

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
September 4, 2025

Board members in attendance: [President] Monica Challenger, [Vice President] Jeremy Elges, Chris Casey, Ana McClain, Susie McDermott, Elisabeth Hepworth, Jade Hart (in person); Rafael Jacobo (via Zoom)

Board members unable to attend: Hassan Selim

Staff in attendance: Dara Schmidt, Amber McNamara, Kevin Delecki, Erin Horst, Jessica Musil (in person); Patrick Duggan (via Zoom)

Others: Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation; Libby Slappey, President, Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library (in person)

- A. Call to Order
 - Ms. Challenger called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
 - Minutes: August 7, 2025

Ms. Hart moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. Hepworth seconded. The action carried with unanimous approval.
- C. Public Comments and Communications
 - There being none, the meeting continued
- D. Foundation Report – Charity Tyler
 - Ms. Tyler reported. This week, auditors visited the Foundation for their annual audit. The team is also planning the Van Vechten Society brunch this Sunday. Over 90 people have RSVPed to attend the event. Ms. Tyler thanked Foundation team members and Library events staff for their work to make this event possible. Ms. McDermott asked how many individuals will be recognized at the event. Ms. Tyler noted that seven will be recognized and this year, multiple families are bringing several people to honor their loved one. At this time, we'll have another two names to add to the wall next year as the memorial gifts were received after the deadline. We didn't have any additions last year so it's special to add seven this year.

Mr. Elges joined the meeting at 4:06 pm.

- Ms. Tyler continues to talk with donors about the capital campaign. She hopes to have a campaign announcement soon.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Slappey reported. Friends still have two Farmers Market book sales remaining this summer on Sept. 6 and 20. Construction on the Urban Plaza work will prevent the Friends from being out front on Sept. 20 but they are grateful to shift slightly to take up space in the drive through. Friends love participating in the Farmers Market as sales have a built-in audience to catch market attendees. They are hopeful to have the same amount of traffic even if they can't be right on the library's front steps.

Ms. Casey joined the meeting at 4:11pm.

- Following the Farmers Market sales, Friends will focus on their big fall sale on Oct. 31-Nov. 2. With the café's closure, the Friends plan to use their seating area to place better book sale displays. They also plan a Thursday preview night on Oct. 30 for a member only event, which they have done in the past and are bringing back this year. Friends are

hopeful that collectors are enticed to visit and purchase books through this event without an extra fee for scanning. Ms. Challenger asked about the donated train collection. Ms. Slappey said one book sold as recently as yesterday and they have continued to sell well.

F. Board Education: Summer Reading Challenge – Kevin Delecki

- Mr. Delecki provided an overview of the Summer Reading Challenge for this past summer. The main goals for the program were to: simplify the program, launch Mega Readers for kids in all day care, and increase participation rates, which was measurable through challenge completions, total minutes read, and program attendance.
- Responses from staff and patrons alike about the simplification of the program continued to be positive. An example of making the program easier was the addition of a large print reading log for outreach in care facilities and Books by Mail/Delivery patrons. This special log was appreciated by those who needed it. Overall, we saw an increase for completions in most age groups comparing 2023 to 2025 numbers: children 0-5 (363 vs 52), teens (111 vs 10), and adults (523 vs 143).
- The Mega Readers program started with individual marketing sent to day care facilities, which resulted in 16 locations registering 46 classrooms with 828 children. Of those, 10 locations completed the program, impacting 31 classrooms and 413 children. Collectively, they read 247,800 minutes. Through support with the Library Foundation, all the kids got to pick out books to keep.
- Participation in the program remained steady for enrollments and completions from 2024. For the second year in a row, our Library was a runner up from Beanstack, the software to track minutes read and program completions, based on enrollment, minutes read, and social media engagement. In total, our community logged 2,667,195 minutes read. Of those, 17 Books by Mail/Books by Delivery outreach patrons recorded 217,620 minutes.
- The Programming Team felt the summer reading challenge found growth and success in several ways: testing and evaluating outreach methods to the community; increasing social media engagement; expanded partnerships with school-age children; and using and promoting Maker Space technology to create prizes. The team looks forward to 2026 as they evaluate feedback and update collateral.
- Ms. Challenger praised the team for creating a wonderful opportunity for daycares and their kids. Mr. Delecki shared a story about the excitement and anticipation one-year-olds demonstrated to their care providers. Ms. Hepworth noted her daughter's excitement for the 3D printed prize. Ms. Hart asked about the price for materials to create the prizes. Mr. Delecki said it's about \$19 for a spool of filament, which produces about 200 items. There's labor involved but a great team of maker space volunteers kept the printer and laser cutter going to produce these.
- Ms. Schmidt shared that the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) has chosen Cedar Rapids as a Summer Learning Award winner. This is not a library-specific award but a learning award. Ms. Schmidt shared NSLA's statement about the library. Our programs exemplify NSLA's values by creating a sense of belonging and purpose for all youth, especially those in need of more support and connection. Outreach to those in detention centers and community parks with support, materials, and connection serves youth who may not experience those opportunities. Ms. Schmidt thanked the programming staff and Mr. Delecki for their tireless work focusing on reaching children in our community, who may not otherwise experience the library.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth reported. During the meeting, the committee members discussed Institute for Museum and Library Service (IMLS) funding. The presidential administration recommended to defund and eliminate IMLS in 2026. However, before the August recess, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a small increase to LSTA funding, which authorizes funding for libraries through

IMLS. The Senate committee that writes the funding bill for agencies like IMLS did not follow the administration's proposal to eliminate IMLS and instead proposed a continuation and increase of funding for LSTA. If Congress does not include funding for library programs in its budget, those services will end regardless what happens with the administration or in court proceedings. The issue will next be taken up with the House of Representatives. This fall is a critical time for libraries at the federal level and is a good time for citizens to communicate with their representatives. The library's website has more information on the local impact of IMLS funds.

- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Schmidt reported for Ms. Hart. The downtown's roof is almost done following the substantial completion inspection. Work will conclude in the next few weeks. The Urban Plaza work will start the week of Sept. 15. The only programmatic impact is the last Friends sale for the Sept. 20 Farmers Market – they will move to the café drive-up. Work should complete in 6-8 weeks, dependent on weather. The 4th Avenue entrance will remain open with access from the sidewalk on the 5th Street. The work site will be enclosed for the duration of the project as phasing construction would add significant time to the completion. One of the major goals of the project was to improve accessibility with multiple ADA path ways as well as long-term sustainable for maintenance. The Westside Library project is going well – August had great weather. Some library staff have been able to walk through the space. Interior walls have been framed so you can see the layout and scale of the different rooms. The goal is to enclose the building by the end of October and move on to more interior work. Library staff are working on an internal project to understand owner supplied purchases and timelines for installation. At the last Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment meeting, Materials Manager Erin Horst and Materials Supervisor Jill Martinez met with OPN and a shelving vendor to discuss shelving types, collection sizes, and collection accessibility for various patrons.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Schmidt reported for Ms. Casey. The July finance memo is broad as it is the beginning of the new fiscal year. The committee discussed the current café contract, which is ending. They decided to move forward with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). We have received interest in the space. Ms. Schmidt was surprised at the interest as there have been challenges for the previous vendors to be successful. However, it is fiscally responsible to pursue an RFQ as café rent is a revenue. If we reclaim the space, there will be a construction cost. We are working with City Purchasing to release a formal RFQ and will better understand a timeline then. The City will help distribute the information through their list and we'll communicate with those who have reached out to us. Ms. McClain asked about challenges in the café's success. Ms. Schmidt noted that library clientele may not have money to purchase items. A catering component for the meeting room uses has been essential to keep the business fiscally viable. It can also be challenging to prepare for catering while also serving the counter. Ms. Schmidt also discussed that chains would be open and the goal is to have a café that can be open when the library is open.
 - The janitorial contract is ending in November. Purchasing is working on releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the downtown and Ladd libraries as well as cost estimates for the Westside Library. Ms. Schmidt anticipates it will be approved at the November board meeting.
 - The committee has been discussing options and possibilities to recover the \$200,000 materials gap created by the new bonding interpretation requiring digital materials to be paid out of operations. They are working on a plan that

can be sustainable to the library long-term and have appropriate staffing for the new facility. More will come to the full board as the decisions are made. The FY27 budget process is expected to begin in October.

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - **Action:** Policy 2.01 Reconsideration Policy. This policy outlines the process for Cedar Rapids residents to ask library staff to reconsider materials as part of the collection. The committee did not recommend any changes.
 - **Action:** Policy 3.08 Right to Protest, Petition, and Assemble. For this policy on community members' right to protest, petition, and assemble in and around the library, there are no recommended changes.

The motion to accept the affirmed policies as in the packet passed with unanimous approval.

H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported. The library was in the news over the weekend in association with an incident. A man approached a child, said inappropriate things to her and touched her. The mother was right there and handled the situation, calling the police. When staff understood what was happening, they supported the mom and child. The adult was apprehended outside the library later on and has been trespassed from the library. The patron had not behaved – in a previous visit nor when entering the library on that day – that would have caused staff to believe he would be a concern to others. For now, he has been trespassed for a year; however, depending on outcomes of his charges, this may be extended by law. Ms. Schmidt expressed thanks to and pride for the staff who responded and supported the family during and following the incident. Staff followed the procedure and board policy regarding behavior.
- Recently there has been a law change that any new board or commission member must take a virtual training on open meetings and public records. The City has decided that all active members should go through the training. Early dates have been full so Ms. Schmidt encouraged trustees to sign-up for future trainings – more will be offered.
- On Monday, Ms. Schmidt with the senior managers team will be at an off-site retreat. They plan to work through plans for staffing models, the November all staff day, and the Westside Library opening tasks and timelines.
- Ms. Challenger thanked Ms. Schmidt for her your openness and sharing positive and not so positive news. It is unfortunate and could have happened anywhere. She noted we are fortunate to have the staff we have to address and take care of that situation.

I. Old Business

- There being no old business, the meeting continued.

J. New Business

- There being no new business, the meeting continued.

K. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, October 2, 2025, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library