

HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Board of Trustees Meeting
August 19, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

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

Trustee Zotos is attending remotely due to business matters.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Rich Basofin, Rob Biederman, Alicia De La Cruz, Irene Hoffman, Ashley Lapin Olian, Rob Olian, Carol Wolfe, Peter Zotos (remote)

Members Absent: Rebecca Nathanson

Others Present: Tony Blumberg, David Buzard, Catherine Lambrecht, Cary Rositas-Sheftel, Pamela Siegel, Heidi Smith

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Trustee De La Cruz moved and Trustee Wolfe seconded a motion to approve the July 15, 2025 regular meeting minutes, the July 2025 Bill List, and the July 2025 Financial Reports. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

President Olian's report included the following:

- President Olian asked Trustee Biederman to report on the presentation of the 2026 budget and 10-year capital improvement plan to the City Council last week. Trustee Biederman stated that Councilmembers asked a number of questions regarding both revenue and expenses. On the income side, Councilmembers asked about other sources of income beyond the levy and how such sources could affect the budget and capital plan. With regard to fundraising, Director Smith explained that fundraising for the expansion is restricted to that sole purpose and cannot be redirected. Councilmembers also asked about the decline in investment income, which Director Smith attributed to withdrawals from the special reserve fund and bond proceeds related to the expansion. On the expense side, the largest category is personnel. Councilmembers asked about the 6% increase in salaries. Director Smith explained that the Library coordinates with the City to remain aligned with non-union City employees and also waits for the HR Source annual compensation data, which is released in November. Councilmembers also inquired about health benefits and Director Smith noted that the Library participates in the City's plan. In addition, Councilmembers asked about the use of outside vendors and whether some functions could be brought in-house to reduce costs. Regarding the capital improvement plan, Councilmembers raised questions about the projected \$1.5 million expenditures in forecast for 2031.

Trustee Zotos asked for an update on the next steps on the budget. Director Smith explained that, if there are no further questions, the City Council will approve the overall budget, including the Library's portion, in November and the Library Board will formally approve it in December.

- President Olian reported that there is nothing new to report regarding the Hold Harmless Agreement with the City.
- President Olian noted that the City has sent a draft intergovernmental agreement in which the City would agree to provide financial backing if the Library did not have sufficient funds to complete the expansion. He stated that the need for such support has decreased due to the success of the fundraising campaign, and the draft agreement still needs to be reviewed.
- President Olian reported that he did not receive a link for the United for Libraries Virtual Conference but he was able to watch a recording. He stated that he did not gain new insights from the session and noted that it appeared to be more targeted toward rural libraries. He will still consider participating next year.
- President Olian referred to a patron who attended last month's board meeting and suggested that magazines should not be checked out during the first 30 days after publication. Director Smith reviewed the policy and expressed support for maintaining the current policy, noting that circulation data shows it has been effective. During discussion, Trustee Hoffman asked if the titles referenced by the patron are available digitally online, Trustee Zotos stated that timely titles should remain available on the shelf for as many patrons as possible, and Trustee Wolfe agreed. The Board agreed that the policy should be further reviewed by staff. Director Smith will discuss the issue further with staff, considering whether certain time-sensitive magazines should remain in-library use only for the first month. She will also review loan periods and best practices within CCS to see how other libraries manage magazine circulation. Staff will conduct a deeper review, and Director Smith will provide an update at the next meeting.
- President Olian led a discussion of the article "Untangling the Real Cost of Ebooks to Libraries" by Steve Coffman. He noted that Director Smith has not yet discussed the article with staff and asked trustees to provide higher-level questions and thoughts that can be shared with the team for discussion.

Trustee Hoffman asked whether YTD statistics for eBooks include audiobooks and inquired about comparative usage of eBooks, audiobooks, and print books. Trustee Biederman asked whether CCS statistics include eBooks and audiobooks. Director Smith clarified that CCS does not include digital formats but the Library is a member of a different consortium for them. She noted that the Library does not necessarily purchase a print copy of every Ebook, though it may occur in some cases. Trustee Biederman also asked whether it would be worthwhile to explore a consortium model to share costs and resources. Director Smith responded that it is always worth exploring such options.

Trustee Zotos asked what the Library is ultimately trying to address with regard to eBooks, noting that eBooks are a growing and permanent trend. He questioned whether the goal is to reduce costs or address another concern, and whether the Library is getting the best value for its investment.

President Olian commented that a key point of the article is that if libraries purchase more eBooks and fewer print books, patrons may stop visiting the Library because there are fewer physical titles available. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that library space continues to be used optimally in the future. Director Smith asked the trustees to consider how the Library should define success in this area and what the overarching goal should be.

Trustee Basofin asked about the number of active cardholders and how that compares to neighboring libraries. Director Smith responded that this is an important metric, noting that

“active cardholder” can reflect different levels of engagement with library services, including checking out materials, booking study rooms, borrowing Ebooks, or registering for programs.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Director Smith’s report included the following:

- Director Smith asked if there were any questions about her report. Trustee Lapin-Olian inquired about Parker, the Highland cow, asking about its origin, name and purpose. Director Smith explained that Parker serves as the Library’s construction ambassador and was inspired by a similar initiative at another area library. The communications team developed the concept to provide a fun and engaging way to keep the community informed about construction progress and to communicate challenges. Trustee De La Cruz suggested that merchandise related to Parker could be available for sale.
- Director Smith reported that the “Hollywood in Highland Park” bus tour program was extremely popular, running two full groups with a waitlist. She shared that one patron, an immigrant to the U.S., told staff that it was the “best thing I’ve been on in America.”
- Trustee Zotos introduced David Buzard, Highland Park resident, attorney, librarian, and current post graduate library studies student at University of Illinois. Mr. Buzard will spend time at the Library as part of his course work, focusing on library policy review.

DEVELOPMENT LIAISONS

Trustee Lapin-Olian reported that two new pledges have been received since last month: \$20,000 for two youth study rooms and \$10,000 for two exterior park benches, bringing the current total to \$449, 936. Trustee Hoffman noted that the gift agreements are being reviewed and will be presented to the Board for approval once finalized.

EXPANSION LIAISONS

Trustee Wolfe reported that there is “a lot going on” with the expansion. While there is not much to report at this time, she noted that more frequent updates will be provided as milestone events occur.

President Olian addressed how Director Smith will handle change orders and allowance spending, noting that a \$250,000 allowance is included in the contract. He stated that, going forward, allowance spending exceeding \$25,000 will require approval from either or both President Olian and Trustee Wolfe, as well as Graham Harwood of CCS. Change orders that would increase the cost of the contract by \$25,000 or more will be presented to the full Board for approval.

OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Lapin-Olian moved and Trustee Wolfe seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting.

President Olian, presiding, adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Nays: None

MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by: Pamela Siegel

Reviewed by: Heidi Smith, Irene Hoffman

Approved: