

# Minutes for January 27, 2026 Oak Park Public Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

## Call to Order and Roll Call

President Bloom called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm. Secretary Yamamoto took roll.

Present: Colin Bird-Martinez, Megan Butman, Susanne Fairfax, Kristina Rogers, Annie Wilkinson, Mika Yamamoto, Virginia Bloom

Also attending: Elsworth Carman (Executive Director), Suzy Antell (Deputy Director), Billy Treece (Director of Finance & Human Resources), Leigh Tarullo (Director of Collections & Technology), Robert Simmons (Director of Social Services & Public Safety)

Public Commentators: none

## Approval of Minutes

### November 17, 2025 Advocacy Committee Meeting

Moved by Wilkinson. Seconded by Yamamoto. Approved by all present.

### November 18, 2025 Regular Board Meeting

Moved by Fairfax. Seconded by Butman. Approved by all present.

### November 24, 2025 Special Board Meeting

Moved by Wilkinson. Seconded by Bird-Martinez. Approved by all present.

### December 1, 2025 Governance Committee Meeting

Moved by Butman. Seconded by Yamamoto. Approved by all present.

## Public Comments

There were no public comments received in person or in writing for this meeting.

## Presentations

### Lynda Schueler, Chief Executive Director, Housing Forward

Lynda Schueler, Chief Executive Director of Housing Forward, presented an overview of the organization's mission and comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness, including prevention, crisis response, and services for children. She noted Housing Forward's service area spans 26 communities and highlighted its three-part framework, prevent, respond, and

stabilize, with street outreach serving as the primary access point to services. Schueler discussed the opening of the Anderson Emergency Shelter in October 2025, which doubled shelter capacity, and reported a temporary relocation back to the St. Catherine of Siena–St. Lucy Shelter due to flooding. She also reviewed the acquisition of the former Write-Inn Hotel, which operates as a referral-based, short-term facility supporting improvements in participant health and stability.

Romiesha Tucker, Director of Prevention, Diversion, and Street Outreach at Housing Forward, reported on street outreach efforts across 24 communities, noting that 431 individuals were served in 2025, including 119 in Oak Park. She described outreach, diversion strategies, and regular office hours at the library to connect individuals with resources.

John Harris, representing the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition, provided an overview of the coalition's role as a service provider and advocacy organization supporting Housing Forward, Beyond Hunger, the Oak Park Public Library, and the Village of Oak Park. He noted the coalition's collaboration with approximately 50 organizations through five work groups, operating under a single coordinated plan and guided by a core leadership team.

### **Rob Simmons, Director of Social Services & Public Safety, Oak Park Public Library**

Rob Simmons, Director of Social Services and Public Safety at the Oak Park Public Library, presented an overview of the library's integrated social services and public safety model, noting his tenure beginning in 2016 and situating the work within a broader national movement among public libraries to embed full-time social workers. He highlighted collaboration with multiple Chicago-area libraries to build social service infrastructure and strategic partnerships, resulting in improved, timely connections to resources, reduced social isolation, expanded mental health support, and strategies to address opioid use and overdose among patrons.

Simmons noted the high-stress nature of the work for staff, including crisis intervention and the administration of Narcan, and commended the Public Safety team, specifically Aaron Alonzo, Manager of Public Safety, for leadership and openness to innovative approaches. Simmons reported that the library's model has been recognized nationally as a best practice, is supported by 24 community-based partnerships, and includes a free mental health clinic that provided 300 clinical hours in 2023 and served 388 patrons in 2024. The department also received the 2023 Dr. Virginia Bishop Community-Academic Research Partnership Award from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Simmons further discussed the continuum of care for vulnerable patrons, emphasizing the shift from a traditional safety and security approach to a comprehensive public safety model. He underscored ongoing staff training in mental health first aid, trauma-informed care, and harm-reduction opioid response, and highlighted continued collaboration with community stakeholders to strengthen social services, public health strategies, and supports ranging from housing to mental health and substance use services.

## **Trustee Comments & Calendar**

The Board reviewed the calendar, which included several committee meetings, a special meeting, and the regular board meeting, all scheduled for February.

## **Executive Directors Report**

The Executive Director presented a six-month report shared publicly to support transparency, accountability, and trust. The report was informed by staff feedback, trustee input, community engagement, surveys, and observation, and aligns with the Board-adopted Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan.

The Executive Director noted the organization's recent period of leadership disruption and transition, highlighting staff resilience and existing strengths in governance, operations, and community engagement. Key strengths identified included sound financial and governance practices, committed and adaptable staff, an engaged Board, and a community invested in the library's success.

The report outlined focus areas for 2026 to 2028, including advancing equity and inclusion efforts, improving consistency in staff experience, strengthening leadership team and Board partnership, and rebuilding staff and Board trust. Ongoing and new initiatives were identified to support these goals, emphasizing staff development, communication, collaboration, and community connection. The report was presented as a working document to guide shared understanding, learning, and intentional planning moving forward.

## **Staff Reports**

### **Strategic Priorities Report (November & December 2025)**

The Board reviewed the Strategic Priorities Report, which highlighted work completed in November and December 2025. Program activity across multiple service areas, including Middle and High School Services and Adult Services, was discussed, along with department and team retreats and the Staff Engagement and Learning Day.

### **Library Core Use Statistics**

The board reviewed the Library Core Use Statistics, with highlights noting the growing increase in use of library digital resources.

### **Additions & Separations Report (November through December 2025)**

The board reviewed the Additions & Separations Report, reporting from November through December of 2025.

## **Staff Changes Report (November through December 2025)**

The board reviewed the Staff Changes Report of November through December 2025

## **Statewide Stats Comparison**

The Board reviewed the Statewide Stats Comparison, a one-page snapshot of key Oak Park Public Library data and metrics, including building visits and materials circulation, and how the Library compares to peer libraries statewide.

## **Financial Reports**

### **November & December 2025 Financial Reports**

The board reviewed the November & December 2025 Financial Reports.

### **November & December 2025 Resolutions on Disbursements**

Motion to approve the November & December 2025 Resolutions on Disbursements

Moved by Bird-Martinez. Seconded by Butman. Approved by all present.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Finance Committee**

Bird-Martinez provided an update on the finance committee meeting that was held on January 17, noting the intergovernmental loan agreement requested from the Village of Oak Park, noting that the agreement was discussed at the Village's Finance Committee meeting. A subsequent meeting was held to formally accept the loan agreement approved by the Village. Bird-Martinez provided an update on discussions regarding the potential establishment of a library foundation, noting that any future effort would require rebuilding the framework from the ground up. It was reported that previous attempts were unsuccessful, and that additional conversations will continue on this topic.

### **Governance Committee**

Butman provided an update on the December 1 meeting, noting that a policy was reviewed, a strategic planning meeting was discussed, the date of the evaluation meeting was identified, and the bylaws were discussed, including the possibility of aligning them with the strategic plan.

## **Advocacy Committee**

The committee has not met since the last meeting on November 17. Wilkinson reported on trustee training and noted an additional agenda item under discussion, the review of othering and belonging materials for the Board and leadership team.

## **Additional Reports**

### **Intergovernmental Committee (IGov)**

Rogers reported on the development of a webpage for the library's website that will provide information and resources for individuals interested in running for office, in preparation for the 2027 elections. Rogers also noted that the page will include an ongoing archive of information related to IGov activities, governing bodies, and how they work together.

### **Council of Governments (CoG)**

Bloom noted that she did not attend the meeting; however, Carman was present in December and reported on a presentation by Kelly Keyes, Chief Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Officer of the Village of Oak Park. The presentation focused on the idea of bringing together all communications staff to coordinate messaging and ensure consistency in how ICE-related matters are communicated and addressed.

### **Plant Green**

Carman reported on notes that Matt Bartodziej attended the meeting, held on December 18 where he discussed the meeting dates and times for 2026. Agreed on continuing meetings on Thursdays. The Village of Oak Park gave an update on their green infrastructure plan and an update on reducing food waste across schools in Oak Park.

### **Friends of the Oak Park Public Library**

Yamamoto provided an update from the most recent meeting, noting discussions on new merchandise products and items for the Friends' Summer 2026 Book Fair and general merchandise for the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library. The meeting also addressed Board member terms, including which members will continue serving. Antell noted that the Friends' funding schedule is aligned with the library's schedule, and reported that a check for \$25,000 has been received from the Friends.

### **Out with Purpose**

Did not meet.

## **Collaboration for Early Childhood**

Did not meet.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **Parking Garage Use & Revenue FY2025 Report**

The board reviewed the report that tracked the use and revenue of the parking garage for the year 2025.

## **New Business**

### **Communications Policy Review**

Motion to approve the recommendation of eliminating the Communication Policy in full.

Moved by Wilkinson. Seconded by Bird-Martinez. Approved by all present.

### **Library Board Member Goal Sheet Review**

Motion to approve the recommendation of eliminating the Library Board Member Goal Sheet in full.

Moved by Yamamoto. Seconded by Wilkinson. Approved by all present.

### **Library Board Member Job Description Review**

Motion to approve the recommendation of eliminating the Library Board Member Job Description Review in full.

Moved by Rogers. Seconded by Fairfax. Approved by all present.

## **Adjournment**

Bloom adjourned the meeting at 9:34 pm.