

City of Beverly, Massachusetts

Public Meeting Minutes

Board: Library Trustees

Date: February 24, 2026, 6:00 PM

Place: 32 Essex St.

Board members present: Margaret Altman, Mary Behrle, Dominic Copeland, Marshall Handly, Cathryn Keefe O'Hare, Ivy Mahan, Colleen Michaels, Kevin O'Reilly, Joanne Panunzio

Board members absent:

Others present: Allison Babin, Meghan Karasin

Recorder: Meghan Karasin

Kevin O'Reilly presided. Meghan Karasin stated that the meeting was being recorded.

Marshall Handly made a motion, seconded by Mary Behrle, to accept the minutes of the meeting of January 27, 2026, as amended. Motion passed 9-0.

Public Presentation

None

Election of Officers

Marshall Handly nominated Kevin O'Reilly to serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Joanne Panunzio seconded the nomination. Motion approved.

Margaret Altman nominated Joanne Panunzio to serve as Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Marshall Handly seconded the nomination. Motion approved.

Kevin O'Reilly appointment the following subcommittee members and chairperson(s)

1. Personnel: Panunzio (chair), Michaels, Behrle, Altman
2. Administration: O'Reilly (chair), Altman, Mahan, Handly
3. Finance: Handly (chair), Copeland, Keefe O'Hare, Mahan
4. Long Range Planning: Behrle (chair), Altman, Copeland, Handly, Mahan, Keefe O'Hare, Michaels, O'Reilly, Panunzio

Report of the Library Director

1. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget: The buyback sick time line is overspent due to the retirement of the Senior Library Custodian. We expect to get a transfer in to cover that or we may be able to cover it from other lines. The city has instituted a spending freeze for FY26 discretionary spending. The materials spending, which is required for certification, can continue. All overtime and discretionary spending has to go through an approval process. This is going to be challenging. We are waiting for the final approval of Sunday hours, as this is overtime for custodians. Joanne Panunzio asked about the snow overtime. Snow and ice overtime can proceed. Dominic Copeland asked what they might look at when considering Sunday hours. Allison Babin said they haven't asked for anything yet.

Joanne Panunzio asked how a change in hours would impact certification. Allison Babin stated that the library is already open more hours than required. Kevin O'Reilly asked if professional development is discretionary. Allison Babin replied that the city already stated it would not be approved. The library is planning to ask the Friends to cover the attendance fee for Katie Nelson, who is speaking at the Massachusetts Library Association Conference. Joanne Panunzio asked about spending from trust funds. Allison Babin has not yet been able to get an answer on that. Marshall Handly stated that it's not part of the city budget. Allison Babin stated the trust funds are under the purview of the trustees.

2. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget: Allison Babin is working on the first draft of the FY27 budget, with each line justified. We have been asked to prepare a level service budget. We expect there to be some difficult conversations ahead.

3. Building/Vehicle Issues: The HVAC project continues on with little disruption to the public. The two rooftop units were removed via crane earlier this month. The garage door, where the bookmobile accesses the garage, needs to be replaced. DPS is working on getting three quotes. We expect it to be about \$19,000 and it will need to be a capital request as we do not have it in the budget. The bookmobile can't be on site until this is repaired and the generator is being impacted due to having to sit outside in the cold. Dominic Copeland asked if there are any concerns about the bookmobile itself. Allison Babin stated that it's aging, at close to 15 years old. We will need to replace it in the near future. We have tentatively planned to use state aid for it.

4. Collections/Services: The pilot of reservable study rooms is going well. Patrons have been thankful about the change. We now have data on their usage, which we never had before. We have handled 147 bookings on the rooms. We will be getting a study pod that will add an additional reservable study room. This is funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's Digital Equity Implementation Grant. We have also ordered and deployed 10 hotspots and two translation devices for staff use with patrons. The braille printer is on order. We will likely buy two more translation devices, so all public service desks will have one. Dominic Copeland asked about the timeline for the pod. Allison Babin stated it should be about six weeks after the mayor approves the purchase.

5. Community Engagement: The Children's Room is participating in the Boston Bruins PJ drive through mid-March. We are moving ahead with the Community Read of *The Bear*. This runs April 6-May 15. We have book discussions, and many programs, including crafts and talks on foraging, salt harvesting, and hiking. Save the date for May 15 for a talk with the author, Andrew Krivak. On June 3 Meghan Karasin will join a coffee chat with Pleasant St Apartments, a supportive home for previously unhoused veterans, to share library resources. Katie Nelson recently held a pop up event at Beverly High School in collaboration with High School Librarian Barb Fecteau, where she issued or renewed library cards and checked out books to students.

6. Personnel: The city did allow the library to hire a temporary employee for up to five hours per week to help with accounts payable. This does not fully replace a 19 hours a week position. We lucked out with a recent city hall retiree who already knew the invoice payment system. Allison Babin has still taken on a lot of work from the lost position. We hired a new senior building custodian, Jason Harvey, at the beginning of the month. He comes to us from a school library background.

7. Programs: Adults have a film screening of Bugonia, the Community Resource Fair (in partnership with Beverly Bookstraps) and a Monday Mornings program on The Stories Behind Beverly's Streets. Teens have Downtown Cleanup and Creative Writing Club. Childrens has Science Squad, Tween Night, and a program on shells with Salem Sound Coastwatch,

Communications

None at this time.

Unfinished Business

None at this time.

New Business

The Director's contract expires on April 26, 2026. The City Solicitor and Head of Human Resources are working on a draft and it will hopefully be ready for the next meeting.

List of Documents/Exhibits

- Draft minutes of the January 27, 2026 meeting
- FY 2026 Budget report as of February 20, 2026

The next regular meeting of the board is Tuesday, March 24 at 6 PM in person at the main library.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 PM.