

**Lake Forest Library Board of Trustees**  
360 E. Deerpath Road, Lake Forest, IL, 60045

Tuesday, November 18, 2025  
*Regular Meeting Minutes*

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Jackson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order on November 18, 2025 at 6:30 pm in the Kasian Room, at Lake Forest Library.

**ROLL CALL**

Trustees present: President Josh Jackson, Vice President JoAnn Desmond, Trustee Jim Clifton, Trustee John Johnson, Trustee Garth Pearson, Trustee Robert Shaw, Trustee Vince Sparrow, Trustee Heather Strong, Trustee Emily Van Bel (via Zoom). A quorum was present.

Library Staff present: Ishwar Laxminarayan - Executive Director, Kate Buckardt - Adult Services Manager, Lorie Rohrer - Youth Services Manager, Joy Schmoll - Communications Manager, Jim Lee - Building Superintendent, Leo Hamza - Business Manager and John Lacson - Media Lab Specialist.

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

President Jackson noted that the Elawa Farm Books and Bites event was very well received. He also touched on the Vinci Hamp presentation of the 1931 room restoration project expressing confidence that the right people are leading the project and that the Board is well positioned moving forward.

**TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

Trustee Johnson reflected on the "The River We Remember" evening, noting he was very impressed with the quality of the Q&A, how well the event was run, and the strong attendance.

Trustee Desmond commended Director Laxminarayan for doing an excellent job in keeping the Board informed of the library's many successful programs and events.

Trustee Strong echoed Trustee Johnson's comments and suggested considering two sessions for future events to accommodate a larger audience.

**CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**

None.

**CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

Director Laxminarayan reviewed a memorandum from the Illinois Department of Revenue which noted that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) "cost of living" or inflation percentage to use in computing the 2025 extensions (taxes payable in 2026) under PTELL is 2.9%.

Lake Forest Library Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Trustee Johnson shared a *Chicago Tribune* article highlighting that book publishing remains strong and relevant. Patron comments were reviewed and generally positive. One patron commented on access to books on banned book lists. In response to comments about the entryway rugs, Trustee Strong suggested exploring whether removing middle security sensors could help alleviate the issue for the time being. Regarding construction concerns from patrons, Trustee Strong reiterated that the Building Committee and staff have gone to great lengths to ensure the library remains open and accessible throughout construction.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A correction was requested to reflect that the October 21 consent agenda was voted on and approved by all trustees present. Trustee Sparrow made a motion to approve the consent agenda as corrected. Trustee Desmond seconded the motion.

The following voted “Aye”: Trustees Clifton, Desmond, Jackson, Johnson, Pearson, Shaw, Sparrow, Strong and Van Bel. The following voted “Nay”: none. 9-Ayes, 0-Nays, motion carried.

**BUILDING COMMITTEE**

**Exterior Courtyard Rehabilitation- Phase I**

Trustee Strong provided an update on the courtyards project, noting timeline setbacks due to weather and site constraints. Courtyard wall installation is anticipated in the spring, with reopening projected for May. Director Laxminarayan also noted the removal of the pear trees.

**1931 Historic Room Revitalization**

Trustee Van Bel referenced updates to the 1931 rooms restoration project, citing a successful presentation by Vinci Hamp to the public. Next steps are to have a full cost estimation by the end of the year or early in January.

**Action Item- New Boiler**

Jim Lee reported that two similar cost proposals were received for a new boiler and the Board would need to approve awarding the project. The budgeted amount was \$74,000.00. Trustee Johnson asked whether the electrical system had been assessed. Mr. Lee confirmed that Hill Mechanical has strong knowledge of the library’s HVAC systems and had reviewed the switch gears and related systems, confirming the capacity to support a new boiler. Trustee Desmond made a motion to approve and award the boiler contract to Hill Mechanical in an amount not to exceed \$52,000.00 and to authorize Jim Lee to sign the contract as presented. Trustee Johnson seconded the motion.

The following voted “Aye”: Trustees Clifton, Desmond, Jackson, Johnson, Pearson, Shaw, Sparrow, Strong and Van Bel. The following voted “Nay”: none. 9-Ayes, 0-Nays, motion carried.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Trustee Sparrow reported that the audit remains unchanged from the previous draft and that the library is in strong financial condition. Trustee Johnson noted that the management letter contained more detailed insight into financial planning and usage of funds. Trustee Shaw commented that the notes were particularly informative.

Lake Forest Library Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 18, 2025

**Action Item- 2025 Audit Approval**

Trustee Shaw made a motion to approve the 2025 audit as presented. The motion was seconded by Trustee Desmond and approved unanimously by all trustees in attendance.

**FUNDRAISING DISCUSSION**

President Jackson led a discussion and raised questions regarding process and best practices for fundraising and how to define the Board's involvement in such efforts. Trustee Van Bel discussed the option of forming a subcommittee to ensure a throughline for all communication and efforts. Director Laxminarayan emphasized the importance of acting timely and efficiently, expressing support for bringing fundraising in-house with dedicated staff. He also questioned whether fundraising should become part of the library's day-to-day operations. Trustee Desmond highlighted the importance of community outreach and engaging key community members in solicitations. Trustee Strong echoed support for hiring a dedicated staff member and forming a subcommittee to ensure coordinated and consistent messaging. Trustee Sparrow agreed with this approach. Trustee Johnson suggested further discussion with staff to determine the appropriate role and scope. Trustee Van Bel suggested that the Building Committee present rough cost estimates for future projects to help frame fundraising needs.

**TRUSTEE TRAINING**

Trustees discussed the value of formal trustee training to better understand governance rules, responsibilities, and best practices.

**OPERATIONS REPORT**

Director Laxminarayan noted classes and lectures continue to be well received and highlighted the strong attendance at the recent Pumpkin Party. There are new take-out kits including a bird watching kit and telescope. Several staff attended the city benefits fair, yielding 30 new library card sign-ups. Director Laxminarayan highlighted upcoming holiday programming and encouraged trustees to attend. Circulation usage and metrics remain ahead of projections across all categories.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Trustee Strong proposed conducting feasibility studies to help answer larger strategic questions related to Phase Three building plans, noting that preliminary research would better define next steps.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

**Next Schedule Meeting: Regular Board Meeting, Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 6:30 pm.**



---

Emily Van Bel, Secretary  
Submitted for approval by the Board on December 16, 2025