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Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors December 17, 2025

ATTENDANCE-Board of Directors

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

Others Present:

Elaine Braithwaite, City Librarian – via Zoom
Laura Matthers, Assistant City Librarian – in person
Sara Santos, Administrative Assistant – in person
Margaret Girgis, Black Rock Dept. Head – in person

CALL TO ORDER: President O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION: Director Errichetti made the **MOTION** to adopt the agenda.

Seconded: Director Rogo.

Result: Passed Unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

MOTION: Director Errichetti moved to approve the minutes with the following correction: On page 5, under "Status/Action regarding solar projects for Burroughs/Saden and North," the reference to the solar panel project should read "North Branch" instead of "East Side Branch."

Second: Rogo.

Abstained: Director Patton.

Result: Passed.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES

MOTION: A motion was made to approve the vouchers as presented:

- \$45,366.32 from City Funds
 - \$4,299.29 from the Traveling Toys Grant
 - \$78.95 from Non-Levy Funds
- Total: \$49,744.56.

MOTION made by: Director Errichetti

Seconded: Director Rogo.

Result: Passed Unanimously.

PAYROLL VARIANCE: The payroll report reflects a favorable variance of \$235,638.59

APPROVAL OF LINE-ITEM TRANSFERS – (5) line-item transfers were approved individually:

1. \$25,000.00 *from* 51000 FT Earned Pay *to* 54555 Computer Supplies
MOTION made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Rogo. Approved.
2. \$12,000.00 *from* 51000 FT Earned Pay *to* 55460 Library Supplies
MOTION made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Rogo. Approved.
3. \$3,000.00 *from* 51000 FT Earned Pay *to* 54675 Office Supplies
MOTION made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Rogo. Approved.
4. \$4,500.00 *from* 51000 FT Earned Pay *to* 55145 Equipment Rental/Lease
MOTION made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Rogo. Approved.
5. \$18,200.00 *from* 51000 FT Earned Pay *to* 56160 Marketing Services
MOTION made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Rogo. Approved.

Supporting documentation is included with the minutes.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Status/Report on public roll out of Library App– There 715 users and growing.

Status/Report on staff engagement with social media – The Social Media Committee continues to meet regularly and collaborate closely with Dinormous. The marketing firm is pleased with the quality of content submitted by library staff.

- ★ **Action Item:** Request Dinormous join the January 21, 2026, Board Meeting.

Status/Report on Burroughs/Saden Teen Center and Teen Advisory Board – The Board recommended that the Assistant City Librarian contact the company Creative Library Concepts to arrange a free walk-through focused on space planning.

- ★ **Action Item:** Assistant City Librarian to reach out to Creative Library Concepts and schedule the walk-through.

Status/Report on Council approval of Board appointments – All background checks are complete, and the information will be sent to the appropriate city contact by the end of the week. The next step is review by the Ethics Commission, followed by Miscellaneous Matters. Concerns were raised about delays and whether start dates will be backdated; dates were included in the memo and will be verified. Incorrect dates reported to the Council need correction. It was advised that future processes start earlier to avoid delays caused by late applications.

Status/Report on planning for centennial Burroughs / Saden – No photographs or materials have been found yet for the building's centennial. It was suggested that the same committee handle both America 250 and the centennial celebration. Need to decide if this will be a staff committee or a Board committee. Target date for centennial: during National Library week in April 2027.

- ★ **Action Item:** Decide on committee structure and start planning for the centennial.

The Board discussed the upcoming retirement of the History Center Librarian/Archivist and options for ensuring a smooth transition. The preference was to bring her back as a consultant to assist in the interview process as well to help with orientation and share her institutional knowledge.

The City Librarian emphasized the importance of hiring a qualified archivist with the necessary background and experience to minimize the need for extended training. It was confirmed that job posting approval is pending signatures and will proceed once authorized. The Board also discussed the need for a formal knowledge transfer process for all retiring employees and suggested that this topic be addressed in future collective bargaining discussions.

Correspondence and Communications – none.

CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

For highlights read the enclosed City Librarian's Report.

Presentation by staff – None.

Questions Raised

1. Has anyone responded to Mr. Jessee Lee regarding his request for a bronze plaque at the library entrance, and a historical showcase in the lobby documenting his civic and educational milestone as the first documented African American in the U.S. to found and own an enrichment program within a private school?
2. Regarding the sale of Judge Saden's house: Will the library receive a portion of the sale proceeds?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Buildings

Status/Action re East Side Branch Phase II project – It was reported that there have been delays in transferring funds due to issues with the City's Office of Policy and Management (OPM). The state contract has expired, and the State OPM has frozen the project, preventing access to funds. A meeting is scheduled next week to review the situation.

It was noted that missing documentation, including a structural study, may have contributed to the delay, though there was disagreement on this point since the construction contract was signed without requiring the study.

The City OPM will not transfer funds until the State OPM confirms the state construction grant status. The Board discussed the possibility of using surplus funds if bonding funds are not available, though this could risk losing the grant. The anticipated construction period is eight months, pushing final payment into July. The Board agreed to continue pursuing state funding and explore options to cover shortfalls if necessary. It was suggested that outreach to state representatives and senators could help expedite resolution.

Status/Action re solar projects for North – Work on the North Branch solar project is in progress, with coordination underway with the finance company to restart the project.

Status/Action re Burroughs/Saden 1st Floor changes and acoustics - The Board discussed changes to acoustics on the first floor and agreed to wait for the results of the recently approved space design study before making decisions on how to utilize the room. It was noted that the study will involve a space design company, with consideration for acoustic improvements.

Plans include salvaging the accordion door from Beardsley to create a partition on the other side of the community room for storage of chairs, tables, and other items. While a full wall was suggested, the current plan is to reuse the accordion door to maintain access. Further decisions will be made after the study is completed.

Status/Action to remove and correct façade at Black Rock Branch – Awaiting one final quote; the low bid has been identified, and work is expected to begin soon.

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- The previous fiscal year ended with a surplus of approximately \$324,000, which was about half of the prior year’s surplus but better than anticipated. The rebound notices have been issued, and the grand list is expected to grow by 30–40%, resulting in an increase in the library’s budget for fiscal 2026-2027.

The Board discussed potential uses of surplus funds, emphasizing that any allocation should align with the library’s mission and strategic plan. It was agreed that surplus funds should not be used to assume responsibilities outside the library’s core mission, such as those belonging to the Board of Education. Instead, surplus funds could support expanded youth services and programming.

The Assistant City Librarian discussed recent interactions with the Board of Education regarding integration of student records into the library’s catalog system. Concerns were raised regarding privacy, financial implications, and the potential increase in record volume, which could significantly affect costs. The Board agreed that while the goal of providing students with access to library resources is positive, alternative approaches should be considered. Suggestions included issuing library cards during school visits and distributing applications through parent portals and registration centers.

The Board reiterated the importance of aligning financial decisions with the library’s mission and strategic plan. While collaboration with external entities such as the Board of Education is encouraged, the library will not assume responsibilities outside its core mission. Any surplus funds will be used to enhance library services, programming, and staffing rather than supplant other agencies’ obligations.

❖ **Off-Agenda Discussion – Fine-Free Policy**

The Board briefly discussed the impact of the fine-free policy on material return rates. Preliminary observations suggest that return rates have not significantly changed compared to previous years, consistent with trends reported by other libraries.

★ **Action Item:** Provide Bridgeport-specific data at a future meeting for further analysis.

GOVERNANCE

Status/Action re Strategic Plan revision– the Committee briefly reviewed the initial draft of the strategic plan. The draft will be circulated to all members for review. Further discussion and revisions are scheduled for the January meeting.

Status/Action re proposed policy revisions – No policies were submitted for review at this time. However, there was a discussion on after-hours access to library branch meeting rooms.

The Board discussed the need for a comprehensive meeting room policy that addresses after-hours access. It was noted that the East Side branch will be properly designed with an alarm system to allow secure after-hours use by approved organizations without staff presence. Other locations may require additional considerations, such as building modifications or alarm system adjustments.

The policy will need to define:

- Criteria for organizations eligible for after-hours access.
- Security measures, including individual alarm codes.
- Whether fees should be charged for use by certain groups (e.g., for-profit entities or condo associations).
- Restrictions to ensure compliance with city regulations.

The Board agreed that the policy should align with building capabilities and include provisions for community stakeholders, such as neighborhood organizations, while minimizing additional costs. Further discussion will continue as part of the ongoing meeting room policy revisions.

Status/Action re use of ALA Benchmark- The Board reviewed the use of Benchmark data for performance comparison. It was noted that Benchmark provides national-level comparisons based on state annual reports, while the state library offers more relevant peer comparisons within Connecticut.

A chart was included showing Bridgeport Public Library data over a ten-year period. The most recent national data available through Benchmark is from fiscal year 2022. The Board agreed that while Benchmark is useful for visualizing trends such as library card registrations and attendance, state-provided data may be more appropriate for local benchmarking.

Review Policy re Library Card issuance and school coordination- No additional updates beyond what was discussed during the Finance report.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

Status/Action re implementing logo and Dinormous marketing plans – No additional updates beyond what was discussed under *Status/Report on staff engagement with social media*.

PERSONNEL - Director Clemons was unable to attend the meeting. The Board expressed condolences during the meeting.

Status/Action re table of organization / job descriptions – One retirement was noted. This topic was addressed during the discussion on planning for the Centennial Burroughs/Saden session of the meeting.

Discussion on Social Worker Position

The Board reviewed the current social worker position provided through the city's social services department. The position is functioning as intended, assisting patrons with needs such as housing, food, and mental health referrals, and reducing the burden on library staff.

Key points discussed:

- The position currently operates at no cost to the library.
- Approximately 20 patrons were assisted in the previous month.
- The service is considered valuable for addressing community needs and supporting staff.
- The Board acknowledged that the city may request the library to absorb costs or pay an interdepartmental fee in the future. If this occurs, a cost-benefit analysis will be needed to determine whether to continue the service.
- Suggestions included requesting more detailed reporting on engagement metrics (e.g., time spent per patron) to support future evaluations.
- An MOU with the city is pending signature to formalize current arrangements.

The Board agreed to monitor developments and refer further discussion to the Personnel Committee for strategic planning related to potential budget impacts.

NEW BUSINESS

Adoption of Calendar of meetings for 2026 - The Board discussed the schedule for meetings in 2026. It was recommended that the Board maintain the current schedule of meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM, with committee meetings held at 5:30 PM on the Wednesday prior.

The **MOTION** was made by Director Errichetti to adopt the proposed schedule as stated

Seconded: Director Rogo.

Result: Passed Unanimously

- ★ **Action item:** Board meeting reports should be submitted to the Board of Directors on the Friday before the Board meeting to allow sufficient time for review.
- ★ **Action item:** President O'Donnell will prepare a certificate, consistent with previous submissions, listing the 2026 meeting schedule dates and forward it to the City Clerk's Office.

Report of Friends of the Library – No new updates beyond what was discussed at the previous meeting. Volunteer recruitment remains a high priority.

Discussion on Library Building Signage

The Friends of the Library suggested adding or updating library building signage as it is inconsistent and often difficult to see, particularly at night. Suggestions included adding illuminated or electronic signs to improve visibility and awareness of library locations. It was agreed that signage should be revisited as part of the space utilization study and branding efforts now that the library logo has been finalized.

ADJOURNMENT

The **MOTION** was made to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. by Director Rogo.

Seconded: Director Errichetti

Result: Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by

Sara Santos, Administrative Assistant

Enclosures:

City Librarian's Report and Line-Item Transfers