

City of Beverly, Massachusetts

Public Meeting Minutes

Board: Library Trustees

Date: April 28, 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, Kevin O'Reilly, Joanne Panunzio

Board members absent: Colleen Michaels,

Others present: Allison Babin, Meghan Karasin

Recorder: Meghan Karasin

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

Joanne Panunzio made a motion, seconded by Cathryn Keefe-O'Hare, to accept the minutes of the meeting of March 24, 2026. Motion passed 8-0.

Public Presentation

None

Committee Reports

Personnel: Joanne Panunzio will send the staff survey to Meghan Karasin to distribute to the staff. Once the results are in, she'll send them to Trustees to aid in their review. It's ok to leave an answer blank. It won't affect the calculations.

Report of the Library Director

1. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget: There have been a lot of transfers between lines due to the need for a lot of repairs. The most significant were the repairs to the elevator and the garage door. There is still a small surplus in the full-time line that could be transferred. Staff are working to spend down the materials budget. Spending this is a requirement for certification and not subject to the spending freeze. Kevin O'Reilly asked about the electric and heating fuel. The heating has been historically underfunded and the electric has been overfunded. Allison Babin is trying to correct this in FY27. Dominic Copeland asked if there was a concern about surprises. Allison Babin said she thinks the budget is fine unless something major breaks, like the south elevator. Joanne Panunzio asked if there are funds to replace the broken panels over the Winter St entrance. Allison Babin stated that there are limited funds in the repair line, but we could transfer funds in. Hopefully, with the HVAC work being done currently, this will be the last time we will need to replace these panels.

2. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget: The Mayor and Finance Director began meeting with City Department Heads earlier this month. Allison Babin met with them on April 3 and prepared a level-service budget. The news was worse than expected. The budget is still in a negotiation phase without a number to share. We have been looking at a lot of different scenarios and data. It's not clear if the library will even get the Municipal Appropriations Requirement (MAR). There is an option in the certification program for a waiver. As long

as we qualify for the waiver there will be no visible difference to the public - though libraries are required to work back toward the required funding within 5 years. In order to get the waiver the library will have to prove that the budget cut to the library is not disproportionate. A cut to the library budget is considered disproportionate when the library budget reduction exceeds the overall municipal budget cut by 5% or more. Allison Babin is very much pushing for the MAR. Allison Babin submitted a proposal of approximately \$32,000 over the MAR. The MAR is minimum for certification but the library needs more than that for level service. Ivy Mahan asked if the library will need to reduce hours. Allison Babin stated that it may have to. Joanne Panunzio asked about using trust funds to supplement the budget. Allison Babin stated that her original request did already include using trust funds. Allison Babin is presenting her budget to the City Council on Thursday June 11.

3. State Aid to Public Libraries: Because the library is certified it receives these funds yearly. We have historically used this for capital projects - such as the Farms Branch renovation. We have been targeting three upcoming projects: updating paint and carpet in the children's room, purchasing a new bookmobile, and updating carpet and paint on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors. Allison Babin is contemplating using 15-40% of the state aid for operating costs to mitigate cuts and preserve services. The remainder would be for capital needs. Marshall Handly stated that capital expenses, such as building repairs, should come from the city budget. There was a discussion about potentially using volunteers for painting. State aid should be used for service enhancements. The cost to be open on Sundays is approximately \$15,000 but it's a very popular day.

Ivy left at 7:20PM

4. Building/Vehicle Issues: The HVAC project continues to move along. We expect the air conditioning units to be commissioned on Monday. Additional work still needs to be done over the Winter St entrance. The stairwell between the 2nd and 3rd floor has been resurfaced and repainted. The garage door was ordered and it will hopefully be installed in the next couple of weeks.

5. Community Engagement: We are a little more than halfway through our Beverly Reads programming. We have had a tremendous response from the community. We have had 7 adult programs and 3 children's programs so far with 10 more programs to go, culminating in the author talk. The bookmobile is attending Touch-a-Truck at Beverly High School. Katie Nelson, teen librarian, is hosting a Reach intern. The 30th Annual Teen Poetry Contest ceremony is this Thursday. There were 271 submissions this year.

6. Personnel: Historically the Department of Public Services (DPS) payroll workweek was Thursday-Wednesday. They have now been migrated to a normal Sunday-Saturday pay week. There was a compensation study for the DPS union which resulted in new job titles and pay grades for staff, including the library's two custodians. Raises and retroactive pay to FY2025 were recently put through and funds to cover these were transferred into the budget on April 14. As we updated the pay period for the custodians, we took the opportunity to update the payroll schedule for part time staff and they are now being paid more promptly.

Allison Babin shared the text of an email received from a Bookmobile patron:

I would like to give a big shout out for Katie as she goes over and above in her duties on the Bookmobile. She does an outstanding job. My granddaughter and I have been visiting the Bookmobile every Tuesday at Cove Playground for the last several months. Katie greets us enthusiastically each time and has brought books she reserved for my granddaughter. She

surpasses what I would expect though this does not surprise me after getting to know her. She is knowledgeable, professional and personable at every visit. After the biggest snowstorm this year Katie delivered books to me using her car when the streets were not maneuverable for the Bookmobile. She is an outstanding representative of the Beverly public library and we are grateful for Katie and the Bookmobile.

7. Collection/Service Updates: OverDrive (Libby) is the main ebook/eaudio collection for the library. March 2026 was the 2nd highest month for checkouts ever across the network. Beverly was number one in NOBLE both in January and March. Every year the demand for ebooks/eaudio books grows. Approximately 33% of checkouts each month are on OverDrive.

8. Update on the Contract for the Library Director: The contract has been signed by all parties.

Communications

None at this time.

Unfinished Business

None at this time.

New Business

List of Documents/Exhibits

- Draft minutes of the March 24, 2026 meeting
- FY 2026 Budget report as of April 27, 2026

The next regular meeting of the board is Tuesday, May 26 at 6 PM in person at the main library.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.