HAMMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2025
HARRIET M. SCHLESINGER BOARD ROOM AND VIRTUAL

PRESIDING: Tom L. Novak – President

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Tom L. Novak — In person
Maxine Simmons — In person
Caryn Janiga — In person
Albertine Dent — In person
Karimar Weekes — In person
Luis Gonzales – In person
Carlotta Blake-King - In person
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
NONE

OTHER PERSONS PRESENT:
Cornell White, Executive Director — In person
Additional HPL staff and community guests – In person and virtual

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I.CALL TO ORDER

President Novak called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Quorum was confirmed. All trustees were present in person.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board and those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

The Secretary, Albertine Dent, certified:

THAT notice of the meeting was given on September 15th, 2025, and the agenda was posted the Library Entrances and outside the Harriet M. Schlesinger Board Room from September 15th-17th, 2025.

IV. PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Trustee Novak made the Motion:
THAT the floor is open for public expression.
Seconded by Trustee Jangia
Action: Unanimously carried.

Community Comments

1. Food Drive Announcement
Theresa Black, Public Services Manager and Foundation Board Member, announced the **October 15 – November 15, 2025, Food Drive** in partnership with **Northwest Community Services**.

- Non-perishable, unopened, and unexpired items accepted (baby food, pasta, rice, canned goods).
- **Monetary donations** will also be accepted.
- Collection bins are to be located at the Library, City Hall, and the Afiliado/STEAM Center.
- Flyers to be distributed and shared via the library website and social media.

The Board expressed strong support and encouraged community participation.

2. Renaissance Fair and Halloween Event
Staff provided updates on upcoming community programs:

- **Renaissance Fair:** Saturday, October 18, 2025 — featuring vendors and family activities.
- **"Wicked Halloween" Celebration:** Thursday, October 30, 2025, 5–7 p.m. — themed décor, character volunteers, giveaways, and indoor trick-or-treating.

The Board praised staff creativity and requested flyers be displayed at City Hall and the Afiliado/STEAM Center.

3. Marketing Discussion
Director White discussed efforts to strengthen internal communication and ensure consistent use of e-blasts and web postings for library events.

Trustee Blake-King made the motion:
THAT public expression is closed.
Seconded by Trustee Dent:
Action: Unanimously carried.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. White recommended THAT the Board of Trustees approve August 21st, 2025, Executive Session and Regular Board Meeting minutes as presented.

Trustee Janiga made the motion:
THAT the Board of Trustees approves the August 21st, 2025 minutes.
Seconded by: Trustee Gonzalez
Action: Unanimously carried.

VI. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Approval of Claims/Vouchers

Mr. White recommended that the Board of Trustees approve claims #509 through #638.

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

THAT the Board of Trustees approve claims #509–#638.

Seconded by: Trustee Dent

Action: Unanimously carried.

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**

The Board reviewed appropriation and fund reports.

Advance on Taxes

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

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

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

Seconded by: Trustee Dent

Action: Unanimously carried.

Note: The Board clarified that purchases equal to or greater than $70,000 must go to bid, while the $75,000 small purchase limit remains compliant with state code.

VII. BOARD POLICIES

A. Second Reading and Adoption

The Board reviewed and approved the following updated policies:

- **BP 3100 – Budget**
- **BP 3155 – Public Purchasing Policy**
- **BP 4131 – Recognition of Service**
- **BP 4150 – Promotion** (with removal of **BP 4140 – Performance Rating**)
- **BP 8001 – Soliciting Funds from the Public**
- **BP 8002 – Author Advisory Committees**
- **BP 8005 – Social Media Policy**

Trustee Janiga made the motion:

TO adopt the above policies as presented.

Seconded by: Trustee Gonzalez

Action: Unanimously carried.

B. First Reading

The following policies were presented for first reading and discussion:

- **BP 3161 – Sale and Disposal of Books and Equipment**
- **BP 3170 – Official Bond – Officers and Employees**
- **BP 4133 – Transfers from Full-time to Part-time Positions**
- **BP 5341 – Recovery of Overdue Library Materials**
- **Proposed Removal: BP 6010 – Cable Television and AV in Libraries**
- **Proposed Removal: BP 6020 – Library Use of Public Access Channel**

Director White noted that outdated terminology is being modernized, and purpose statements are added to all policies.

VIII. PROPERTY DISPOSITION – 5247 SOHL AVENUE

Director White reported on the disposition of the **library-owned parking lot and adjoining parcel at 5247 Sohl Avenue.**

- Legal counsel confirmed that property valued over **$15,000** requires **public bidding (RFP).**
- Title search and legal notice will be completed before the RFP is issued.
- RFP will include using language to ensure alignment with community goals.

Action: Director White to coordinate with the attorney and email the draft RFP to the Board before the October meeting.

IX. 2026 BUDGET HEARING

Director White presented highlights from the proposed **2026 Budget**:

- **Total Budget:** $5,199,395
- **Operating Budget:** $5,099,395 (4% increase)
- **Levy:** $5,946,416
- **Rainy Day Fund:** $100,000

Due to **Senate Bill 1 (SB1)** adjustments, overall revenue is expected to remain level with FY2025.
Public Hearing Opened: 1:13 p.m.
Public Comment: None
Public Hearing Closed: 1:20 p.m.
The 2026 Budget will be presented for **final adoption on October 16, 2025.**

X. EXTERIOR SIGNAGE PROJECT

Director White reported ongoing evaluation of **the digital monument sign** project **at Sohl Avenue and State Street.**

- Multiple vendors consulted.
- Discussion included visibility, height, wiring costs, and potential tree interference.
- Alternatives: **corner monument sign** vs. **building-mounted digital display.**

Actions:

1. Obtain two quotes for corner and building-mounted options.
2. Confirm city zoning and setback requirements.
3. Assess tree trimming or relocation costs.
4. Present comparison and recommendation at next meeting.

XI.PUBLIC EXPRESSION (Second Opportunity)

President Novak made the motion:
THAT the floor is open for public expression.
Seconded by: Trustee Janiga

No public comments were made at this time.

The following announcements were shared by Board Members:

- **Estate Planning Workshop:** Sept. 26, 11:00 a.m., Steen Center
- **Hope Angels Cancer Awareness Program:** Sept. 25, 4:00 p.m., Central High School
- **Excel "Jazz & Generosity" Fundraiser:** Nov. 6, 6:00–9:00 p.m., VPAC Munster
- **IUN Jazz Jam:** Sept. 20, 3:00–5:00 p.m., Arts & Sciences Building, Gary
- **Oak Hill Cemetery Historical Tour:** Oct. 5, 1:00–4:00 p.m., $5 entry
- **Midwest Underground Railroad Network:** Collecting Hammond-area oral histories for the Chicago–Detroit Freedom Trail.
- **School City of Hammond "Ten Times Better" Breakfast:** Sept. 23, 9:00–10:30 a.m., Area Career Center, 527 Sohl Ave.

President Novak made the motion:
THAT public expression is closed.
Seconded by: Trustee Janiga
Action: Unanimously carried.

XII.CALENDAR

- **Executive Session:** Thursday, October 16, 2025 – 12:00 p.m.
- **Regular Board Meeting and 2026 Budget Adoption:** Thursday, October 16, 2025 – Immediately following the Executive Session

XIII.ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Janiga made the motion:
THAT the meeting adjourn.
Seconded by: Trustee Dent
Action: Unanimously carried.
The meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.

President: Maxine Simmons

Secretary: Alberteen Dent