

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

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
Regular Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of President Jackson, Vice President Desmond welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order on February 17, 2026 at 6:35 pm in the Kasian Room.

ROLL CALL

Vice President JoAnn Desmond, Trustee John Johnson, Trustee Garth Pearson, Trustee Robert Shaw, Trustee Vince Sparrow, Trustee Heather Strong, Trustee Emily Van Bel (arrived at 6.37 pm). A quorum was present.

Trustees absent: President Josh Jackson, Trustee Jim Clifton.

Library Staff present: Ishwar Laxminarayan, Heidi Krueger, Assistant Director, Jim Lee, Building Superintendent, Kate Buckardt, Adult Services Manager, Leo Hamza, Business Manager and John Lacson, Media Lab Specialist.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Vice President Desmond noted that she was eagerly looking forward to a productive discussion on several interesting topics at today's meeting.

TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Trustee Sparrow complimented staff on a well-organized chocolate program.

CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Jan Gibson, representing the Friends of the Lake Forest Library, provided an update on artwork restoration efforts supported by the Friends. Four pieces of artwork have been restored, including a page from a Bible translation that dates back to 1535. Restoration efforts included cleaning, restoring color, and stabilizing the artwork. The work was completed using remaining funds previously allocated for restoration.

Trustee Shaw inquired whether the restoration would affect the overall appraisal value of the collection. Ms. Gibson noted that restoration will likely increase the appraisal value of the items. Trustee Pearson asked about the use of specialized glass or other conservation measures to protect the artwork. Trustees Van Bel and Strong noted that the Vinci Hamp proposal for the 1931 Rooms project includes a line item for artwork restoration and protective window film to mitigate environmental damage.

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT AND PATRON COMMENTS

Director Laxminarayan reviewed several patron comments, highlighting the many praises received for the library's extended hours and food offerings during Exam Escape. He also shared appreciation for staff efforts during Exam Escape, particularly highlighting the supportive environment created for students. Mr. Laxminarayan noted that there will be a final city recommendation expected late January with regards to parking.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Omnibus Consent Agenda was presented. Trustee Sparrow made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Trustee Pearson seconded the motion.

The following voted "Aye": Trustees Desmond, Johnson, Pearson, Shaw, Sparrow, Strong and Van Bel. The following voted "Nay": none. 7-Ayes, 0-Nays, motion carried.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Exterior Courtyard Rehabilitation- Phase I

The committee is preparing for the spring kickoff of construction activities. Berglund Construction is expected to return at the end of February to begin work on the doors. Furniture has been ordered, and the project is still targeting a May 1, 2026 completion date.

1931 Historic Rooms Revitalization

Trustee Strong reviewed the preliminary cost estimate summary, noting that the estimate separates the project costs from design and construction contingencies due to the size and complexity of the project. The Building Committee anticipates that the contingency amounts may ultimately be higher than necessary but are included as a prudent placeholder. The Board will vote on a formal architectural fee proposal once received from Vinci Hamp. Following receipt of the proposal, the Board will schedule another public meeting to present the final design. Trustee Johnson asked for clarification regarding the scope of work and the expected finished product.

Trustee Strong reviewed the planned improvements, which include:

- Updated wayfinding throughout the building
- Custom furniture designed to respond to patron and staff requests
- New paint and restored historic finishes
- Acoustic plaster to reduce sound transmission
- New walk-off mats and carpeting
- Refurbishment of historic photographs
- Supplemental lighting
- Updated desks and staff work areas
- Restoration of fireplaces
- Select artwork restoration

Trustee Van Bel noted that the design approach aims to be future proof, avoiding a dated aesthetic while honoring the building's historic character.

Trustee Pearson asked whether the Reed Room would be included in the renovation. Trustee Strong noted that it is not included, as it is better suited for consideration in a future Phase Three project. Trustee Shaw asked whether oversized conduit would be installed to allow for future electrical expansion. Trustee Strong noted that Vinci Hamp has been evaluating long-term electrical capacity needs. Trustee Johnson asked what steps might be needed to increase electrical capacity and flexibility for future upgrades. Trustee Strong noted that the project's lighting consultant will help evaluate those requirements. Trustee Shaw also asked for clarification regarding contingency cost calculations, which Trustee Strong explained.

Lake Forest Garden Club Grant

Vice President Desmond reported that the Lake Forest Garden Club has awarded a grant to fund a master landscape plan design for the library grounds. Trustee Van Bel provided an update on the status of the grant process. Trustee Strong noted that the Board was being asked to formally accept the gift.

Trustee Johnson made a motion to graciously accept the grant. Trustee Shaw seconded the motion. Voice vote: All in favor. Motion carried.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PARKING REGULATIONS

Director Laxminarayan provided an update on proposed parking regulations for the Central Business District. The City waited until completion of the Deerpath streetscape project before implementing a new parking plan. Under the new ordinance:

- A row of 90-minute parking spaces across from the library will be designated specifically for library patrons.
- Overnight parking will be relocated to improve daytime availability.
- Parking will be monitored using a new electronic enforcement system.

The city has committed to continuing to accommodate additional parking needs during special library events. The new parking system will begin as a pilot program starting May 1.

OTHER PROJECTS UPDATES

Building Superintendent Jim Lee offered updates on the following:

Boiler Replacement

Mr. Lee reported that Hill Mechanical has begun installation of the new boiler, with completion expected by the end of the week.

HVAC Noise Mitigation

The Kasian Room HVAC system is being evaluated to reduce noise caused by the ductwork during programming events.

Structural Assessment

Engineering firm WJE will conduct a structural audit of the building to assess the structure's capacity to support future Phase Three improvements.

FINANCE COMMITTEE
FY2027 BUDGET

Finance Committee Chair Trustee Sparrow presented the draft FY2027 budget. Many revenue projections remain relatively predictable. The greater challenge lies in forecasting capital expenditures and determining the timing and availability of donations and other funding sources. Trustee Sparrow noted that the draft budget is strong but will continue to evolve as planning progresses. The budget currently anticipates a reduction in the library's cash balance by the end of FY2027, primarily due to capital investments. Trustee Johnson noted that the Finance Committee has asked Director Laxminarayan to evaluate staff compensation to ensure that employees remain competitively compensated.

FUNDRAISING

Vice President Desmond discussed the creation of a new advisory committee dedicated to capital campaign fundraising. Director Laxminarayan noted that ongoing discussions are focused on determining which projects should be considered one-time improvements versus those that are better incorporated into a future Phase Three renovation. Although the library has underspent in certain areas over the past several years, the current planning efforts are laying the groundwork for larger capital investments in the coming years.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY FUNDING REQUEST

Director Laxminarayan presented the Friends of the Library's FY2027 funding request totaling \$55,000.

The funding would be divided into two primary areas:

- Support for library programming and reading initiatives
- Digitization of Lake Forest local history materials, including periodicals, board meeting minutes, and historic photographs

The Friends also expressed interest in contributing to the 1931 Historic Rooms revitalization project. Trustee Strong asked whether there was flexibility in the annual funding request. Director Laxminarayan noted that the library maintains a programming budget and suggested reserving the Friends' larger contributions for the 1931 Rooms project.

Trustee Johnson made a motion to approve the Friends' funding request as presented. Trustee Shaw seconded the motion. Voice vote: All in favor. Motion carried.

OPERATIONS REPORT

Director Laxminarayan highlighted the continued success of Exam Escape, which has received very positive feedback from students and families. Staff are evaluating alternatives to the current print-management system and reviewing potential replacements. Additional programming highlights include a Young Adult potato chip tasting contest and the upcoming Books and Bites event at Elawa Farm. Library usage metrics remain strong, and the library is returning to more consistent availability of print materials while also increasing investment in electronic collections.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

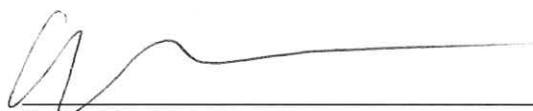
None.

NEW BUSINESS

Trustee Johnson asked that the Board discuss the library's plans for the United States' 250th anniversary celebration at a future meeting. Director Laxminarayan noted that the library is participating in a community coalition with other city organizations planning a multi-day celebration. The celebration will take place July 1–4, culminating with a community event at the beach on July 4.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Next Schedule Meeting: Regular Board Meeting, Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 6:30 pm.



Emily Van Bel, Secretary

Submitted for approval by the Board on March 17, 2026