

HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Board of Trustees Meeting
April 15, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

President Olian, presiding, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Rob Biederman, Alicia De La Cruz, Irene Hoffman, Rebecca Nathanson, Ashley Lapin Olian, Rob Olian, Carol Wolfe, Peter Zotos

Members Absent: Rich Basofin

Others Present: Graham Harwood, Catherine Lambrecht, Cary Rositas-Sheftel, Darren Schretter, Pamela Siegel (remote), Heidi Smith (remote)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Trustee Zotos moved and Trustee Wolfe seconded a motion to approve the March 18, 2025 regular meeting minutes, the March 2025 Bill List, the March 2025 Financial Reports, and the rescheduling of June 4, 2025, 11 a.m. late opening to June 11, 2025 at 12 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Ayes: Biederman, De La Cruz, Hoffman, Nathanson, Lapin Olian, Olian, Wolfe, Zotos

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

President Olian had no report.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Director Smith's report included the following:

- Director Smith asked Dr. Rositas-Sheftel to share a correction in the Caminando Juntos report. The topic should be updated to read "How to Support Children and Adolescents." The past three sessions have focused on mental health, self-care, and strategies for explaining difficult news and situations. The sessions were well attended.
- Trustee De La Cruz inquired about social services engagements. Dr. Rositas-Sheftel responded that while engagement has fluctuated, it has increased over the last two weeks.

EXPANSION LIAISONS

Executive Director Smith expressed her appreciation to the Trustees for their perspectives and support over the past week. She then introduced Darren Schretter, architect with StudioGC, and Graham Harwood, consultant with CCS, who were present to provide a summary of bid results. Director Smith stated that she would subsequently speak about how the Library might align the project with the updated budget and discuss next steps. Mr. Harwood and Mr. Schretter would then elaborate on how the proposed plan could be implemented. The bid results, bid tabulation document, and summary were included in the meeting packet.

Mr. Schretter reported that bids were received the previous Tuesday from five of the seven pre-qualified contractors and the results were higher than anticipated. In an effort to understand the discrepancies,

follow-up interviews were conducted with four of the bidding contractors. The review revealed several contributing factors: fewer subcontractors submitted bids for various components of the project; tariffs were not a major influence, and there was a significant escalation in costs – approximately 30% - from early January to the present. Additionally, due to high demand across the industry, contractors were less competitive in their pricing. Mr. Schretter highlighted that several project components were subject to single-source constraints, which limited competitive pricing.

The team also considered rebidding the project; however, this process would likely take an additional three months, with no guarantee of receiving lower bids. Delaying the project to begin construction in the winter months could further increase costs due to the need for winter protection and supplemental heating, which would likely offset any savings achieved through rebidding.

Director Smith provided a summary of the project’s financial history and current status. The 2025 budget originally allocated \$6.965 million for the total project, with \$5.7 million designated specifically for construction. However, in late December, it became evident that this amount would not be sufficient given current market conditions. In response, the Library consulted with experts and adopted an alternate approach, opting to issue bids that included alternates to provide greater flexibility.

Following the bid process, the total construction cost came in at approximately \$7.9 million, bringing the overall project cost to \$9.2 million. Director Smith posed the question: *Can we fund this?* To address this, she presented a potential funding summary and reviewed available financial resources. These adjustments provide a potential funding subtotal of approximately \$9.2 million. Director Smith added that she would like to revisit the inclusion of the third elevator stop, which would require an additional \$200,000 in funding.

President Olian shared his thoughts and observations regarding the timing of the expansion project. He expressed strong reservations about delaying the project, noting that the unpredictability of the stock market, tariffs, and construction pricing in the coming year adds considerable uncertainty. He acknowledged that the Library has some leverage through its services and potential fundraising opportunities. He is particularly concerned about the elevator—stating that the inclusion of a three-stop elevator is likely a “now or never” decision.

The Board is scheduled to reconvene on Monday to make a final decision regarding the project. He encouraged Board members to contact Director Smith directly with any questions or concerns prior to the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Wolfe moved and Trustee Lapin Olian seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. President Olian, presiding, adjourned the meeting at 8:57 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Ayes: Biederman, De La Cruz, Hoffman, Nathanson, Lapin Olian, Olian, Wolfe, Zotos

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by: Pamela Siegel

Reviewed by: Heidi Smith, Rebecca Nathanson

Approved: May 20, 2025