

Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
February 17, 2026
Donelson Branch Library
12:00 PM

Members Present: Joyce Searcy, Kate Ezell, Katy Varney, Charvis Rand, and Rosalyn Carpenter

Library Staff: Terri Luke, Chantel Clark, Susan Drye, Andrea Fanta, Annie Herlocker, Jena Schmid, Liz Atack, Anna Harutyunyan, Ryan Darrow, Larry Jirik, Forrest Eagle, Hannah Gerst, Travis Humbert, Cameron McCasland, Eric Lowey, Bailey Battilla, Chase Caudill, Nikki Glassley, Chelsy Melvin, Sonia Humphries, Sade Johnson, Joan Brasher, Mark Crowder, and Emily Krieble

Others: Shawn Bakker, President of NPLF; Kelli Woodward, Metropolitan Attorneys at Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County; Jon Boghonian, NDOT; Stephen Elliott, Nashville Banner; Sharon Emerson, Kayla Willie

- I. Call to Order / Roll Call
 - a. Joyce Searcy called the meeting to order at 12:06 PM.
- II. Metro Ordinance required to be announced at all Board Meetings – *Chair, Joyce Searcy*
 - a. “Pursuant to the provisions of § 2.68.030 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws, please take notice that decisions of the Nashville Public Library Board may be appealed to the Chancery Court of Davidson County for review under a common law writ of certiorari. Any appeal must be filed within sixty days after entry of a final decision by the Board. Any person or other entity considering an appeal should consult with an attorney to ensure that time and procedural requirements are met.”
- III. Public Comments
 - a. “Pursuant to T. C. A. § 8-44-12, time is reserved at the beginning of Library Board meetings for which there is an actionable item on the agenda for public comment germane to items on the agenda. Up to five people will be allowed up to three minutes each to speak. Speakers must register within one half hour prior to the beginning of the meeting by signing their name on a physical sign-up sheet available at the entrance and identifying any agenda item on which they intend to comment.”
- IV. Board Chair Comments, *Joyce Searcy*

- a. Ms. Searcy did not have anything to report except that the book selection for the Carnegie Society was wonderful, and she looked forward to hearing more about the event during the NPLF Update.

V. Approval of Minutes: January 20, 2026

- a. **Ms. Searcy asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Charvis Rand moved. The motion passed unanimously.**

VI. Library Director Report, *Terri Luke*

- a. Library administration continues to depend on the expertise of First OnSite to lead us through the Main Library restoration. Chantel Clark, Susan Drye, and members of FOS are meeting every Wednesday to provide updates. NPL will remain in close contact with the restoration company, and while there is not a confirmed date for reopening, library administration is working on the logistics and timeline.
- b. It is budget season. Terri Luke and Ms. Drye will present the FY27 operating budget requests to the Mayor's office and Finance on March 26th. Ms. Luke will also work with administrators to finalize the NPLF budget over the next few weeks. The NPLF budget is due to Shawn Bakker on March 9th.
- c. Ms. Luke thanked the library staff who came into work during the ice storm in January. Many branches were able to reopen on January 26th, providing vital services to their communities.
 - i. Katy Varney thanked Liz Atack and Andrea Fanta for their continued work on Begin Bright during the ice storm, even when they were without power.
 - ii. Ms. Searcy was appreciative of how fast the maintenance crews were able to get the libraries operating. Ms. Luke agreed, noting that the library was very fortunate to have only minimal damage from the storm.
- d. In March, NPL and the Tennessee Performing Arts Center are teaming up to highlight the Votes for Women room at the Main Library. The musical *SUFFS* will premiere early in the month, and VFW team members will participate in special panels before several of the shows.
- e. Limitless Libraries has been able to continue operating out of the Edmondson Pike Branch during the Main closure. The Limitless Libraries program is unlike any other in the nation, and NPL is grateful to work with MNPS to provide materials to school children. The Memorandum of Understanding between NPL and MNPS expires in

June 2026. The library is working with MNPS to get a new one in place. Ms. Luke thanked Syreeta Butler and Linda Harrison for working on this endeavor.

VII. Foundation Report, *Shawn Bakker*

- a. As Ms. Searcy mentioned earlier, the Carnegie Society will host their annual book club on March 29th. The group is reading *James* by Percival Everett. If board members have anyone interested in learning more about joining the society, please let Ms. Bakker or Claudia Schneck know. This group helps to provide unrestricted funds to the library, which is crucial to funding different programs.
- b. Picnic at the Library will be on April 24th at 4 PM, and the NPLF Gala Weekend will be November 6th and 7th. The plan is for both events to be at the Main Library, but Ms. Bakker will notify the board if that plan changes.
- c. The East Branch and the North Branch both received grants from the Carnegie Foundation. Each branch will have \$10,000 to spend.
- d. Ms. Bakker shared several love letters to the library from donors on why they give to the library.

VIII. New Business

- a. Status of the Parking Garage, *NDOT Staff*
 - i. Jon Boghozian is an engineer for NDOT, and he manages their capital projects.
 - ii. Mr. Boghozian gave an overview of the library garage structure. In 1989, the mall and its parking garage were constructed. In 1997, there was additional parking added, and in 2001 the mall was converted into the Main Library. In 2018, the 5th, 6th, and 7th levels of the garage were added.
 - iii. The fire that happened on June 10th, 2025, occurred between the 4th and 5th levels of the garage. Following the fire, NDOT started investigating the structure and the damage. Several structural engineers were hired to assess the damage. In December, NDOT began shoring up the structure, and they are continuing to assess the damage and the cause of the fire.
 - iv. NDOT intends to open a few floors of the garage. They will need to demolish several of the top floors and then rebuild those. Mr. Boghozian hopes that the bottom floors can remain open during the demolition and repair process.
 1. Ms. Varney asked if there was a date for reopening the garage. Mr. Boghozian stated there was not a date yet, but they are working closely with Metro Legal and investigators. Once they understand the extent of the damage, they will be able to move forward.

2. Kate Ezell asked if the public will be made aware once a schedule is set. Mr. Boghozian confirmed that a schedule will be posted on their website, and he can work with his department to create a special landing page specifically for updates on this project.
 3. Ms. Searcy asked if contractors needed to go through the Metro Procurement process, and Mr. Boghozian stated he believed so, but was unsure if the process differed in any way.
 4. Ms. Luke asked if entrances to the garage would need to change during the demolition and repair process. Mr. Boghozian explained that NDOT would like to keep the entrances and exits the same if possible.
 5. Ms. Varney asked if any of the work needed to wait until the investigation was complete. Mr. Boghozian confirmed that the garage could reopen since most of the investigation work has been completed on the front end. NDOT might need to wait to begin repairs until they know the cause of the fire, but it should not delay the reopening of the bottom floors for use.
 6. Ms. Searcy asked about the surrounding businesses that have contracts with NDOT to use that garage. Mr. Boghozian stated that Legal has not come to a resolution about those contracts. Currently, they are on pause since the garage is closed, and they will be reinstated when the repairs are completed. He is unsure what will happen during the repair process but imagines that library patrons will be given some consideration.
 7. Ms. Bakker asked about the number of spaces impacted. Mr. Boghozian stated that number has not yet been determined. The shoring was just completed, and the investigation will restart in March as they were delayed by the ice storm.
 8. Mr. Boghozian is happy to return to this body to provide updates.
- b. Vote on NAZA Contract Amendments to Fund Unfunded Summer Programs, *Anna Harutyunyan*
- i. Anna Harutyunyan brought forward the final three contract amendments for the board to approve. This additional funding would allow for three more sites to expand their summer programming.
 - ii. Ms. Harutyunyan asked for the following allocation: \$25,600 to Boys and Girls Club, \$22,400 to Water Walkers, and \$28,000 to Youth Encouragement Services.
 1. Mr. Rand asked how long these programs would run. Ms. Harutyunyan confirmed that this funding would be for the summer programming. However, NAZA has not had to cut slots or close

programs due to lack of funding. They rely on Metro funding, which is stable.

- iii. Ms. Varney motioned to approve the contract amendments. Ms. Ezell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

IX. Staff Report

a. Begin Bright Update, *Liz Attack*

- i. Ms. Luke explained that Begin Bright is a new initiative for the library. NPLF has been able to raise \$21 million in a year to fund this program which aims to help children work on literacy and reading skills before they enter school. Liz Attack and the entire Bringing Books to Life team have an excellent reputation in the community.
- ii. Ms. Attack explained that Begin Bright grew out of BBTL, which has been doing literacy outreach for 23 years. Begin Bright has three pillars: little libraries, literacy lifeline, and learning laboratory.
- iii. Little libraries began rolling out in October 2025. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides all the books for the little libraries, while the 400 book carts are being donated by Tennsco. Ms. Attack and her team worked with a local designer to create the casing for the carts. Each little library comes with a resource guide that outlines how to use the books provided as well as access to the digital learning platform.
- iv. The digital learning platform is part of the literacy lifeline pillar, and it includes 185 minutes of training content in both English and Spanish. Content is evidence-based training and focuses on infant through 5 years of age. The literacy lifeline also includes a literacy coach. Begin Bright hired Holly Wells, who is able to provide one-on-one coaching for teachers at sites with little libraries.
- v. So far, 25 centers have received their little libraries, and the feedback is positive.
- vi. The last pillar is learning laboratory. NPL has partnered with Vanderbilt to conduct an impact study. An initial cohort launched in August 2025. Every center that was approached was excited about participating. They are halfway through the first cohort, and Vanderbilt will begin recruiting for a second cohort soon. Ms. Attack will present the findings from the first cohort later this year, and the final impact won't be known until early 2027.
- vii. Ms. Attack's team will continue to roll out little libraries to centers who are not participating in the study as well. Their goal is to provide carts to 30-40 centers each quarter. There are about 400 childcare centers in Nashville and all of them are eligible to receive carts.

- viii. So far, NPLF has raised \$21 million for the initiative, but they are hoping to raise \$27 million to ensure the program is endowed and materials can be provided in perpetuity.
- ix. In the coming months, Ms. Attack and her team will focus on the following:
 - 1. Creating a robust communication plan
 - 2. Providing monthly training for Begin Bright partners
 - 3. Developing the next phase of content for the digital platform
 - 4. Recruiting for the second impact study cohort
 - 5. Partnering with Geodis to help construct, store, and transport the little libraries
 - 6. Rolling out little libraries to 40 additional locations by June
- x. Ms. Searcy asked about the criteria to be included in the cohort. Ms. Attack explained that Vanderbilt was looking for a representative cross section of the city and matching demographic percentages across Nashville as a whole. MNPS and Head Start sites are ineligible because they have many resources already which could skew the data. Small centers are also ineligible because it would be too small of a sample size. Eligible centers need to have children between 3 and 4 years old and need to be open every day of the work week, if not all year.
- xi. Ms. Varney added that the Geodis partnership is very exciting as the BBTL team has been constructing and moving the carts on their own and it has been a lot of labor.
- xii. Ms. Luke highlighted the incredible collaboration happening to ensure Begin Bright is a success. She thanked Linda Harrison for her work in getting the initiative off the ground.
- b. Donelson Branch Library Report, *Ryan Darrow*
 - i. The Donelson Branch has 16 staff members, as well as 7 additional staff from Main during the closure. Mr. Darrow explained that his staff exceed his high expectations daily, and any success is due to their hard work. Each week, staff meet in the morning to discuss weekly plans, challenges, and celebrate wins.
 - ii. The new Donelson building is LEED certified and has many unique attributes. It is the only branch with a parking garage, and it is currently the only two-floor branch. Upstairs, they have an adult changing table, and downstairs they have computers with a carrel for children.
 - iii. There are 20,000 unique items housed at Donelson Branch, and several special collections, like board games and lending art, are kept there as well.

- iv. Last year, Donelson Branch had over 750 programs. Some standouts include the yearly Christmas tree lighting and the quarterly Repair Fairs where patrons can bring in broken items to be fixed.
- v. Services are important to the Donelson community. Last year, their study rooms were used for almost 7,800 hours. Staff completed 806 appointments, the majority of those being notary appointments. Soon, patrons will be able to reserve their Memory Lab space to digitize their physical media. Patrons will be able to bring in VHS tapes, photos, film negatives and more.
- vi. Ms. Luke noted that the customer service at Donelson is outstanding, and Mr. Darrow is an asset to the system. He brings forward innovative ideas, like the Library of Things, and works to make the system better.

X. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 1:18 PM.

Next Scheduled Board of Trustees Meeting

March 17, 2026

Edgehill Branch Library

Meeting Room

1409 12th Avenue South

Nashville, TN 37203

12:00 PM