



**Free Library of Philadelphia | Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Friday, September 20, 2024 | 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**  
**Virtual**

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**Attendance:** F. Olanipekun-Lewis (Chair); J. Chizick-Agüero; A. Appulingam; J. Benoliel; J. Cooper; P. Dembe; G. Generals; D. Gould; R. Heim; J. Hinckley; D. Moore; M. Rashed; J. St. Geme; M. Stitt; E. Tomlin; L. Walke

**Staff:** K. Richards; Q. Alegria Gambrell; D. Cottman; T. Dupass; D. Henderson; S. Maccari; M. Moore Pryor; C. Patton; G. Sims; P. Suero;

**Guest:** R. McPherson

**I. Call to Order and Chair’s Remarks – F. Olanipekun-Lewis**

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. and welcomed the Board of Trustees and meeting attendees.

**II. President and Director Remarks – K. Richards**

**Info Item: President and Director Report**

K. Richards shared that David Adler joined the Free Library on July 1<sup>st</sup> as the new Safety and Security Director. D. Adler is working diligently to ensure the safety of the Free Library staff, patrons and spaces.

The Power Up Civics & Citizenship Month Programs kicked off on September 7<sup>th</sup> at Lillian Marrero Library. On Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, the Free Library will host the culminating 2024 Philly Civics Fair event, which will provide informative civics-related resources for attendees. Trustee E. Tomlin worked closely with our staff to bring this program to fruition. E. Tomlin remarked that Library staff is doing a great job with the Civics programs.

L. Walke asked if the Safety and Security Director and the Communications and Marketing Director positions are new or vacancies. K. Richards responded that Safety and Security Director is a new position that aligns with Mayor Parker’s safer, cleaner and greener initiatives. The Communications and Marketing Director position was briefly filled and is now in the hiring process.

J. Hinckley requested an update on Saturday attendance and stable 5-day service. K. Richards shared that stable 5 day service is going well and not as many libraries are closing daily. Stable 6-day service is a work in progress. Some libraries are busier than others, but all provide an opportunity for access to those who are unable to visit during the week. F. Olanipekun-Lewis asked if the Library tracks attendance. K. Richards replied that the Library tracks entrance into its buildings daily.

R. Heim asked for further details about the delay with Saturday Service. K. Richards shared that the leadership team worked with the bargaining units to come up with a strategy. D. Cottman added that eleven libraries will open on September 28<sup>th</sup>. F. Olanipekun-Lewis requested that K. Richards keep the Trustees apprised regarding Saturday openings via a report. K. Richards will oblige.

**III. Strategic Plan – Quincy Alegria Gambrell**

Q. Alegria Gambrell shared a PowerPoint slide with the objectives of the strategic plan.

R. McPherson introduced herself to the attendees as the consultant for the strategic plan. There is a consortium of groups working with her on this project. Extensive engagement, including town halls, are forthcoming.

R. McPherson asked attendees to email Q. Alegria Gambrell with questions about the strategic plan. E. Tomlin and F. Olanipekun-Lewis noted that they look forward to this process.

**IV. Action Item: Consent Agenda – F. Olanipekun-Lewis**

Info Item: Minutes of the June 20, 2024 Meeting

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called for a motion to accept the consent agenda. The motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

**V. Budget Briefing – S. Maccari**

**Info Item: FY24 Operating Budget**

S. Maccari stated that the increase in class 200/300/400 reflected funds for equipment aligned with the City's clean and green initiatives. The increase in class 100 reflected funds for salary increases.

F. Olanipekun-Lewis inquired about the budget process for FY26. S. Maccari shared that he is working on the target budget for the current fiscal year and will receive information regarding the operating budget by December.

The FY26 capital budget process is also forthcoming. R. Heim inquired about the capital budget currently. S. Maccari replied that it is currently \$11.5 million (\$3 million for the Library system and \$8.5 million for McPherson Square). R. Heim asked how this budget compares to previous years. S. Maccari noted that prior budgets were approximately \$1.5 million. F. Olanipekun-Lewis added that \$3 million is not nearly enough and hopes for an increase in the upcoming capital budget. R. Heim replied that the Library needs at least \$10 million annually for capital.

**VI. Hiring Status – D. Henderson**

**Info Item: Staffing Report**

D. Henderson shared that 233 staff (121 new permanent and 112 temporary/seasonal) were hired by the end of fiscal year 2024. Also, 135 internal promotions occurred.

The HR team continues to move forward with hiring to support six-day service. F. Olanipekun-Lewis inquired about the promotions in regards to positions. D. Henderson replied that most consisted of Librarian 1 to Librarian 2, Library Supervisor 1, Library Assistant 2 and Library Assistant 3. There were also some promotions in Payroll and Performance Management and Technology.

P. Dembe asked if HR has staff support for training. D. Henderson shared that the Training and Development team orients new hires and staff receive on the job training at their work locations. P. Dembe asked if training for staff promoting into new positions is handled by HR. D. Henderson replied that this is a collaborative effort with Operations.

L. Walke asked if the information regarding seasonal workers includes summer staff. D. Henderson noted that temporary seasonals begin working at the start of the school year and end in June. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter will always have a high attrition rate due to this factor.

L. Walke asked if the 19% attrition rate is normal. D. Henderson will follow up.

J. Hinckley noted that there are 35 Library Assistant 1 vacancies and asked if these were new positions to be filled or occurred due to normal attrition. D. Henderson remarked that there are 1,017 staff in the FY25 budget and her team is working on 170 vacancies. The HR team is also ramping up seasonal hiring to support six-day service.

D. Henderson stated that the Library is stable in terms of meeting hiring of seasonal workers. The HR team is also working on hiring part-time Municipal Guards and full-time Library Assistants.

**VII. Facilities Report – T. Dupass**  
**Info Item: Info Item: Status Report**

T. Dupass is working on acquiring contracted cleaning services for Neighborhood Libraries. This work will occur several times per year and give additional attention to the carpets, walls, etc. P. Dembe congratulated T. Dupass on prioritizing cleaning to improve buildings for staff and patrons. E. Tomlin noted that she observed the need for new carpet in the children’s area of Coleman Regional Library during the Power Up Civics program and was glad to see a focus on improving the workplace for staff.

Andorra Library experienced an emergency cleaning due to a plumbing issue. The root cause of the issue was repaired.

T. Dupass shared that there are many capital projects on the horizon, especially in Neighborhood Libraries. HVAC updates are slated for FY25, including the replacement project currently in progress at West Oak Lane. In FY26, Oak Lane will receive HVAC upgrades.

T. Dupass has asked the City for facilities and conditioning studies for all Free Library buildings. F. Olanipekun-Lewis asked who is funding this project, as it will inform upcoming capital projects. T. Dupass replied that he will ask the City to fund this project. D. Moore offered support for this project, if needed.

For Rebuild projects, T. Dupass expects certificates of occupancy to be issued shortly, with the scheduling of ribbon cuttings to occur in December or January.

The 1901 Steering Committee has entered a three phase program to think about the design of the additional space in the rear of Parkway Central. The visioning process will begin shortly. T. Dupass remarked that space lost due to construction must be accounted for in this process. At the conclusion of the third phase, the Committee will share a cost analysis with the Board.

D. Moore asked if T. Dupass has pursued creating a master plan to align with the strategic plan. T. Dupass will follow up with K. Richards and D. Moore regarding this project.

#### **VIII. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – G. Sims**

##### **Info Item: Quarterly Report**

G. Sims recently discussed partnerships and the possibility of bringing programming to Neighborhood Libraries with the Director of Culture and Engagement at the School District of Philadelphia.

G. Sims presented at the National Conference of African American Librarians on the topic of DEI leadership and managing internal challenges.

D. Generals asked if the Library is receiving pushback on DEI, similar to other places across the country. G. Sims replied that if people are being attacked at the collegiate level, then the same is occurring in libraries. G. Sims is working to bring people together and provide support/guidance. Philadelphia has its challenges but there is structure and leadership support. K. Richards added that peers have been doxed and fired over programs and materials, whereas Philadelphia is seen as a safe haven.

G. Sims noted the DISC Committee meetings highlight things happening around the country and raise awareness.

#### **IX. Policies for Consideration – G. Sims**

##### **Info Item: Rationale for Consideration of Policies**

##### **Action Item: PS12 – Library Card Registration Policy**

F. Olanipekun-Lewis asked if there were any comments about PS12 Library Card Registration Policy and there were none. F. Olanipekun-Lewis called for a motion to approve these policies. P. Dembe made a motion, J. Cooper seconded and all were unanimously in favor.

#### **X. Public Comment - J. Chizick-Agüero**

J. Chizick-Agüero stated each speaker will have three minutes to speak on agenda topics.

J. Chizick-Agüero asked C. Patton to call the first speaker. C. Patton asked Linda Colwell Smith to raise their hand.

Linda Colwell-Smith stated:

*Okay, good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to comment to the board of trustees. Just 3 items. I'd like to bring up door to your attention that the friends of the Free Library are following at this time.*

*First, the Saturday hours. We understand that they were delayed, and this it was unforeseen. But many of our groups had events planned for the 1st Saturday that we were open, and they were very upset about it. But we're looking forward to full hours being resumed. On Saturdays. We welcome the 11 branches that will be opening next week, and the other branches that will soon follow that our neighbors and our patrons really appreciate the Saturday hours, and I would agree that folks really want to come into their library when it's convenient for them. And Saturday seem to be a very great day for that. And we're looking forward to 7 day service whenever that happens. Soon. Hopefully. Okay, we also look forward to fully participating in the strategic planning process. We are. We do represent the citizens of Philadelphia who use our libraries, and I know you're going to hear a lot of if you go to a public focus group or you ask for comments, you're going to get a lot of great stuff. So we look forward to participating in that.*

*And we also look forward to participating in the 1901 Vine planning project. It affects the friends of the Free Library Book Corner as well, and we have a very strong interest in it, and I think we're on the right track to get started and get something substantial accomplished.*

*Summer of wonder! Another great event. We were pleased to donate our usual funding for the summer of wonder children and adults, apartment for programming and for general expenses. And we're very, very pleased with Ty Dupass and his emphasis on the age facts. I want to thank him personally for stepping in for the Torresdale branch, because our system finally gave up the ghost in the middle of July, and we had to cancel all of our summer programs. He stepped in, and he said he was able to work on it. And right now we are open and he's been working on other projects. His emphasis on prevention and assessing the situation, for every branch is outstanding. We're and we look forward to helping him with that. And towards that goal we are. We have already launched a campaign in City Council to get more money for capital funding. We need more money. We don't need 10 million. We need 20 million. So we're going to get started on that.*

*And of course we love our library. We're here to support you folks and let's get it done. Philadelphia needs a good strong library system. We've got it. Let's keep it going. Thank you again.*

**XI. New Business – F. Olanipekun-Lewis**

F. Olanipekun-Lewis asked M. Moore Pryor, Executive Director of the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation to speak.

M. Moore Pryor remarked that she looks forward to working with the ROZ Group and understands that other libraries and foundations are looking at this plan as a guide. A press release about the strategic plan is forthcoming.

M. Moore Pryor shared that Summer of Wonder was a successful program, supported by the City and the Foundation.

Malcolm Gladwell will be coming to the Free Library for an Author Event next month.

The Public Programs team will continue to work with the Engagement team moving forward to support events similar to the WHY event with Dr. Ala Stanford.

M. Moore Pryor's team recently collaborated with the Community College of Philadelphia's new faculty. D. Generals added that this was a good way to engage students and faculty. M. Moore Pryor looks forward to engaging the Community College of Philadelphia with future programs.

**XII. Adjournment**

The Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 9:23 a.m.