

City of Beverly, Massachusetts

Public Meeting Minutes

Board: Library Trustees

Date: June 30, 2026, 6:00 PM

Place: 32 Essex St.

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

Board members absent: Dominic Copeland, Ivy Mahan

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 Colleen Michaels, to accept the minutes of the meeting of May 26, 2026. Motion passed 6-0, with Altman, Behrle, Handly, Michaels, O'Reilly, and Panunzio voting in favor.

Public Presentation

None

Committee Reports

Personnel: Joanne Panunzio presented the Director's Review and commented that the staff appreciate Allison Babin and she makes the job of the Trustees easier. Joanne Panunzio will forward the review to the Mayor.

Report of the Library Director

1. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget: This has been a challenging year. The report currently shows a negative balance. The overage was due to a retirement payout. This is usually covered by a separate fund in the city but that fund was depleted this year, and the funds for this payout needed to be found in the library budget. Allison Babin will move a charge out of service contracts and pay that with state aid. There will be a final FY26 budget report in September. The repairs to the elevator and some door repairs will take place early in FY27.

2. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget: At the May meeting we discussed a budget that was at the Municipal Appropriations Requirement (MAR), built on the assumption that the full proposed trash fee (\$425) would be in effect. The City Council advanced a \$300 fee instead, necessitating an additional \$1.4M in cuts to the city budget. Almost all municipal departments had to go down by one full time staff member. For the library, that reduction was a retirement and a requirement that we keep a full time position vacant. The total city appropriation to the library for FY27 is \$2,325,891.01 This is an \$80,000 reduction from level service. The City Finance Director and Mayor were committed to a number that would get us a waiver, and we are expecting that we will qualify. On June 10, Kevin O'Reilly met with the Finance Director to discuss the budget. Allison Babin presented the library budget to the City Council on June 11.

There were difficult questions, such as how much would be saved if we closed the Farms branch. Allison Babin calculated the Return on Investment (ROI) of the library, which is 301%. This doesn't even count all the services we offer. The City Council seemed to appreciate this. To continue this advocacy, we will be adding a "value calculator" to each checkout receipt. Mary Behrle asked if it is possible to do this with e-resources as well. Allison Babin is not sure. Allison Babin also followed up with an email to city councilors explaining certification and the consequences of being decertified. Allison Babin met with Councilor Rotondo, had a phone call with Councilor Feldman, and will meet with Councilor Housman tomorrow. Thank you to Meghan Karasin for her help with the budget. The City Council voted on the budget on June 23, with additional cuts including the cut of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging position. There were no additional cuts to the library budget. FY28 is expected to be twice as difficult as FY27. There's talk of closing multiple city departments and it will still not cover the projected deficit. With larger cuts we may not qualify for a waiver. Kevin O'Reilly asked if the closure of the Farms branch would prompt a recalculation of the MAR. Allison Babin has contacted the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and they reported that it won't be a justification to recalculate the MAR.

On June 17, Allison Babin attended the workshop on how to apply for a waiver in the State Aid to Libraries Program. The petition is due on October 2, with supporting documents due in November. The municipality applies for the waiver, but Allison Babin will take the lead, working with Kevin O'Reilly and Bryant Ayles. They may need to attend a meeting in person to advocate for the waiver. If the city receives the waiver this year the public won't see a difference. However, the waiver can only be for five years. The MAR continues to be calculated each year, and the city will have to meet the new MAR to be removed from the waiver.

3. Building/Vehicle Issues: The new HVAC system was made operational on May 29. They are still tweaking the settings and this week will be a test of how it performs in a heat wave. The subcontractors are finishing up work on the 3rd floor and will need to return to install the gutters over the Winter Street entrance. The Farms branch has experienced several leaks and a mysterious noise. DPS has been investigating.

4. Community Engagement: Lifebridge is launching an outreach van and may add a weekly stop at the library.

5. Collection/Service: Allison Babin showed the change in hours for FY27. The FY27 Version 1 shows the proposed hours with the \$425 trash fee. But with the new lower fee, we are at the FY27 Version 2. The open hours at the Farms branch went from 45 hours per week (52 when open on Saturdays) to 30 hours per week (33 when open on Saturdays). This allows us to operate the Farms with one less full time staff member. The hours changes were data driven. 82% of the circulation is done at the main library, 12% at the bookmobile, and only 6% at the Farms library. We looked at circulation and visits per day to determine where to reduce hours. We have decided to discontinue the investment-related database Morningstar, due to usage. We have another similar database, Value Line, that we are keeping. We did have a \$7,700 decrease in our books & subscriptions line with this year's budget. Patrons can still access Morningstar with a Boston Public Library card. The grant-funded study pod was installed on Thursday, but the bench seating was not delivered. This should arrive in mid-July. We have received 33 desktop computers from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute Connected & Online Grant. These come with all the peripherals, including webcams and headsets. The old computers will be offered to other city departments and if not needed we may investigate donating them to the Saugus Public Library.

6. Personnel: Dorothea Lam retired from the Head of the Farms branch position on June 11. We are hoping to post the position soon.

7. Programs: The Summer Reading Brochure lists all the programs offered through August 5. Highlights include Pasta & Pages Italian Dinner Book Chat, crafting, and an author talk for adults; cupcake wars, dungeons & dragons, and cookie decorating for teens; and a stuffed animal sleepover and story time at Hale Farm for kids.

Communications

None at this time.

Unfinished Business

None at this time.

New Business

Standards of Conduct Policy. There are no suggested changes at this time. Marshall Handly made a motion, seconded by Mary Behrle, to accept the Standards of Conduct Policy. Motion passed 7-0.

Public Internet Use Policy. There are no suggested changes at this time. Marshall Handly made a motion, seconded by Joanne Panunzio, to accept the Public Internet Use Policy. Motion passed 7-0.

Security Policy. There are no suggested changes at this time. Marshall Handly made a motion, seconded by Colleen Michaels, to accept the Security Policy. Motion passed 7-0.

Meeting Room Policy. Last May we revised this policy to allow us to make the study rooms reservable. This is going very well, is appreciated by the public, and is not burdensome on the staff. The proposed policy adopts the study room policies currently in use, and corrects a pronoun issue. Marshall Handly made a motion, seconded by Cathryn Keefe-O'Hare, to accept the revised Meeting Room Policy. Motion passed 7-0.

List of Documents/Exhibits

- Director's Review
- Draft minutes of the May 26, 2026 meeting
- FY 2026 Budget report as of June 30, 2026
- FY 2027 Budget
- Draft of value calculator for receipts
- FY27 Library Hours
- Summer Reading Brochure
- Standards of Conduct Policy
- Public Internet Use Policy
- Security Policy
- Current and Proposed Meeting Room Policies

We expect to hold an August meeting, potentially virtually, to discuss the Assistant Director contract.

The next regular meeting of the board is Tuesday, September 22 at 6 PM in person at the main library. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:04PM.