

**CITY OF NORWALK
LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 11, 2025**

ATTENDANCE: Janie Williams, Alex Knob, Geraldo Williams, Patsy Bryscia, Moina Noor, Laurel Peterson, Mary Mann (7:02 pm).

STAFF: Sherelle Harris

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Noor called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. A quorum was present.

II. ROLL CALL

A roll call of those present was performed.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. REGULAR MEETING: JULY 10, 2025

The minutes were tabled.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Diane Lauricella had her hand electronically raised but was unable to participate. The Board advised that they would reach out to her so she could call during the remainder of the meeting to participate.

V. REPORTS

A. PRESIDENT

1. Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was held for the late Councilmember Greg Burnett.

2. Debate/Voting at Main Library

Ms. Noor reported that the Norwalk Public Library hosted a well-attended Democratic primary debate between Ms. Young and Ms. Smyth and also served as a polling place. She thanked Ms. Harris, library staff, the Registrar of Voters, and the Norwalk Police Department for their coordination. She noted the library will again serve as a polling place in November and expressed pride in its role as a neutral space for democracy, adding that the high turnout reflected years of work improving parking and upgrading the facility.

3. Strategic Planning Next Steps

Ms. Noor thanked Mr. Rennie for his help with parking improvements, fence removal, and debris cleanup. She stated that the goal for the fall is to begin the strategic planning process, noting major changes since the last plan, including a post-COVID environment, an upcoming new mayor, the acquisition of two properties, and shifts in facility usage.

She added that she and Ms. Harris will work on initiating the RFP process to hire a strategic planning consultant to work with the board and the City, and, though they have not yet met with the Purchasing Department, they plan to move the process forward next week. Ms. Brescia extended her willingness to help during the RFP process.

B. LIBRARY DIRECTOR

1. Capital and Main Library Expansion Budget Update

Mr. Knopp voiced a concern about the use of library expansion funds. He stated that while the City appropriately used ARPA funds to acquire three buildings, \$800,000 from the library's expansion funds was used to acquire the parking lot behind the library through a condemnation process. He cautioned that a trial on the property's value is expected next month, and if the court awards more than \$800,000, there may be a possibility that the City may attempt to take the additional amount from the library's remaining expansion funds of about \$700,000. Mr. Knopp emphasized the need to clarify this with the city before issuing an RFP for a design expert, as they should not commit funds they may not actually control.

Ms. Harris provided a capital budget update, reporting the accounts that have been closed out, and estimating the time the remaining accounts will be closed. She reported that the laptop vending machine, which is nearly closed out, and shared usage data of about 700 checkouts FY2023-24 and over 800 checkouts FY2024-25. She explained that the difference between laptop vending machines and laptop dispensers is that the vending machines is the overall project when two machines were purchased for both libraries and the dispensers projects are per the contract to are upgrade the board and laptops every five years.

Ms. Harris noted that Guardian has a capital budget for library projects and will fund the main library elevator replacement, expected around January or February, as well as roof replacements at both libraries, though no timeline has been set yet. This will be funded through their FY2025-26 budget.

2. Statistical Comparison FY 2024-25

Ms. Harris reported that overall library numbers have risen since COVID, though program attendance dipped partly dipped. She noted it has been challenging to bring elementary-aged children back for programs, while attendance for ages 0–5 remains strong. Staff are offering virtual and self-directed programs to engage families.

Ms. Brescia suggested partnering with local scouts to encourage visits, and Ms. Noor proposed coordinating with SoNo staff to develop strategies to reengage older children and teens. Ms. Harris added that adult attendance trends were similar, though room bookings have increased, and Wi-Fi usage has increased. She said main branch door counts are rising, while SoNo's were affected by the closure, and highlighted the need to boost library card sign-ups through new outreach efforts. She mentioned a new idea of creating a museum pass perks newsletter showcasing current programs and events that the museums have. She noted in-house computer use has declined as more patrons bring their own devices utilizing the library's Wi-Fi. The library tracks computer usage by usage statistics track both sessions and minutes across age groups.

Ms. Noor commented on how technology is transforming patron interactions, and Ms. Brescia emphasized the library's growing role as a community center amid rising local population. Ms. Harris stated that when she was at SoNo she assigned a staff member to create outreach packets and take them to new apartment developments and develop a relationship with their staff for resident engagement. She said it would be a good idea to continue that outreach with the main library.

3. Updated Policy Approvals

The Board received and reviewed printouts for the following policies.

A. Circulation Policy

It was proposed for patron privacy and protection to record only the last four digits of identification provided (e.g., driver's license and passports without country name), while still verifying identity at the desk. It the "responsibilities of cardholders" to alert the library of any changes to the identification provided. Specific edits reviewed included removing language implying all transactions occur in person (given phone renewals) and adding the requirement to provide the last four digits of ID in addition to the month/day of birth.

****MS. BRESCIA MOVED THE CHANGES AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. KNOPP SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Homebound Policy

The Board discussed the Homebound Policy for formal adoption. The policy allows eligible Norwalk residents with medical/physical immobility to receive delivery of up to 10 items every few weeks at no fee; cardholders are required, and a designee may assist with signup.

****MS. BRESCIA MOVED TO ADOPT THE HOMEBOUND POLICY AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. KNOPP SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. Museum Passes Policy

Members proposed increasing the \$5 fee for returning passes in the book drop to deter damage and misuse; \$25 was suggested. Ms. Williams thought the \$25 fee too high.

****MS. BRESCIA MOVED TO SET THE BOOK-DROP RETURN FEE AT \$25.**

**** MR. KNOPP SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) OPPOSED (MS. WILLIAMS).**

It was also noted that museum pass use is broad. Wi-Fi hotspot lending was recently discontinued due to return issues, and a usage report on specific passes will be provided next month.

D. Materials Donation Policy

Ms. Harris stated that revisions to the material donations policy included removing references of friends group. Everything else remained, including Tuesdays and Thursdays as the preferred donation days, with flexibility as needed. The handling of cash associated with donations will be addressed separately and was tabled.

****MS. BRESCIA MOVED TO ADOPT THE POLICY CHANGES AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. KNOPP SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Part-time Staff Hourly Rate Increase Request

Concern that part-time staff have gone over ten years without raises, unlike full-time union staff who receive cost-of-living increases and step raises, was discussed.

Ms. Harris emphasized they work hard, are public-facing for long hours, and deserve recognition. She said the library is open seven days/week from 7.5 – 10 hours/day. She said she continually advocates for the raises. She was invited to a budget meeting and alerted Lamond Daniels who wasn't on the invitation list and the meeting was canceled to be rescheduled. Ms. Noir said she recently spoke with the Mayor's Chief of Staff to push for raises this year.

5. Library Van Update

Ms. Harris confirmed that the library van has been ordered by Mr. Matt Halverson. She noted she will follow up to find out when it will arrive, as it will take time to customize, and confirmed it will be an electric vehicle.

6. Main Library New Reading Room Furniture

Ms. Harris reported that new reading room furniture has arrived, designed for comfort and accessibility, and thanked the city for funding the project and the foundation for funding for agreeing to pay for the shortfall..

She noted wanting to use money left in the budget to replace the outdated auditorium chairs, which are not suitable for elderly patrons and haven't been replaced since the 1970s, with 150 stackable chairs at about \$170 each, totaling roughly \$31,000. If full funding is not available, they could consider purchasing fewer chairs.

7. Text Message Notifications

Text message notifications are nearly ready, with PINs set to be the last four digits of patrons' library card numbers. They expect to launch the feature by October.

8. Public Copiers/Printers with Credit Card Option

Upgrades to the public copiers are still in progress, as the system offered by Xerox was not compatible with the City's financial system. Ms. Harris said they are close to resolving the issue, which will allow patrons to pay by credit card instead of cash.

9. Passport Services

Ms. Harris reported that passport services were delayed due to one staff member's illness and another needing recertification. Since the passport agency did not approve the Sono branch, citing sufficient existing service in the area, that staff member will be reassigned to the main library which will give the main library two certified staff hired specifically for passport service. She hopes to launch passport services by October.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There were technical difficulties experienced.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 pm.