

SOMERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING, November 12, 2025

Minutes

ATTENDING

TRUSTEES: Kate Van Sleet, Sarah Pascarella, Janaki Perera, Mark Sternman, Mike Smith, Ami Feldman, Carla Lillvik

ABSENT: April Kuehnhoff, Anandavalli Thiagarajan

DIRECTOR: Cathy Piantigini

CALL TO ORDER

President Van Sleet called the meeting of the Library Board of Trustees to order at 6:06 pm.

MINUTES

Sarah Pascarella motioned to approve the minutes from October. Janaki Perera seconded and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Staffing update – New teen librarian – Nikki Bavar (formerly a Generalist) – starting this Monday, was an internal bid. Youth Services position still open. New opening for a Generalist, since Nikki's role change. East Branch has two vacancies – Head and Circulation full-time position.
2. Staff development day happened last week. Focus was on teen panel – three panelists from Cambridge, Waltham, and Westwood (teen librarians) came on site to work with staff. Positive employee feedback from staff. Foundation picked up breakfast and lunch. Director provided updates on rules of conduct; Social Worker presented on trauma-informed librarianship.
3. Teen behavior has been good overall. A few incidents, but not relentless/every day. Teens using the teen room, all kinds of kids. Kids who had been bullied are now coming in. Much credit to Karen, who has been making sure there's been adequate staffing. Every afternoon there's at least two people in the room. Presence of adults has been helpful. Staff using teen-specific training from Ryan Dowd.
4. West Branch safety – uptick of activity since Labor Day behind the building. HHS, DPW, Mayor's office involved in discussions for improvement following recent incidents (fight, confrontations, overdose, belongings, etc.). Fencing and signage will be going in, via DPW, on the driveway side and on the new addition side, making it difficult to access in after hours. No timeline for when the fencing work will be complete.
 - a. Two weeks ago, there was an overdose at West. Staff called 911 and administered Narcan; person was saved and did not stay for emergency responders. Prevention Services offered another round of Narcan training. Social worker going to West for staff support. Staff also have access to free counseling.
 - i. Mark recommends a letter of appreciation to the employee who administered Narcan.

- b. A week ago, West Branch patron involved in altercations called 311 misrepresented himself as an employee to report another patron's behavior. Was reported as an employee incident to HHS and mayor's office and escalated. Social worker and staff researched and realized it was a false call. Director will be following up with 311 staff.
- c. West Branch may add exterior locks for bathroom doors to close up spaces at end of day. Only staff would have access to such locks. Director checking legality for this type of lock in public buildings.
- d. DPW verified there are external cameras on the building. Will also be addressing lighting issues in collaboration with Somerville Police.
- e. May be hiring a new security guard for West/the Warming Center. Budget for new guard TBD; Director collaborating with Mayor's office for next steps.

5. East Branch safety – no issues.

6. Programming – recent jewelry accessory swap event was very successful, 40+ attendees. Tim Peligra, new librarian, will be running an “Antiques Roadshow” style event, running extra promotion for it. Chair yoga back up and running at East, going well. Girls Who Code event.

7. Strategic planning still moving forward. Focus groups underway, more scheduled for this month, including Teen Empowerment and Positive Forces focus groups.

8. Rules of Conduct – final draft still in progress. Aiming for December for final approval. Moving forward with PITS (Patron Incident Tracking System); Director recommends doing a deep dive on the system early in the new year.

9. Central will be getting new carpeting from DPW. Director's and Social Worker's offices will be done next week; first floor after that. Incremental scheduling.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

1. Four new bills being taken up in MA Senate tomorrow, two focusing on libraries – one prohibiting schools and libraries from arbitrarily banning books; the other regarding digitization in public libraries. The latter would set up a commission for solutions for libraries banding together for covering digital licenses expenses, digital services, etc.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. December will be a shorter meeting, focusing only on policy agenda.
2. Next newsletter should go out in early January.
3. Gracie's fundraiser – Fluffering Heights flavor – to publicize.
4. Friends Book Sale – December 5 – 7 and May 1 – 3. Trustees are welcome to attend the Friends meetings (always the first Wednesday of the month).
5. New slate of elected officials in Somerville – outreach and introductions, getting regular meetings and direct communication with Mayor-elect and new representatives.

COMMITTEES

1. Communications Committee - Trustees will circulate content for next newsletter over email.
 - a. Legislative update
 - b. Strategic planning update
 - c. Commendation for staff who administered Narcan at West
 - d. Staff Development Day highlights

- e. Friends book sale recap and upcoming next sale

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and no objection, the meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.

NEXT MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Trustees will be held on December 10, 2025, at 6:00 pm. The open meeting will take place in the Director's Office at the Central Branch Library.

Sarah Pascarella, Trustee