Day Is Sunday*, and is accepting submissions for the Sokol High School Literary Awards; the award ceremony is April 23. The annual campaign is on track—the recent ROC the Day effort raised \$16,000, meeting the Friends' goal and fully funding the RPL request.

Lastly, Executive Director Borgus has submitted three grant applications to support RPL projects: one for children's services and two for ImagineYOU. She reminded the board that FFRPL grant reports are due February 15 and said she aims to have agreements ready by March with funds distributed to recipients in early April.

Director's Report

Director Clasper reported that the library experienced a very busy November and December and highlighted staff efforts to maintain service during a recent weather event by keeping the Central Library open on reduced hours; she noted positive staff feedback about the decision and the community benefit. She described the current municipal budget process as likely to be difficult, with the City indicating the potential for cuts; library leadership is actively engaging with City Hall to model several budget scenarios, although nothing is final. Clasper explained the timeline for budget actions: a joint MCLS–RPL meeting at the end of February to present a proposal, the Mayor's proposed budget in May, and subsequent opportunities for the board to review changes. She emphasized that conversations with the administration are ongoing, that staff are preparing various scenarios at the City's request, and that the board will be kept informed as more concrete proposals emerge.

Central Library Report

Associate Director Lehman reported that library staff will participate in advocacy day in Albany to meet with state legislators about statewide and Rochester-specific library needs. Lehman noted recent events and operational updates at the Central Library: a wedding held at the library, progress on contracts and vendor outreach for events at the Central Library, and removal of exterior fencing in front of the Rundel Memorial Library Building which enables larger-scale programming.

Next, she drew everyone's attention to a pamphlet showing how to support the Liberators gaming group at ImagineYOU through existing Amazon Prime memberships. She also shared the reinstatement of CASH tax-preparation services at Central following short-term funding challenges. Lehman invited questions about both her oral and written reports.

Community Libraries Report

Deputy Director Scanlon reported operational and program updates for community libraries. He explained that Wheatley's HVAC replacement remains delayed by the manufacturer, with March delivery and April installation anticipated, so a future closure will be scheduled when timelines are firmer. The Maplewood Community Library has closed to the public; staff packed the Lexington site, belongings were moved to the Dewey Avenue location and storage, some furnishings will transfer to Mary's Place or other branches, and staff will phase back in late February to prepare a targeted mid–late March reopening.

Under the county ARPA digital equity grant, Scanlon described a pilot decentralizing MiFi distribution by issuing 15 units to each branch, with branch staff training beginning February 2 and branch-level circulation expected by March to reduce wait times and improve access. He reported a proposed 12–18-month partnership with the University of Rochester to host air-quality sensors at library sites, with an MOU in development.

For advocacy, Scanlon outlined priorities for meetings with legislators including maintaining library construction and operating aid at prior levels, e-book pricing reform, support for the Open Shelves Act, passage of the Library Worker Protection Act, capital funding needs including potential ILS costs and renovations at the Winton branch, and pursuing sustained MiFi funding including E-Rate eligibility.

Lastly, he noted successful local initiatives and partnerships: an RRLC grant awarded to a Sully Branch staff member to build a Spanish-language children's collection and bilingual programming, and planning for a branch training day with city partners and donated keynote sessions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Liaisons and Committees

Vice President McDermott announced that he was appointing himself and Trustee Benjamin to the Finance Committee and invited any other volunteers from the floor of which there were none. There were no objections to the appointments.

Vice President McDermott announced that Trustee Murphy Abbamonte has volunteered to be the Liaison to the MCLS Board temporarily and asked the other trustees to consider volunteering for this role.

Lastly, he asked trustees to consider volunteering for the Policy Review Committee.

Next Meeting

Vice President McDermott reminded everyone that the next meeting will be on February 25.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Sarah Murphy Abbamonte, Secretary