

**CITY OF NORWALK**  
**LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**NOVEMBER 13, 2025**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

**ATTENDANCE:** Laurel Peterson, Jannie Williams, Haroldo Williams, Moina Noor (Chair)

**STAFF:** Sherelle Harris (Library Director)

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Moina Noor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She confirmed that a quorum was not present and noted that the Board could proceed with discussion but could not take any votes.

**II. ROLL CALL**

A roll call was performed. Four Board members were present. Although additional Board members were expected to join later, a quorum was not achieved at any point during the meeting.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A. The October 9, 2025 minutes were included in the meeting packet. Because a quorum was not present, the Board was unable to vote on acceptance of the minutes.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present at this time.

**V. REPORTS**

**A. PRESIDENT**

**1. NAMING OF THE HISTORY ROOM FOR RALPH BLOOM**

Chair Noor provided an update on the proposal to name the History Room in honor of Ralph C. Bloom. At the previous meeting, the Board unanimously voted to forward the resolution to the Common Council. On November 5, Chair Noor, Patsy Brescia, Alex Knopp, and Director Harris attended the Land Use Committee meeting, where the proposal was presented. The committee expressed strong support and voted unanimously to send the item to a public hearing.

The public hearing will take place on December 3, followed by consideration by the full Common Council on December 9. A two thirds majority is required for approval. Chair Noor explained that stakeholders, including the Historical Commission and library staff, will be invited to speak at the hearing.

Chair Noor stated that Mr. Bloom requested the room be formally named “Norwalk History Room Established by Ralph C. Bloom 1972.” He prefers this phrasing rather than naming the room after him directly. The year is being confirmed.

Chair Noor and Director Harris viewed the current signage in the History Room. They discussed placing a plaque similar in size to the one honoring former Library Director Donald Gaus. A tentative date of January 28 at noon has been selected for the dedication ceremony, pending Council approval.

## **2. NEW MAYOR AND NEXT STEPS ON PLANNING**

Chair Noor congratulated Mayor elect Barbara Smith on her election and noted that she is the second female mayor in Norwalk’s history. Board members expressed optimism about working with her, particularly given her background in education.

Chair Noor and Director Harris have reached out to the Purchasing Department regarding the strategic planning process, though progress has been slow. They hope the transition to a new administration will help move the work forward. The Board discussed hosting an open house for the new mayor and council members at both library buildings. The event would include tours and short presentations about programming and technology. Recorded departmental videos are being updated into a cohesive presentation by staff member Raven.

A tentative date of February 24 at 10:00 a.m. was identified, timed to coincide with a children’s story time.

## **3. GARR DONATION AND ROOM NAMING**

Chair Noor summarized developments related to the future bequest from W. Randall Garr and Laura Coleman. Their living trust directs a percentage of the trust estate, currently estimated at more than \$300,000, to the library upon their passing. The gift is contingent on naming a children’s space the Celeste W. Garr Children’s Reading Room.

Because the building is a city property, the naming requires approval through the city’s process, including a public hearing and a final vote by the Common Council. A draft resolution was

prepared with guidance from Buildings and Facilities Manager Alan Lo and City Attorney Darren Callahan. The resolution specifies that once the City receives a gift of \$100,000 or more, it will name a public room of at least 200 square feet as the Celeste W. Garr Children's Reading Room. The Mayor would be authorized to execute the necessary agreements.

Board members discussed the complexity of the matter, noting that it involves both the Foundation and city governance. Concerns were raised about long term protection of the bequest funds, especially in the event of trust modifications or challenges by heirs. Chair Noor stated that these questions will be referred to the City Attorney for clarification. No vote could be taken without a quorum.

## **B. LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

### **1. FYE2027 CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS**

Director Harris presented the capital request for fiscal year ending 2027. The library currently has three self check stations that are approximately twelve years old and nearing the end of service life. Technology Manager Lori Irvin reports that they are difficult to service and pose operational challenges. The proposed replacement cost is \$60,000. The new units would be ADA compliant and allow patrons to check out materials, including DVDs with security strips, without staff assistance.

Board members agreed the update is necessary, particularly with current staffing shortages. A vote will be held at a special meeting

### **2. FYE2027 OPERATING BUDGET REQUESTS**

Director Harris reviewed operating budget considerations. She presented two possible scenarios for part time hourly rate increases. Scenario one includes a one dollar increase for all part time staff except shelvers and custodians. Scenario two includes a two dollar increase for part time staff and a four dollar increase for librarians, who have not received raises in more than fifteen years. A typographical error in one of the figures was identified and will be corrected.

Director Harris also reviewed department requests for additional programming funds and explained that supervisors across five departments expressed the need for increased support due to evolving programming demands. An additional twenty thousand dollars was suggested.

She also noted increases in the cost of digital materials and recommended allocating twenty five percent of the book budget toward E-Content. She reminded the Board that Community Services departments are expected to keep budget increases within 2.5 percent in support of the Mayor's goal of maintaining a low mill rate. This constraint will require adjustments to requests.

Board members discussed concerns about compensation for library staff compared to other city departments. No votes were taken.

### **3. REQUEST TO CLOSE THE LIBRARY SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2025**

Director Harris requested approval to close the library on Saturday, November 29, which would allow staff a four day weekend for the Thanksgiving holiday. The library is already closed on Thursday and Friday and normally open on Saturday. Board members supported the idea but could not take action without a quorum.

### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

Director Harris briefly noted continued work on policy updates required under Senate Bill 271. She plans to consult with state officials and hopes to present updates at an upcoming special meeting.

### **VII. BUDGET ADVOCACY AND EXPANSION RENOVATION**

Chair Noor announced the publication of Board Member Laurel S. Peterson's new book, *The Sky Weeps with Us*. Laurel shared that the book reflects on personal losses and explores themes of grief and gratitude. It is currently available for purchase and will be stocked in the library.

Chair Noor also congratulated Director Harris and staff on the success of the Annual Author Celebration, which featured approximately ninety authors and received positive press coverage. Photographs from the event are available on the library's website.

### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no quorum and no further discussion, the meeting concluded at approximately 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jada Caballero