

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

October 20, 2025

Location

Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library

Present

Robert Ray IV, Libby Bawcombe, Dianne Fox, Oscar Fitzgerald, Canek Aguirre, Ahn Phan,
Staff present: Director Rose Dawson, Division Chief Liz Achuff

Excused: Albert Moseley II

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm

Public Comment and Attendees

Sarah Hill – Friends of Barrett report

Jessica Horowitz – Friends of Burke report

Lindsey McClenathan – Alexandria Library Foundation

Allison Carmola – Beatley Library staff

Ank Webbers – patron. Question on parkway trail – signs are broken. Director Dawson advised that Parks and Recreation manage the signs. They have been asked to remove them.

Elaine Wick – Barrett Friends

Cindy Zwaduk – patron

Dibbie Dittmann – patron

David Williams – patron

Emily Roberts – Duncan Friends

Craig Crutchfield – patron

Nancy Wilson – patron

Doug Wade - patron

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fitzgerald moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Bawcombe, approved unanimously.

Chair's Report - Ray

Spoke with a State Representative. They would like suggestions for legislation for upcoming session. Chair Ray can pass along ideas or you can contact them directly. Councilmember Aguirre asked about Library issues vs regular issues and advised separating the two. Anything coming on behalf of the Board should follow processes – discussion with Board, passed to

Director Dawson who will go through the legislative liaison with the City. Mr. Fitzgerald clarified that members of the public can contact their representatives directly.

Director's Report - Dawson

For the month of September the Alexandria Library distributed 554 Covid test kits.

Monthly Activity Report – due to the Polaris migration the majority of library statistics were unavailable for September.

- Patron count was up 4.2%
- Wireless usage was flat
- 327 passports were processed, valued at \$11,445
- Desktop computers were in use only 30% of the time

Thanks to the Friends Groups who received a proclamation from the City Council on Saturday. As stated on Saturday, Alexandria's Libraries could not offer our wonderful programs and services without the support of our Library Friends.

Programs

As Hispanic Heritage Month comes to an end, anecdotally, we have had a terrific response from the community, especially the Fiesta that took place at the Beatley Library on Saturday, October 6. The attendance at that event was approximately 270 and the Library received lots of accolades.

The Le' Tour d' Alexandria, bike ride also took place earlier on that day. We had 45 registrations and 29 riders showed up. The ride was supported by three Sheriff's Deputies. Using the theme of "*The natural beauty of Alexandria, riders received presentations from the following organizations along the ride:*

- City Office of Climate Action (Burke)
- Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia (Duncan)
- RPCA Division of Natural Resources (Windmill Hill Park)
- Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bicentennial Tree near Beatley)

Ms. Bawcombe asked if the federal funding has ended for hotspots. Director Dawson advised that the discount has ended. We have additional funding from the City, but it will not purchase as many hotspots as we had hoped.

Ms. Bawcombe shared that she attended the fiesta and it was lovely. It was a really nice program.

Treasurer's Report – Fox

As of August 31, 2025:

1. We are 16.76 % through the fiscal year.

2. The Library has spent 16.90% of the operating budget
3. To date we have received the first installed payment budgeted for State Aid funds and have expensed 46.49% of the original budgeted amount. This is typical as most State Aid expenses occur at the beginning of the fiscal year.
4. The Library has collected \$43,397 or 11.31% of its requirement of \$383,772 in Fees Revenue.

Councilmember Aguirre asked if the Library is concerned about meeting the target. Director Dawson advised that there was a delay in the new passport position but we are confident. Ms. Achuff clarified that the fee income is not only passport income and that reported figures are only for 2 months.

Investment Committee Report - Phan

1. As of August 31, 2025, the year-to-date portfolio performance was 3.11% compared to the benchmark of 2.47%. The 12-month performance was 10.4% as compared to the benchmark of 9.84%.
2. As of August 31, 2025, the year-to-date market value of the Library's investment account was \$4,318,831.00

Old Business

none

New Business

1. FY27 Budget – Dawson

Department submissions are due to Deputy City Managers on October 31 with the final submissions due on November 7, 2025. Director Dawson distributed an addition Handout - Recommended Library Budget Submission and advised that the Division Chief is working on base budget updates.

Highlights from the City's budget plan for FY26:

1. Monitor continued economic uncertainty and respond to the dynamic shifts impacting our community
2. Maintain investments in employee recruitment and retention, youth and education, public safety programs, and eliminating community disparities
3. Increase affordable housing
4. Continue to navigate the financial sustainability of the CIP, specifically the need to reduce required borrowing

FY27 Budget Calendar:

- Oct. 2 – FY2027 Budget Kick-off
- Oct.6 – Budget entry training for fiscal staff
- Oct. 24 – Base budget submissions due to OMB
- Oct. 31 – Supplemental, Reduction, Fee Adjustment submissions due for DCM/ACM review

- Nov. 1 – FY2027 City Council Budget Retreat
- Nov. 7 - Supplemental, Reduction, Fee Adjustment, and Budget Equity submissions due to OMB
- Dec. 1-12 – Department Budget Meetings
- Feb. 24 – City Manager Proposed Budget Presentation
- Late Feb-April - Budget Work Sessions, Public Hearings, & Council Deliberation
- Apr. 29 – Budget Adoption

Departments are required to submit a 1% reduction which is equal to \$93,126 for the Library. The Library is already pretty lean and efficient, so limited in available options that will not cause major harm to programs and services. We considered several options – cutting Sunday services, cutting security guard hours, custodial services, etc. We decided to eliminate two vacant Library positions – one was intended to be a selection librarian and the other is a paging position that will come from either Beatley or Barrett. This will not impact filled positions, but will affect planned schedules due to expectations that they would be filled. We feel that this option does the least amount of harm. The combined reduction achieves slightly more than the amount the Library is required to meet.

Councilmember Aguirre asked about the paging position impact. Director Dawson explained that existing staff can request extra hours to cover. Ms. Phan asked how many pages there are per branch. Director Dawson clarified that it varies by size and circulation and availability of aides. That information can be obtained and shared. She also asked if the Librarian II position would be “nice to have” or “would like to have in the future”. Director Dawson clarified that we are the only library system in northern VA that doesn’t have a selection department. This is similar to implementation of the Outreach Department last year. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if this would be more efficient. Director Dawson explained that a centralized department would be able to look at the collection more holistically and could prepopulate the acquisition lists. Branches could then focus on their patrons’ specific needs.

Ms. Bawcombe asked for clarification that we’re not asking for anything because we would have to make an equal cut. Director Dawson replied the library is verifying whether submitting a supplemental request would require a matching reduction. She gave the example that our Human Resources department is overwhelmed, which is why we have been contracting out assistance. While a request to hire an HR Technician I position was made, the Library has not received final approval. In FY25 the Library used contract staff for 706 hours (approximately .34 FTE) for a total cost of \$43,638.20. The requested HR Tech I position is a 0.5 FTE position that would cost \$38,981.45, which would result in a savings.

Ms. Bawcombe also asked about staff salaries. Director Dawson clarified that salaries have not been touched. All staff completed JDQs (job description questionnaires) and they have been submitted for review by the City. Ms. Bawcombe asked that the board be informed if there are ways to advocate for staff salaries.

Ms. Bawcombe proposed acceptance of the budget submission, seconded by Ms. Fox. Mr. Fitzgerald opposed, explaining he did not agree with the library accepting any cuts. All others approved. Motion is carried.

2. FY25 Audit - Dawson

Print versions of the audit are no longer provided by the accounting firm. The audit was completed with no findings. The electronic version will be forwarded to the Board. No action from the Board is needed. Paper copies can be mailed if requested.

Ms. Bawcombe asked Director Dawson if she has seen impacts from the shutdown. Director Dawson responded that the library does have staff who have been impacted. Extra hours are offered to those individuals to reduce stress. The City has shared information about benefits and services they have available to staff. The impact on patrons is unknown.

Councilmember Aguirre motioned to adjourn, Mr. Fitzgerald seconded, meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.