

MINUTES

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

July 29, 2025 | 5:15 pm

111 Library St NE | Board Room

Boston called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

1. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present:

Kelly Boston, Justine Bryant (arrived at 5:17 pm),
Kathryn Dilley, Bryan Holt, Kevin Peterson,
Lauren Woolsey

Board Members Absent:

Rachel Anderson (with notice)

Administration Present:

Robert Adcock, Natalie Drew, Lindsay Laplow,
John McNaughton, Jen Vander Heide (via phone in
Grand Rapids, MI); Patrick Beatty

Staff Present:

Atti Betts, Julie Beukema, Megan Biggins,
Matt Black, Ashley Bovin, Brittany Boza,
Rachel Diener, Kelly Dolson, Erin Hart, Jen Heatley,
Andrea Hiler, Christina Jackson, Michael Johnson,
Shannon Lewis, Jennifer McCown, Sean McKillop,
JR Martin, Travis Mathis, Ann Neff-Rohs,
Rya Northrop, Thomas Terrell, Aubrey Wagg

Public Present:

Jax Johnson, Zach Marshall, Nick Nawrocki,
Allison Troyer, Scott Troyer, Kristina Vandermeer;
Ben Knight, Julie Tabberer, GREIU

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING ON JUNE 17, 2025

MOTION: By Commissioner Woolsey, supported by Commissioner Holt, that the Board of Library Commissioners of the City of Grand Rapids approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of June 17, 2025.

No comments.

ACTION: AYES 6 – 0

Motion passed.

3. **BOARD COMMENTS**

Peterson gives kudos to the GRPL team that has been working on the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC). He adds that his 13 year old niece completed it and was very thrilled with the prize.

Woolsey comments that she is also thrilled with SRC and completed hers today as well.

Dilley states that she attended the Michigan Author Series with Bonnie Jo Campbell & Josh Malerman. She adds that she also went to Comic Geek Out and it was very well attended.

Boston comments that she attended Storytime in the Park at Garfield Park and it was very well attended. She adds that she also finished her SRC and loved the prize.

4. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a. **Legislative**

Peterson states that at their recent meeting they reviewed MLA Advocacy points and decided to focus on intellectual freedom as well as 2 other areas in their work.

b. **Policy**

No comments.

c. **Board Retreat**

No comments.

5. **STAFF & FOUNDATION REPORTS**

a. **Library Director's Report**

No comments.

i. **GRCM Collaboration**

Boston states this will be addressed in Item 6a.

ii. **GRPL + GREIU Contract Negotiations**

HR Director Natalie Drew states GRPL had a productive bargaining session this morning and the next bargaining session is scheduled for August 21.

b. **Financial Report**

Adcock states there has been progress with the City's new finance system. He adds that he should have the final numbers for FY25 in September.

Woolsey asks if the City's system is working better. Adcock answers yes.

c. Foundation Update

No comments.

6. OLD BUSINESS

a. Children's Museum Partnership Letter

MOTION: By Commissioner Peterson, supported by Commissioner Holt, that the Board of Library Commissioners of the City of Grand Rapids approve the Children's Museum Partnership Letter.

Woolsey states that she will read the letter aloud once approved so it is part of the meeting minutes and asks the Board if they have any statements about the letter.

Peterson thanks the team for being part of the process with our neighbors.

Woolsey states she and Anderson were on the steering committee.

ACTION: AYES 6 – 0

Motion passed.

Woolsey reads the letter aloud:

"The Grand Rapids Public Library Board of Library Commissioners would like to share a statement regarding the proposed partnership with the Grand Rapids Children's Museum.

There has been ongoing dialogue between the City of Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Public Library about the potential uses of the parking lot located at 111 Library Street NE. The management of the property, which was purchased using library funds, was transferred to the Board of Library commissioners from the City Commission on July 1, 1995. As such, the Board of Library Commissioners holds seriously its responsibility for the management of the property.

Over the years, the property at 111 Library Street NE, which is currently used as car parking for library staff and patrons, as well as the Mobile Library vehicle, has elicited both creative and practical proposals from businesses and organizations seeking to leverage the central location of the lot. These proposals range from independent expansions to suggestions for joint projects.

Most recently, the Grand Rapids Public Library and the Grand Rapids Children's Museum have been exploring the feasibility of a collaborative venture that would create a shared facility on the current parking lot site. The concept was introduced as a way to enhance experiences for families in the downtown area by bringing together the resources of both organizations in a shared space.

As initial planning progressed, it became evident that the unique legal frameworks, governing structures, and financial models that guide the respective organizations introduced layers of complexity to the collaboration. In addition, the museum's expedited and fixed timeline for utilizing already secured grant funding did not align with the library's current operational realities.

The Board of Library Commissioners takes seriously the responsibility for decisions regarding this property, prioritizing fiduciary responsibility, the effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and that community interests remain at the forefront of all decisions.

As a result, the Board of Library Commissioners has decided not to move forward with the proposed project with the Grand Rapids Children's Museum.

The Board of Library Commissioners is committed to considering innovative solutions presented for the development of this land, guided by the same framework applied to all projects of this scale: consistent community input, thoughtful and comprehensive planning, strong collaboration, and the prioritization of the library's needs and responsibility to the public trust.

Sincerely,

Grand Rapids Public Library

Board of Library Commissioners"

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. ALA Annual Conference Reports

Boston states that Anderson provided a written summary to the Board of her experience at ALA. Woolsey comments that she finds these notes very valuable and thanks Anderson.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

a. Media Index

No comments.

b. Staffing Report

No comments.

c. Statistical Reports for May & June 2025

No comments.

9. GRAND RAPIDS EMPLOYEES INDEPENDENT UNION

Tabberer comments that GREIU remains willing to negotiate the addition of Library Pages to the bargaining unit and asks GRPL to continue to engage in all bargaining discussions.

10. AGENDA ITEMS FOR REGULAR BOARD MEETING: AUGUST 26, 2025

Boston says to please email herself, Anderson, and McNaughton to request any additional agenda items.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Boston reminds the public to keep each of their comments to no more than 3 minutes.

JR Martin, staff member, comments in support of Library workers as well as the Library Pages being incorporated in the GREIU. They add that they appreciate the Library's proactive policy regarding ICE and wishes that GRPL could do more.

Ashley Bovin, staff member, comments in support of the Library Pages being added to the union.

Matt Black, staff member, comments on the bargaining process between the Library and the union. He adds that he hopes both sides will be more transparent.

Meghan Elwell, staff member, comments her concerns about whether GREIU is acting in the staff's best interest and requests open bargaining for staff observation.

Julie Beukema, staff member, comments in support to Elwell's statement.

Erin Hart, staff member, states a request for open bargaining and comments supporting the Pages being in the union.

Shannon Lewis, staff member, comments in support of Pages joining the union.

Allison Troyer, member of the public, comments in support of Pages joining the union.

Aubrey Wagg, staff member, comments her continued support for Pages being part of the union.

Atti Betts, staff member, comments in support of Pages and library staff.

Jax Johnson, resident, comments in support of increased pay and transparency and asks the Board and GREIU to support Library Pages.

Boston thanks everyone for commenting.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Commissioner Holt that the Board of Library Commissioners of the City of Grand Rapids adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:43 pm.