ELKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY
MINUTES

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, October 20, 2026
Cleveland Branch

ROLL CALL & INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Members present: Cynthia Dunlop, Sarah Hooley, Dan Holtz, Laura Steffen, Jeri Stahr, and James W. Rieckhoff. Yuliana Rivera Arce attended virtually via Zoom.

Others present: Kristen Edson, Executive Director; Kevin J. Kilmer, Director of Branch and Technical Services and Allison McLean, Interim Director of Public Services.

Staff present: Deb Bloom, Circulation Department Head; Laura Holland, Administrative Clerk; Mary Ann Kempa, Cleveland Branch Manager; Eric Nord, Computer Services Department Head; and Violeta Stroth-Campos; Executive Assistant.

Staff present via Zoom: Jamie Arce, Director of Finance/Treasurer; Sue Eller, Dunlap Branch Manager; Nathan Claeys, Director of Human Resources; Katie Cullison, Osolo Branch Manager; John Dawson, Senior Building Operations Manager; Katie Graham, Technical Services Department Head; Elizabeth Layman, Technical Services Librarian; and Trevor Wendzonka, Chief Marketing Officer.

Guests present: Ralph Spelbring, patron. Rick Ortmeyer, Bostwick Design Partnership attended via Zoom.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Elkhart Public Library was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by James W. Rieckhoff, President.

CONSENT AGENDA

Jeri Stahr moved

THAT the Consent Agenda be adopted.

Dan Holtz seconded. Roll call vote was taken:

Cynthia Dunlop	Aye
Sarah Hooley	Aye
Dan Holtz	Aye
Jeri Stahr	Aye
Laura Steffen	Aye
James W. Rieckhoff	Aye
Yuliana Rivera Arce	Aye

Motion: carried (7-0)

PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

James W. Rieckhoff, President, thanked Dan Holtz, Vice President; for his contributions and work

during the last board meeting. No additional business was presented.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Kristen Edson, Executive Director, invited questions regarding her Director's Report.

The Executive Directors annual performance evaluation was brought up and discussed. James W. Rieckhoff, President will review historical records to provide additional information at a future meeting.

FMP Progress with Bostwick Design

Rick Obermeyer of Bostwick Design joined the meeting via Zoom. He presented an update on the EPL facilities master planning process. The planning process began in April and has included building and site assessments, staff engagement, technology surveys, community focus groups, public houses, and surveys. Feedback consistently praised library staff for being welcoming, friendly, and helpful. Community members and staff emphasized the importance of improving facilities to support current services and future strategic priorities. The goal is to present final recommendations by the end of 2026 or early in the first quarter of 2027.

Across the branches, the public identified a need for more parking, meeting rooms, and better accommodations for food and drink. Staff also identified a need for more meeting space and improved back-of-house work areas. Separate feedback was requested for the Downtown location. Community feedback identified several strengths such as centralized location, great atrium, children services, and outdoor concerts. A list of areas that could use improvement was created but Bostwick did report that the existing downtown building's mechanical/building systems are aging and would require substantial upgrades or replacement if retained. The existing downtown library complex contains approximately 68,000 square feet, including the annex. Initial planning estimated 90,000 square feet being needed to accommodate public services and support functions. A potential arrangement separating library services from operational support functions was suggested. Bostwick did explain that the existing downtown building may not accommodate all the identified needs without substantial compromises.

The library has begun evaluating the available portion of the former Sears building which is shared with Goodwill. It was noted that the buildings loading dock and existing configuration could improve delivery and material processing operations. Discussion was had over the potential benefits and challenges of separating staff across two locations. Benefits could include improved operational efficiency and reduced space pressures downtown. Concerns include staff cohesion, parking, shared property agreements, and cost of adapting the building. Kristen did emphasize that no decision had been made regarding the location of administrative offices or other departments.

Cleveland Branch Presentation

Mary Ann, Cleveland Branch Manager, gave a presentation on her staff, their professional development, usage statistics, programs, and partnerships. Mary Ann praised the staff's teamwork and commitment to public service. Staff participated in team-building activities and professional development. The branch recorded 53 hours of staff community engagement, exceeding the requirement of 32 hours. Physical circulation is gradually recovering following the COVID-19 pandemic and renovation related closures. In person visits are approaching pre-pandemic levels, and patrons continue to make substantial use of digital resources. Some programs that were

mentioned are Baby and Me, Storytime, Fun in the Sun, Spanish Together, Readers Roundtable and the Hooks and Needles group. These programs have helped build relationships, encouraged reading, and have strengthened the branches role as a community gathering place.

Cleveland maintains partnerships with Elkhart Community Schools, the Elkhart County Parks, and other community organizations. Staff participate in classroom visits, outdoor programs, family activities and community events. A program with Mental Health Awareness of Michigan has been scheduled for November 11th. Discussion was had over the branch's visibility from the nearby roads and potential addition of directional signage. Previous efforts have been made to introduce branded signage but had not received county approval. Standardized library signs have received approval and potential purchase will be looked into.

OLD BUSINESS

2027 Budget Adoption – Resolution No. 2026-10

Jamie Arce, Director of Finance, presented Resolution No. 2026-10, the 2027 Budget Adoption. He reported that the LIT payment had been revised, coming in higher than the original estimate. He also explained that a transfer from the General Fund to the Library Operating Reserve Fund could be made through Board action without triggering binding review at the time of transfer.

Dan Holtz moved

> THAT the 2027 Budget Adoption – Resolution No. 2026-10 be adopted.

Cynthia Dunlop seconded. Roll call vote was taken:

Cynthia Dunlop	Aye
Sarah Hooley	Aye
Dan Holtz	Aye
Jeri Stahr	Aye
Laura Steffen	Aye
James W. Rieckhoff	Aye
Yuliana Rivera Arce	Aye*

Motion: carried (6-0)

*Yuliana Rivera Arce's voiced being in favor of the 2027, but because she attended the meeting via Zoom, her response is not an official vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Friends Week Proclamation

The Board considered the annual proclamation recognizing National Friends of the Library Week and the contributions of the Friends of the Elkhart Public Library.

Laura Steffen moved

> THAT the Friends of the Elkhart Public Library Proclamation be approved.

Cynthia Dunlop seconded. Roll call vote was taken:

Cynthia Dunlop	Aye
Sarah Hooley	Aye
Dan Holtz	Aye
Jeri Stahr	Aye
Laura Steffen	Aye
James W. Rieckhoff	Aye
Yuliana Rivera Arce	Aye

Motion: carried (7-0)

Jazz Festival 2027 Library Closure

The board was presented with the proposed operating schedule for next year's Jazz Fest. The Downtown branch will be open the Friday of from approximately from 9 am to 3 pm, and will then be closed all day Saturday. Branch locations will maintain regular hours.

Cynthia Dunlop moved

THAT the closure of the Downtown be approved as proposed.

Jeri Stahr seconded. Roll call vote was taken:

Cynthia Dunlop	Aye
Sarah Hooley	Aye
Dan Holtz	Aye
Jeri Stahr	Aye
Laura Steffen	Aye
James W. Rieckhoff	Aye
Yuliana Rivera Arce	Aye

Motion: carried (7-0)

Internet Access Policy Reaffirmation

The Board considered the annual reaffirmation of the Internet Access Policy required by the Indiana State Library. No changes were recommended for the current year.

Jeri Stahr moved

THAT the Internet Access Policy be reaffirmed.

Laura Steffen seconded. Motion: carried (7-0)

PLAC Report for Board and Director signature (quarterly)

This is a signature only item.

Questions and Information from Board, Staff, and Guests

Ralph Spelbring, patron, addressed the board. Ralph spoke of the importance of public transportation access to the library branches, particularly Dunlap and Pierre Moran. He also suggested a simpler code of conduct, similar to that of the Goshen Public Library. Ralph closed by noting the lack of additional newspaper titles such as the Indianapolis Star, Kalamazoo Gazette, Fort Wayne Gazette, and Chicago Tribune.

ADJOURNMENT

Jeri Stahr moved

THAT the meeting be adjourned.

Dan Holtz seconded. James W. Rieckhoff, President, adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Elkhart Public Library at 7:15 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be November 17, 2026, at 5:30 pm, Downtown Library, 300 S. Second St, Elkhart, IN.

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Laura Steffen, Secretary