BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

925 Broad Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604
Ph. (203) 576-7400
bportlibrary.org

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
October 15, 2025

ATTENDANCE-Board of Directors

James E. O'Donnell, President - in person
Kenya Osborne-Gant, Vice President – in person
Thomas R. Errichetti, Treasurer - in person
Denise Clemons, Secretary - via Zoom
Jeanette Muñoz-Allam – in person
Blanca Bermeo – in person
Marcie J. Patton - Absent
Barbara A. Rogo – via Zoom, joined at 6:13 p.m.
Kathleen E. Turner – in person

Others Present:

Elaine Braithwaite, City Librarian - in person
Sara Santos, Administrative Assistant – in person
Breta Hasimi, Library Assistant- in person
Margaret Girgis, Black Rock Dept. Head – in person at 6:22 p.m.
Coach Jessie Lee – guest speaker - in person, Founder of Miles Preparatory Center

CALL TO ORDER: President O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION: Director Errichetti made the MOTION to adopt the agenda.
Seconded: Director Osborne-Gant
Result: Passed Unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Coach Jesse Lee addressed the Library Board with a request to commemorate his civic and educational milestone as the first African American to establish and own an enrichment program integrated within a private school. He proposed the installation of an exterior plaque and an interior showcase at Burroughs-Saden Memorial Library to recognize his achievement. The Board referred the matter to the Governance Committee for further discussion and a decision.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

MOTION: Director Errichetti moved to approve the minutes from the meeting originally scheduled for September 17, 2025, which was rescheduled and held on September 23, 2025.

Seconded: Director Muñoz-Allam
Abstained: Director Turner and Director Osborne-Gant
Result: Passed.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES

A MOTION was made to approve the vouchers as presented: $17,218.32 from City Funds and $2,358.00 from the Jenny Smith Funds, totaling $19,576.32.

MOTION made by: Director Errichetti
Seconded: Director Osborne-Gant.
Result: Passed Unanimously.

Discussion: Baker & Taylor (Non-Agenda Item)

City Librarian Elaine Braithwaite provided an update on the transition in book vendors. Baker & Taylor, the primary supplier for the library, is ceasing operations. As a result, the library will begin purchasing materials from a broader range of vendors, including Brodart, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble.

This shift will significantly impact internal operations. Since many items from these new vendors will not arrive pre-cataloged or processed, the library will need to handle cataloging and processing in-house. To manage this increased workload, additional staff may be required.

Elaine Braithwaite and Assistant City Librarian Laura Matthews will assess the department's current capacity and staffing needs. Based on their evaluation, they will prepare a proposal for submission to the Personnel Committee for review and approval.

In parallel, the library is reviewing approximately $40,000 in outstanding invoices and $50,000 currently on deposit with Baker & Taylor. Legal counsel may be consulted to explore the library's right of offset and address any potential vendor claims.

PAYROLL VARIANCE: The payroll report reflects a favorable variance of $88,785.97.

APPROVAL OF LINE-ITEM TRANSFERS - No line-item transfers this month.

TREASURER'S REPORT – There is nothing further to report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- ***Status/Report on public roll out of Library App***– The app is being promoted with posters and flyers.

- ***Status/Report on staff engagement with social media –*** All media communications are now centralized under a new committee chaired by Anna Knorovska. To ensure a more streamlined and cohesive public presence, all social media posts must be submitted to the committee for review and approval before publication.

- ***Status/Report on annual report to state and city*** - The State Report has been submitted. The City Librarian also emailed a copy to all board members. The complete State Report is expected to be available after the New Year.

- ***Status/Report on Burroughs/Saden Teen Center and Teen Advisory Board –*** Location data for the Teen Center is still being gathered, along with information on Community Room usage. The Teen Advisory Board initiative has been tabled for the time being. The current focus is on ensuring that all 3rd grade classes in Bridgeport visit their nearest library location. Several Board Members suggested reaching out to the Director of Early Childhood to join the group working with the Board of Education. This collaboration would help facilitate the initiative to bring all 3rd grade classes in Bridgeport to their nearest library location.

- ***Status/Report on submission of Board appointments –*** This item was not discussed during the meeting.

- ***Status/Report on planning for centennial Burroughs / Saden –*** The upcoming 100th anniversary of the Burroughs-Saden Memorial Library, commemorating its opening in 1927, will take place in April 2027. It was suggested to begin research at the History Center to identify any materials related to the original opening. This initiative does not currently have a designated committee.

Correspondence and Communications – An email from the Listserv was received and forwarded to all Board members for their awareness.

CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Highlights – The Bridgeport Public Library is the recipient of three grants:

1. Comcast Grant – $20,000 was awarded to support the Library's Digital Navigator Program, which helps bridge the digital divide by assisting patrons with technology access and skills.

2. M&T Bank Grant – A $6,000 grant designated to expand the popular eSports program at the Newfield Branch, enhancing youth engagement through competitive gaming and digital literacy.

3. Traveling Toys Grant – A $5,000 award to purchase educational and recreational toys for the Traveling Toys program, which brings play-based learning opportunities to local families.

Mayor Ganim saw the Channel 12 segment featuring the podcasting rooms at the Beardsley Branch. During the leadership retreat, he expressed interest in being interviewed on the Bridgeport Unmasked podcast, hosted by Adam Cleri.

The City Librarian will arrange a meeting with Patron Point to reacquaint the Board of Directors with the scope and capabilities of their services. This effort aligns with the strategic initiatives she plans to pursue in collaboration with the newly revamped Technical Services Team. For more details, please refer to the City Librarian's full report.

Review of monthly statistics and presentation by staff – There were no staff presentations this month, and the monthly statistics were not discussed.

- ***Presentation by staff –*** This item was a duplicate of the earlier point regarding staff presentations. As noted, there were no staff presentations this month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Buildings

- ***Status/Action re East Side Branch Phase II project –*** Renovation work has resumed at the East Side Branch. Excavation for the elevator pit is currently a priority, as it needs to be completed before winter arrives.

- ***Status/Action re solar projects for Burroughs/Saden and North –*** The solar panels at the Burroughs-Saden Library are now operational. The solar panel project at the North Branch is expected to resume shortly.

- ***Status/Action re Burroughs/Saden 1st Floor changes and acoustics*** - Additional statistics on usage for all three Community Rooms at Burroughs are still needed. The artisanal quilt panels have been installed in the large Community Room on the first floor. The panels have made a slight impact on dampening sounds.

- ***Status/Action to remove and correct façade at Black Rock Branch –*** There is a plan to address the facade at the Black Rock Branch. The design of the front door closely resembles its appearance prior to renovation. If all goes according to plan, the work is expected to be completed by Christmas.

- ***Status/Action re report of David Otero re other facility issues –*** There was nothing further to discuss regarding David Otero's report on other facility issues.

FINANCE

- ***Review of 2025-26 budget planning and CAFR status***- Finance Director Mr. Flatto requested a copy of the Library Board resolution authorizing the allocation of $1.1 million from surplus funds to cover additional construction costs (including necessary change orders) for the East Side Branch renovation. A copy of the September 23rd meeting minutes was sent to him to fulfill this request.

  The City of Bridgeport's next state-mandated revaluation of taxable property has begun. If the grand list increases, the library's mill rate will also rise. There was a brief mention of Senate Bill 1554, which proposes a phased reduction and eventual elimination of Connecticut's motor vehicle property tax beginning in 2029. How this bill will impact the library's budget remains uncertain.

GOVERNANCE

- ***Status/Action re Strategic Plan revision and public surveys –*** Everyone was issued a copy of the current strategic plan. It was noted that the plan primarily needs updating and can serve as a framework for developing the new one. Much of the content focuses on communications and resources—specifically, improving how the library informs patrons about available services and responding effectively to their needs.

★ ***Action Item – Strategic Plan Review:*** All Governance Committee members are to review the current Strategic Plan and come prepared to discuss and formulate new goals at the next meeting.

- ***Status/Action re adoption of metrics/goals for Strategic Plan:*** ALA Benchmark –A thematic structure was proposed based on a revised version of the "3Rs": Resources, Relationships, and an additional concept noted in the meeting materials. The use of ALA benchmarking tools was suggested to help measure progress and align objectives.

- ***Status/Action re proposed policy revisions*** - Staff policy proposals are being developed, including revisions to the meeting room policy to support after-hours access for community groups at branch locations. These items will be prepared for discussion at the next Governance Committee meeting.

★ ***Action item:*** All board members were reminded to request a copy of the current strategic plan and any related materials if needed. Having these documents on hand will support and streamline the development of the new strategic plan.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

- ***Status/Action re implementing logo and Dinormous marketing plans –*** The group discussed finalizing the statement of work, noting that most items were agreed upon except for one concerning the number of press releases. There was no issue with the quality of work, but some concern about setting a high numerical target. It was suggested that a lower number might be more realistic and still likely to be exceeded, which would be a positive outcome.

  Clarification was needed around the definition of a press release, as different interpretations were causing hesitation. A follow-up meeting was proposed to resolve this. The conversation also touched on social media engagement metrics, referencing a successful campaign around library card sign-ups and media coverage in September.

  The communications media consultant, Dinormous, will provide standardized templates for social media posts and flyers. These templates are designed to help unify the library's messaging across all branches. In addition to supplying the templates, Dinormous will train Bridgeport Public Library's Communications Team on how to use them effectively and incorporate feedback to improve outreach.

  To further enhance communication efforts, the team is also developing posting guidelines to coordinate the timing of posts and prevent overlap or competition between content. This initiative aims to ensure that key messages receive optimal visibility and engagement across platforms.

★ ***Action item***: To clarify deliverables and define the press release, committee members were encouraged to attend the upcoming meeting with Dinormous, scheduled for noon on Wednesday, October 29, 2025.

> Reminder: Marketing Committee meetings with Dinormous are scheduled for every other Wednesday at 12:00 PM (noon).

PERSONNEL

- ***Status/Action re table of organization / job descriptions*** –Several staff positions are currently vacant and need to be filled. A grievance was filed by a custodian regarding a higher-level position; the issue is pending review by Labor Relations, and a hearing will be scheduled. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was sent to the President of the Board during the meeting for review. The committee is awaiting updates from the city regarding the accessibility of appropriate space for social worker services at the Beardsley and Black Rock branches.

Report of Friends of the Library

- A recent outreach initiative targeting 6th graders resulted in the distribution of 390 books. Of these, approximately 10 were flagged as not age-appropriate by assisting librarians.
- Planning is underway for a Spring 2026 event featuring food trucks, aimed at fundraising.
- By-law revisions are currently in progress, with updates shared during recent meetings.
- A software purchase was made in memory of a community member, including Adobe Acrobat, which supports document editing.
- The IT team will install the software on all library computers, though only one user can access it at a time. If there is interest, the Friends will explore a multi-user licensing options to expand access.

NEW BUSINESS

- ***Status /Action re Beardsley Bike storage/public art***- The bike lockers at Beardsley Branch will be removed and replaced with a bike rack.

  The City Lights Project is looking for a location for a new mural. Two locations were presented, Beardsley Branch and Newfield Branch.

  Director Errichetti made a MOTION to allow the selection of one of the two proposed locations—Newfield Branch or Beardsley Branch—for the City's Mural Project. The selected location will be presented to the Library Board along with a mockup of the intended mural design, which will be subject to Board approval prior to installation.

Seconded: Director Bermeo
Result: Passed Unanimously.

***Status Action to approve/ratify use of surplus funds for purchase orders* –** Approval or ratification of the use of surplus funds for purchase orders was not necessary. See FINANCE.

ADJOURNMENT

The **MOTION** was made to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. by Director Clemons.

Seconded: Director Osborne-Gant
Result: Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by
Sara Santos, Administrative Assistant