

HAMMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF THE HYBRID REGULAR MEETING ON
FEBRUARY 20, 2025, AT 1:00 PM
HARRIET M. SCHLESINGER BOARD ROOM

PRESIDING: Maxine Simmons – Vice-President

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Albertine Dent, Secretary - In person
- Caryn Janiga, Treasurer - In person
- Carlotta Blake-King, - In person
- Luis Gonzalez, In person
- Karimar Weekes, In person

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Tom L. Novak

OTHER PERSONS PRESENT:

- Cornell White, Executive Director -- In person
- Whitney Chapman, Admin Manager – In person
- Sherrie Olichwier, Network Technician

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-President Simmons called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Trustee Dent certified:

THAT notice of the meeting was given via email on February 17, 2025, and the agenda was posted in the Circulation Department and outside the Harriet M. Schlesinger Board Room from February 17 - 20, 2025.

III. PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

THAT the floor open for public expression.

Seconded by: Trustee Gonzalez

Action: Motion unanimously carried.

- Community Comments:

No public comments were made at this time.

Trustee Blake-King made the motion:

THAT public expression be closed.

Seconded by: Trustee Janiga

Action: Unanimously carried.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. White recommended the approval of the minutes from the January 16, 2025, Executive Session and Regular Board Meeting.

Trustee Blake-King made the motion:

THAT the Board of Trustees approve minutes from the January 16, 2025 Executive Session and Regular Board Meeting.

Seconded by: Trustee Blake-King

Action: Motion Carried with one abstention (Trustee Weekes).

2. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Voucher Approval:

Mr. White recommended that the Board of Trustees approve claims #7 - #63.

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

THAT the Board of Trustees approve claims #7 - #63.

Seconded by: Trustee Gonzalez

Action: Motion Carried with one abstention (Trustee Weekes).

Financial Reports:

Mr. White presented the following financial reports for review:

1. **Appropriation Report**
2. **Disbursement Report by Fund**
3. **Financial Report**
4. **Bank Balances**
5. **Rainy-Day Fund**

Other Financial Matters:**Advance on Taxes:**

Mr. White recommended seeking an advance on taxes to be collected.

Trustee Blake-King made the motion:

THAT the Board of Trustees approves seeking an advance on taxes to be collected.

Seconded by: Trustee Dent

Action: Unanimously carried.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. LIBRARY FACILITY AND MAINTENANCE UPDATES

Mr. White announced the installation of a new PA system at a cost of \$35,000, which will be paid using the insurance proceeds. He also reported the replacement of a water pump at a cost of \$35,000.

2. LIBRARY PROGRAMMING & COMMUNITY EVENTS**African American History Month Events**

Mr. White provided an update on the Vendor Fair held on Tuesday, Feb. 18th highlighting that despite the inclement weather, the event had strong attendance from both vendors and the public. He also announced the upcoming "Literacy 2 Legacy" genealogy program and invited the Board to attend.

Mr. White also shared that a Women's Health Fair will be held in celebration of Women's History Month. The library is currently planning Cinco De Mayo and Veteran's Day programming. Trustee Blake-King recommended that Justice Sonia Sotomayor be acknowledged during a program as the first Latina to serve the U.S. Supreme Court.

Further details on both events will be provided at a future meeting.

Technology & Digital Access Improvements

Mr. White reported on the installation of 10 new public computers and the addition of 6 wireless access points, including one in the police room. He also shared that 10 new laptops have been acquired, with 5 designated for use in LATs and 5 allocated for makerspace.

Trustee Gonzalez inquired on the rollout for the library app. Mr. White shared that additional details will be provided in the upcoming presentation.

3. REVIEW OF SENATE BILL 283

Mr. White reported that Senate Bill 283 proposes significant changes to the governance and funding of public libraries in Indiana. If passed, the bill would:

- **Remove libraries' authority to levy property taxes**, transferring this power to county governments.
- **Require libraries to submit annual budgets** to county fiscal bodies, which would determine funding through special tax levies or appropriations.
- **Transfer fiduciary responsibilities**, including budgeting, debt management, and workforce oversight, from library boards to county governments.

The bill is slated for implementation on July 1, 2025. The main concern is that this shift could lead to reduced funding for libraries, as county budgets may not prioritize library services equally across all regions.

Mr. White shared that the Indiana Library Federation (ILF) is currently lobbying against this bill. The Board emphasized the importance of staying informed on the bill's progress and urged members to contact senators to vote against the bill.

4. DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a renowned program that mails free, age-appropriate books each year on children's birthdays, aiming to foster a love of reading and learning. In Indiana, the program expanded statewide in 2023, with the state covering 50% of the funding to ensure all 92 counties participate.

However, in February 2025, Governor Mike Braun's proposed budget eliminated the state's 50% funding match for the program, potentially impacting its reach and sustainability. This development has prompted local organizations and libraries to seek alternative funding sources to maintain the program's benefits. Given this information there's uncertainty involving future of the program. Additional details will be provided at a later date.

5. OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY CIRCULATION NUMBERS

The Board requested Jason Scott, Head of Tech Services, provide the stats overview at their March meeting.

The Board would also like for the library to present at an upcoming School Board and Council meeting.

VI. PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

THAT the floor open for public expression.

Seconded by: Trustee Simmons

Action: Unanimously carried.

- **Additional Community Input:**

Trustee Weekes introduced herself to the Board. She's a proud parent and employee of the School City of Hammond. She considers herself a passionate reader, she and her family enjoy participating in the Summer Reading Program. She expressed her excitement about joining the Board. Trustee Blake-King recommended featuring on the newest board member in the Bookends.

Trustee Gonzalez made the motion:

THAT public expression be closed.

Seconded by: Trustee Blake-King

Action: Unanimously carried.

VII. CALENDAR

- **Executive Session and Board Meeting:**

The next Executive Session is scheduled for Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 12:00 p.m.
The Regular Board Meeting will follow in the Harriet M. Schlesinger Board Room.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

THAT the meeting adjourn.

Seconded by: Trustee Gonzalez

Action: Unanimously carried.

The meeting adjourned at **1:30 p.m.**

President: Thomas L. Neal

Secretary: Abigail Deat