

CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH

**Board of Library Trustees
Civic Center Council Chambers
100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 23, 2026 – 5:00 PM**

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Lauren Kramer called to order the Board of Library Trustees meeting for February 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Trustees Absent: None

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
Ben Zdeba, Acting Deputy Community Development Director

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Secretary Dorothy Larson 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 January 20, 2026 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 Secretary Dorothy Larson, seconded by Chair Lauren Kramer, and carried 5-0-0-0 to approve the Consent Calendar Item Nos. 1-4.

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

VI. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. Items for Review

5. General Plan Update

Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture and Historical Resources Elements.

Acting Deputy Community Development Director Ben Zdeba reported that he has twice previously presented to the Board about the ongoing comprehensive updates to the General Plan, adding that today he seeks formal support of the Draft Arts and Culture Element and Draft Historical Resources Element. He added that both are considered final drafts and have been approved by the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) and General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC).

In response to Chair Kramer's inquiry, Acting Deputy Community Development Director Zdeba reported that changes to the two elements since their last Board discussion were primarily due to City Arts Commission (CAC) input, adding that all are small linguistic tweaks and not substantive changes.

Chair Kramer opened public comment, and there was none.

Motion made by Secretary Dorothy Larson, seconded by Vice Chair Antonella Castro, and carried 5-0-0-0 to approve the item as presented.

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

6. Study Rooms/Charles Sword Meeting Room Policy (NBPL 13)

Staff requests that the Board of Library Trustees review and approve changes to Library Policy NBPL 13, *Study Rooms/Charles Sword Meeting Room*.

Adult Services Coordinator Andrew Kachaturian reported that the Library's three study rooms are in high demand, and they can be reserved in person on a first-come, first-served basis by anyone with a library card. He stated that this practice has worked well after trial-and-error with several potential reservation formats. He added that the Charles Sword Meeting Room used to be an open space whose enclosure has worked well for the Library, providing a dedicated private space for larger groups.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Adult Services Coordinator Kachaturian stated that staff is constantly looking at ways to expand the number of study rooms available. He noted that there are limited options for space, but more study rooms would be a welcome addition.

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

In response to Trustee Rief's inquiry, the Board and City staff collectively agreed that the first sentence of the fourth paragraph in the Sword Meeting Room portion of the Policy should state "a NBPL" and not "an NBPL."

Motion made by Trustee Chase Rief, seconded by Chair Lauren Kramer, and carried 5-0-0-0 to approve changes to NBPL Policy 13 with the amendment of changing "an NBPL" to "a NBPL" in the fourth paragraph of the Charles Sword Meeting Room section.

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

7. Arts and Culture Update

Staff will present the annual report on the activities of the Cultural Arts Division.

Library Services Manager Rebecca Lightfoot reported that there are a variety of programs and events involving the Library held in conjunction with the City Arts Commission and Cultural Arts Department. She reported that the Pacific Symphony returned to Newport Beach in 2025 with terrific attendance. She added that other notable 2025 events included a Marina Park concert, the 58th Newport Beach Art Exhibition, the presentation of Cultural Arts Grants, a well-received student art exhibition, rotating art displays in the Central Library's Lobby Gallery, the annual Halloween Spooktacular, and custom holiday ornaments.

In response to Secretary Larson's inquiry, Library Services Manager Lightfoot clarified that no new sculptures were added to the Sculpture Exhibition in 2025, as the rotation has changed to a three-year basis. She noted that there usually is an event celebrating new Sculpture Garden installations.

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

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

8. Children's Summer Reading Program Update

Staff will provide an update of the Summer Reading Program for summer 2026.

Branch and Youth Services Coordinator Annika Helmuth reported that the annual Children's Summer Reading Program will continue using the expanded eight-week window that proved successful in 2025. She reported that the 2026 theme will be "Summer Reading: Make it One for the Books!" with a goal of one million minutes read. She added that the Program will continue to be a self-paced reading challenge with weekly interactive family programming.

Branch and Youth Services Coordinator Helmuth added that early registration will be a new option to help reduce last year's opening day congestion and allow for registration during springtime school visits intended to promote the program. She reported that weekly prize drawings and book review incentives are being discontinued due to declining interest, while keeping the focus on reading. She added that the Beanstack Badges are being redesigned with images focused on the joys of summer in Newport Beach. She added that the teen and adult reading challenges will also continue to support family engagement. She reported on the eight weekly themes for this year's program.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Branch and Youth Services Coordinator Helmuth clarified that reading hours can be logged either online through the Beanstack application or on paper.

Chair Kramer commended the planned changes and the work to build on last year's success. She lauded how residential participation felt welcomed last year and agreed with the joys of Newport Beach summer theme for the badges.

Secretary Larson commended the plans for this year.

In response to Vice Chair Castro's inquiry, Branch and Youth Services Coordinator Helmuth confirmed that Summer Reading Program information is available at all Library service desks in addition to posted Children's Room signage.

In response to Chair Kramer's inquiry, Branch and Youth Services Coordinator Helmuth reported that all Children's Rooms will have a minutes read tracker. She noted that last year's tracker in the Central Library had a Super Mario Bros. theme where Mario leveled up based on minutes read.

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

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

9. Library Activities

Monthly update of library events, services, and statistics.

Library Services Director Melissa Hartson reported that the Public Works Department will submit a bid for construction work on the Balboa Branch Library at tomorrow's City Council meeting for its approval, adding that the bids came in under budget.

In response to Chair Kramer's inquiry, Library Services Director Hartson reported that the City received five prequalified bids on the project, and the lowest bidder, Albert M. Giacomazzi (AMG) & Associates, Inc., is the one being presented to the Council. She stated that AMG is constructing Witte Hall and has satisfactorily completed similar projects for other municipalities. She added that the AMG bid was 18% below the City's estimate of \$16 million.

Library Services Director Hartson reported that staff expects the Council to approve AMG's bid, and staff has been winding down the Balboa Branch's operations, accordingly, anticipating the last day of service to be February 28. She added that Balboa Branch's weekly story time has been moved to Marina Park, seeing great turnout. She added that other Balboa Branch programming and services can be conducted in Marina Park during construction, which is expected to last through September 2027. She added that the Friends of the Library will host a big "everything must go" book sale on March 7.

Chair Kramer stated that it seems like AMG has done a good job with Witte Hall.

Trustee Rief reported that Corona del Mar Branch's annual Stuffed Animal Sleepover event went great, commending staff on the success.

Library Services Director Hartson stated that staff put a lot of work into making it a great event for both the stuffed animals and their caregivers.

In response to Chair Kramer's inquiry, Library Services Director Hartson confirmed that pictures from the event were posted on the Library's Instagram stories.

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

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

B. Monthly Reports

10. Library Foundation Liaison Report

- A. Library Foundation Board – Report of the most recently attended meeting.
- B. Library Live 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 D. Kappel has a comprehensive written report from their latest meeting included in the Agenda packet.

Secretary Larson reported that the Library Live Lecture series has begun and will continue through May. She added that the anticipated venues have had to change because Witte Hall remains under construction, with its Grand Opening event tentatively set for summer 2026.

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

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

11. Foundation Literacy Liaison Report

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

Vice Chair Castro reported that the next meeting will be in March, adding that they have formed a partnership with Orange Coast College (OCC).

Library Services Manager Lightfoot confirmed that the Library and OCC will be sharing ideas and resources for adult literacy programs. She clarified that they are not sharing tutors or learners but rather reciprocally referring potential learners where one program would be a better fit than the other.

Vice Chair Castro reported that OCC's English as a Second Language learners recently toured the Library to learn about the resources it offers.

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

Chair Kramer received and filed the report.

12. 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 book sales went well last month, and the group found two new volunteers.

Library Services Director Hartson clarified that, based on the numbers presented, it was likely that the book sale collected \$4,000, and the month of January saw \$16,000 raised overall.

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 – 5:28 P.M.**

The next meeting will be on March 16, 2026.

DRAFT