CITY OF NORWLK
LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - MARCH 12, 2026
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

ATTENDEES: Moina Noor, Jannie Williams, Mary Mann, Haroldo V. Williams, Alex Knopp.

STAFF: Sherelle Harris, Library Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Library Board of Directors was called to order by Ms. Noor at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom virtual meeting.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken and the attendees listed above were present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: March 12, 2026
Ms. Williams noted corrections to the minutes of the February regular meeting. Her name should have two N's and Mr. Williams' first name should be spelled with A H A rather than H E in the attendance and roll call sections on the first page. No other edits were suggested.

> ****MR. KNOPP MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY REGULAR MEETING WITH THE CORRECTIONS NOTED.**
> ****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS AMENDED.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Diane Lauricella of 21 Little Fox Lane addressed the Board. She commented on the budget-making process and noted that Chairman Ed Abrams had expressed concern about staff turnover and the number of part-time staff leaving. Ms. Lauricella encouraged the Board to investigate reasons for turnover beyond pay. She also urged the creation of a fundraising committee for renovations and expansion of the main library, noting that other towns such as Darien, Westport, and New Canaan had succeeded despite city-owned buildings and had benefited from federal infrastructure funding. Ms. Lauricella expressed strong opposition to the capital budget plan to replace the main roof and switch to natural gas, advocating instead for rooftop solar, geothermal systems, and other renewable energy options like those in Darien to reduce electricity and heating costs. She requested to speak further with the Chair and Director on these matters.
Ms. Harris responded that she had raised the staff turnover issue with the Board of Estimate and Taxation in connection with the library's salary structure and that Mr. Abrams had asked all departments to model staffing reductions. Mr. Williams inquired about whom Ms. Lauricella

should contact regarding her energy concerns. Ms. Harris she had brought up staff turnover during her finance report and replied that the appropriate contacts for the roof project would be Alan Lowe and Neil Rennie. Ms. Lauricella stated she would first speak with Ms. Noor and Ms. Harris before approaching Mr. Lowe. Ms. Noor noted that any future design process for the library would include an open public process with community input.

V. REPORTS

A. President

Ms. Noor reported on the History Room dedication planned for Ralph Bloom. She had proposed April 15 at 2:00 p.m., but Ms. Williams and Ms. Peterson were unavailable on that date. Ms. Noor stated she would propose additional dates after consulting Ms. Harris and would aim to finalize the date by Monday so that the mayor, council, and community could be notified. She emphasized the event's importance in showcasing the History Room.

Ms. Noor provided an update on the Celeste Garr Room Naming in the Children's Library. On March 4 the Land Use Committee held a public hearing at which Mr. Garr, Ms. Williams, and Ms. Noor spoke. Colin Holstein recommended forwarding two separate resolutions to the Council—one to accept the donation and one to name the room. On March 10 the Council unanimously approved both resolutions. Ms. Noor thanked Ms. Williams and Ms. Harris for stewarding the process and noted the generosity of Mr. Garr and his family. Ms. Harris stated that the process had been clarified and that the naming would occur later upon the donation. She described Celeste Garr as a phenomenal person whose memory would be kept alive for future generations and noted the timing during Women's History Month. Ms. Williams expressed her happiness and congratulated Mr. Garr and his sister. Mr. Knopp confirmed that the naming would occur later upon the passing of the donors as it is held in trust.

Ms. Noor addressed parking. She referenced the discussion at the previous meeting and the email correspondence she had forwarded among herself, Ms. Harris, and Lamond regarding the Eagles lease, responsibility for parking costs, and signage. Ms. Harris had also forwarded photographs showing the parking lots nearly full during major programs. Ms. Noor noted that she had personally observed the entire lot full on Saturday and stressed that parking is essential for the library. Ms. Harris reported that the Eagles had contacted her that day and confirmed the library could install library parking signage, as this is the final year of the one-year option. She also noted that the 3 Belden lot is frequently full due to renters and post office users. Mr. Knopp observed that the lot was full that afternoon and asked whether non-library users were occupying spaces. Ms. Harris replied that usage varies by lot and program but that the main library lot is primarily used by library patrons. Ms. Noor suggested convening a meeting with the city and parking authority to address management and payment responsibilities.

B. Library Director

Ms. Harris reported that the elevator replacement remains scheduled for April 20 after the tax season. Signs have been posted both outside and inside the elevator. Plans are being developed to relocate some services upstairs and to bring requested items from downstairs via stairs; details will be added to the website and newsletter.

Ms. Noor inquired about the roof replacement included in last year's capital budget. Ms. Harris confirmed it is a current-year project and that quotes are being obtained. Mr. Knopp followed up on Ms. Lauricella's public comment regarding energy infrastructure during the roof replacement. Ms. Harris reported no information had been received on that topic. Mr. Knopp asked how the Board could initiate review of renewable energy options. Ms. Harris suggested sending a written request or requesting a meeting with Alan Lowe and Neil Rennie. Mr. Knopp emphasized the need for an assessment of roof orientation, shading, and feasibility. Ms. Noor supported exploring solar, citing her school's successful solar installation that powers the entire building, and noted the benefits for both environmental and cost savings.

Ms. Harris reported on the EV charging stations. The SoNo project contact confirmed installation for the SoNo chargers would begin within three weeks. The stations will be installed in a manner that will not interfere with the upcoming sidewalk project. Details for the main library stations will be provided at the next meeting. Mr. Knopp inquired about possible discounts for purchasing additional stations. Ms. Harris clarified that the Sono stations are being provided at no cost. Discussion followed on whether the First Taxing District could offer similar support, though Mr. Knopp noted they provide only water service. Ms. Noor asked which city department would handle installation; Ms. Harris replied that building management and South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW) worked on the SoNo project. Ms. Harris confirmed the SoNo installation would take no more than one week and would comply with ADA requirements coordinated by Bill Hnatuk. Ms. Harris mentioned that users would pay for electricity and that the library's electricity bill would increase, but could be offset by charging revenue.

Ms. Harris presented the budget report. She summarized the recent Board of Estimate and Taxation meeting and provided a recap of questions posed to departments. She reviewed the public library's history as a free public institution starting in 1833 in New Hampshire. She said the Norwalk Public Library is public-facing role seven days a week, and serves the entire community. Door counts were discussed: approximately 427,000 pre-COVID, dropping to 145,000 during the pandemic, and recovering to 390,000 in 2025. Increased use of digital services since the pandemic and the library's role in addressing loneliness were noted. Passport service revenue was reviewed: $31,000 in fiscal year 2018, $34,000 in 2019, and $21,000 in 2020 despite closure. Current passport fees and costs were outlined. Part-time staff wages and retention were addressed; custodians had been raised to $17 per hour from $11 in 2024, but many part-time positions had not received increases since 2012 and before. Full-time staffing reductions since 2012 were detailed: custodians from three to two, adult services from one manager plus four librarians to one manager, two librarians, and one assistant, and technical services from three to two. 2025 librarian salary benchmarks for the region show $35.23 per hour, leaving the library approximately $8–$9 behind. The Board packet included compensation data, a 2020 Connecticut Post article on prior cuts, collection and cataloging statistics, e-resource usage and holds data, and previously reduced accounts totaling approximately $26,000. Finance recommended a $100,000 increase in the part-time budget and a 25 percent increase in the book budget. Ms. Noor asked how the $100,000 part-time increase would translate into raises. Ms. Harris explained that it would not cover raises for all staff and that distribution decisions would be required. Mr. Williams inquired about the number of part-time employees (43) and noted that even $1,000 raises per person would use only $43,000, leaving room to reward loyal staff. Ms. Harris reviewed current vacancies including custodians, acquisitions, and a full-time technical services position, and she had followed up with HR that day. Discussion continued on HR turnaround times. Mr. Knopp and Ms. Noor emphasized the importance of filling funded positions. Ms. Harris outlined next steps: awaiting final recommendations from the city after 10 percent cut requests across departments. Mr. Knopp linked parking costs (including the Eagles lease) to the budget pressures, arguing that library funds should prioritize staff and collections rather than subsidizing parking. Ms. Harris agreed and suggested that if the parking authority managed the lot, it could enforce time limits to generate revenue and improve turnover. Mr. Williams recommended including a free parking grace period for short library visits if paid parking is implemented.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

****MR. KNOPP MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
****MR. WILLIAMS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary