

CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH

**Board of Library Trustees
Civic Center Council Chambers
100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – 5:00 PM**

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Lauren Kramer called to order the Board of Library Trustees meeting for January 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Trustees Present: Chair Lauren Kramer, Vice Chair Antonella Castro, Trustee Meghan Murray, Trustee Chase Rief

Trustees Absent: Secretary Dorothy Larson

Staff Present: Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
Francine Jacome, Administrative Support Specialist
Rebecca Lightfoot, Library Services Manager
Andrew Kachaturian, Adult Services Coordinator
Annika Helmuth, Branch and Youth Services Coordinator
Miranda Gentry, Circulation Coordinator

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Library staff members led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC - Waived

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

Administrative Support Specialist Jacome read the Consent Calendar Notice to the Public.

A. Consent Calendar Items

1. Minutes of the November 17, 2025 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

2. Patron Comments

Monthly review of evaluations of library services through suggestions and requests received from patrons.

3. Expenditure Status Report

Monthly expenditure status of the library's operating expenses, services, salaries, and benefits by department.

4. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

List of agenda items and dates for monthly review of projects by the Board of Library Trustees.

Chair Kramer opened the items to public comment, and there was none.

Motion made by Chair Lauren Kramer, seconded by Vice Chair Antonella Castro, and carried 4-0-0-1 to approve the Consent Calendar Item Nos. 1-4.

AYES: Kramer, Castro, Murray, Rief
NOES:
ABSTENTIONS:
ABSENCES: Larson

VI. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. Items for Review

5. NBPL eBranch, Database, and Downloadable Services Update

Staff will provide an update and overview of the Library eBranch, database, and downloadable services.

Library Services Manager Rebecca Lightfoot reported on the Library's eBranch, which is comprised of downloadable and streaming materials accessible anywhere at any time. She added that the streaming and digital resources are seeing a significant increase in popularity, with the databases constantly being reevaluated by staff to best meet the needs of the community. She noted that there has been a significant number of patron requests for a cookbook database, and the Library will be adding one soon.

Chair Kramer opened public comment, and there was none.

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

6. Annual Budget – Preliminary Review

Staff requests that the Board of Library Trustees review and approve the preliminary Library operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Library Services Manager Lightfoot noted that the Finance Department did not have final numbers on the Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget when the staff report was prepared. She reported that the item is focused on the program enhancement requests made to the City Manager for additional funding. She reported that staff is requesting an additional \$50,000 in the materials budget to help cover the cost of the growing eBranch, and an additional

\$17,500 in facilities funding due to maintenance matters that staff learned the Department of Public Works does not finance. She reported that the Library requested a one-time \$16,000 increase to install a new door count system for better accuracy, and an additional \$100,000 to fund furniture replacement in the Central Library and Mariners Branch. She reported that staff is requesting funds to host another summertime Pacific Symphony concert, leading to a \$45,000 request from the Library.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiries, Library Services Manager Lightfoot clarified that the materials budget includes the cost of magazine and other subscriptions. She confirmed that the City shares some subscription costs with the Southern California Digital Library Consortium for OverDrive access but added that the City also has its own collection of content in addition to what it shares with the consortium. She added that the City's contribution to the service is \$10,000, which grants access to \$1 million worth of materials. She clarified that the request for a larger materials budget is to cover both the increased cost of subscriptions and new materials.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Library Services Manager Lightfoot reported that databases cost about \$250,000 in FY 2025-26 and are projected to be closer to \$300,000 in FY 2026-27, adding that the final number will likely be less as the Library eliminates some underperforming databases.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Library Services Manager Lightfoot clarified that the Library had its own facilities budget up until FY 2025-26, but the retirement of the maintenance technician in June of 2025 and the assumption of day-to-day operational duties by Public Works led to the Library shifting its facilities budget to Public Works.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiries, Library Services Manager Lightfoot reported that the new door count system would just count the number of Library entrants. She stated that there have been no conversations she is aware of about installing metal detectors.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Trustee Rief reported that there have been no official discussions about adding furniture for the children's area.

In response to Trustee Rief's inquiries, Library Services Manager Lightfoot clarified that \$100,000 is a starting point for the new furniture needs. She reported that most of the quotes received by the Library were higher than \$100,000 so staff hopes to make the line item an ongoing budget component. Library Services Director Hartson reported having an ongoing conversation about the regular useful life interval for Library furniture with other City staff members because of aging buildings. Staff is looking at developing an ongoing replacement schedule for furniture.

Chair Kramer stated that she has been reluctant to request too much in recent budgets because the City is paying \$12 million towards the construction of Witte Hall, along with the reconstruction of the Balboa Branch. She noted that Witte Hall will be completed soon, and the differences between Witte Hall and the attached 32-year-old Central Library will be drastic. She expressed her support for staff to improve the furniture, interior paint, and other similar matters, also expressing concerns about the poor state of the restrooms.

Trustee Rief agreed about the poor condition of the Central Library's restrooms.

Chair Kramer stated that there are better options for restroom stall beauty and sturdiness other than the current metal doors.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

In response to Chair Kramer's inquiry, Library Services Director Hartson confirmed that staff intends to bring the FY 2026-27 back to the Board if there are material changes.

Motion made by Chair Lauren Kramer, seconded by Trustee Chase Rief, and carried 4-0-0-1 to approve the preliminary Library operating budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

AYES: Kramer, Castro, Murray, Rief
NOES:
ABSTENTIONS:
ABSENCES: Larson

7. Acceptance of Donation from the Library Foundation

Staff recommends the Board of Library Trustees approve the acceptance of a donation from the Library Foundation of Newport Beach.

Chair Kramer, with Board concurrence, opted to skip the staff report.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

Motion made by Trustee Chase Rief, seconded by Trustee Meghan Murray, and carried 4-0-0-1 to accept the donation.

AYES: Kramer, Castro, Murray, Rief
NOES:
ABSTENTIONS:
ABSENCES: Larson

8. Library Activities

Monthly update of library events, services, and statistics.

In a year-in-review update, Library Services Director Hartson reported that the 2025 Summer Reading Program far surpassed its goal of 600,000 minutes read. She reported that the City Arts Commission brought back the Pacific Symphony last summer for a Concert on the Green after a seven-year hiatus. She added that, in 2025, the Library was able to host a new film screening with assistance from the Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation, hoping to continue this programming in the future. She reported that the successful Storytime Specials at Corona del Mar Branch expanded to Central Library and Mariners Branch in 2025 with help from City partners, expressing hopes to also extend the program to Balboa Branch upon its completion. She lauded the successful launch of the new Tech Toys for Kids collection.

Library Services Director Hartson reported that the facilities were enhanced through completion of elevator modernization work at Central Library, a new Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning handler, and new carpeting in the Children's Room. She added that the Mariners Branch roofing project remains on schedule despite recent rain and should be completed in the coming weeks. She added that the Newport Beach Civic Center's ongoing exterior painting work will reach Central Library in early February. She reported that she and Library Services Manager Lightfoot attended a meeting earlier today about the Balboa Branch replacement project, stating that construction bids will close at the end of January, with an anticipated closure occurring at the end of February.

Library Services Director Hartson reported that the number of patrons served jumped dramatically up to 70,000 in December 2025 because of a software malfunction on the tracking system at some gates, which led to underassessment of traffic from September through November.

In response to Trustee Rief's inquiries, Library Services Director Hartson clarified that the 9,208 new library card accounts in 2025, while impressive, are slightly down from 2024. She and Adult Services Coordinator Andrew Kachaturian collectively stated that there are about 90,000 total library card accounts.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

B. Monthly Reports

9. Library Foundation Liaison Report

- A. Library Foundation Board – Report of the most recently attended meeting.
- B. Library Live Lectures Committee – Report of the most recently attended meeting.
- C. Witte Lectures Committee – Report of the most recently attended meeting.

Trustee Rief reported that Library Foundation Chief Executive Officer Jerold Kappel has a comprehensive written report from their latest meeting included in the Agenda packet.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

10. Foundation Literacy Liaison Report

Trustee update of the most recently attended Foundation Literacy Committee Meeting.

Vice Chair Castro reported that the next meeting is not until March, but they held an annual celebration in December. She reported that 12 learners have entered a writing contest to be judged in March and included in a book to be published for International Literacy Day.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

11. Friends of the Library Liaison Report

Trustee update of the most recently attended Friends of the Library Board meeting.

Trustee Murray reported that the Friends of the Library met and are focused on preparing for their February book sale.

Chair Kramer expressed her amazement at how long some of the Friends of the Library have been volunteering for the organization.

Chair Kramer opened the item to public comment, and there was none.

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – THREE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

None.

VIII. BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATTERS WHICH MEMBERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION ACTION OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – 5:26 P.M.

The next meeting will be on February 23, 2026.