

DRAFT

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

August 27, 2026

Rappahannock County Library
4 Library Road, Washington, VA 22747

Victoria called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Confirmation of Quorum: In-person attendance were members of the Board of Trustees: Victoria Fortuna, John Beardsley, Bonnie Jewell, Maureen Harris, Patti Peterson, Michael Chamowitz, and Kit Johnston. Virtual attendance was Board of Trustee member: Liz Conley who stated that she was calling in for personal reason from Norway. Absent: Jen Cable who was moving her son into college. Also attending: Library Director Amanda Weakley, FOL Representatives Ruth Welch, Rappahannock News Reporter Ireland Hayes and members of the public.

Special Announcement: Maureen Harris made a statement regarding the incident with the removal of lawn signs. Maureen stated she never should have done what she did, she never should have taken them down. She apologized to Christine Smith and all those affected. On Monday, she was able to connect with Christine via email. They agreed to meet at the meeting today for Maureen to return the signs. She again apologized.

Victoria on behalf of the board accepted Maureen's apology.

Patti then took a moment to acknowledge Dolly Parton and asked that we take a moment of silence to honor all she did to promote children's literacy.

The meeting agenda was approved as presented.

The minutes of the July 21, 2026 of the Board Meeting were approved.

Friends of the Library Report – Ruth Welch clarified that all comments by members of the FOL are theirs alone. The FOL have not made any statement regarding the move. Ruth wanted to clarify some misconceptions shared on Facebook. She highlighted projects FOL have supported including – programs, new chairs for the meeting room, and an emergency HVAC repair. She noted, the Friends supplied all the new lighting in the library. Amanda clarified that after the HVAC repair secondary work was supported by insurance claim.

Public Comment

Question was presented to the board regarding whether we would be voting today on the move to Rush River.

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Christine Smith, Piedmont District – Believes the survey that was conducted was flawed. That it had pie in the sky ideas. If folks knew that the library would be moved, they would have not answered as they did. It is the Rappahannock Free Library, and we need to acknowledge if we move then we will not be free. Rush River designs said Rush River Community Center and Library and therefore it will no longer be the Rappahannock Free Public Library. She has served two terms in the county and has given more time and energy to saving this library. No one wants to talk about moving the library, they want to talk about saving this library. Recommend we do this during the next election cycle for board of supervisors.

Demaris Miller, Hampton District - In her 83 years she has seen people screwed over by boards supposed to be serving the people and not rich benefactors and special interests. Believes the library will turn into a resort if sold. Asked why the minutes are not shared publicly (Bonnie and Victoria clarified all minutes that have been approved are posted on the website)

Rod Osborne, Stonewall Hawthorne – How the board has gone through this process has been disappointing. Closed door meetings and no transparency. What was discussed in these meetings with Mr. Akre? In life nothing comes for free. Ms. Harris stole signs and never apologized and claimed they were safety concern which is laughable. In closing, I am embarrassed by the action of this board and transparency must be a priority. If nothing is done about Ms. Harris, he will be seeking BOS to remove her and appoint a new member.

Craig LeValley, Stonewall Hawthorne – What had started as an exploration to renovate and expands has turned into a negotiation of a lease with a private citizen. Library does not belong to the board, to the Board of Supervisors, to Black Kettle, it belongs to the citizens of Rappahannock.

Laura Grigsby, Hampton – Reminded that at the last meeting she spoke about the hard work of Mary Jamieson, Jamie Jameson, and Roberta Anderson who helped build this library. Two weeks ago, Mrs. Anderson passed away and in her obituary was included how much this library meant to her. The speaker reported that she listed 17 different ways to raise money for the library on Facebook. She has served on multiple boards. She has had fundraising experience in her career and is not afraid to ask people for contributions, but believes the library board to be reluctant to ask for donations.

Jeff Knight, Hampton District – When his family moved here 13 years ago, the library was one of the nicest surprises. Does not believe the structure at Rush River in 40 years out will be much better than our current location. It is very easy to just push this off to a developer. Make a plan, prioritize improvements, and keep our library here.

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Fran Krebsler, Wakefield – Commend the library board. It is a thankless job. Take a moment of silence in honor of former board member, Nancy Ely-Raphel. Since last meeting, heard numerous rumors about Mr. Akre regarding how the center would be used as a conference center or for weddings. As someone who knows Mr. Akre, she feels this has been misrepresented. We need to sit down, have conversations, and allow this board to do what it needs to do. “Moving it will improve it.”

Susan Babcock, Hampton – Stay in the current location. Please see her graphic on page 11 of the August 27 edition of the Rappahannock News.

Bill Tieckelmann, Hampton- The library board not telling the public what the details of the deal is unfair. Most incredible commercial opportunity located down on that corner. We don't know what the deal is on this and until we know, it should be no flat down.

David Konick, Stonewall-Hawthorne - People don't take the board seriously because you won't make Maureen resign. You limit Public Comment. “You people are a joke.”

Conclusion of the Public Comment Period

Report of the President – no report

Report of Librarian – Amanda started her report by honoring two members of the community who recently passed, Roberta Anderson and Nancy Ely-Raphel, for their service and dedication to the library.

Patrons are actively sharing their opinions on renovating or relocating with Amanda and library staff. As noted at previous meetings, it still seems the majority of library patrons are supportive of us renovating at our current location.

Programs/Events: Amanda thanked those who joined the library and helped make last month's Community Event successful. She also shared that the library hosted their first kid librarian, Bailey, who assisted with story time, created a book display of her recommended titles, suggested books for purchase, and checked out books to her family at the circulation desk. Bailey did a wonderful job, and the library is grateful. Other library programs are going well, and exciting programs for all ages continue with: Story times, Outreach, Kid's Book Club, Seniors Paint classes, Sew What? at the Library, Tai Chi, Teen Advisory Board, a special live blues concert and story event, and more planned for the next month.

Amanda noted that patrons were questioning the presence of two people taking photos and measurements around the library on Wednesday. They were not there on behalf of the BoT. She talked with them and found that they were from Madison Spencer Architects and

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were there on behalf of community members that were concerned with Enteros' designs for both sites.

Amanda informed the Board that the future of E-rate funding is uncertain, and that any program changes could impact the library budget. E-rate currently offsets monthly internet costs and helps fund other specific connectivity components.

The State Aid Grant Application she submitted was approved in the amount of \$138,140.00, and this will be discussed further in the Finance Committee Report.

Amanda plans to attend the Library of Virginia Library Directors meetings on September 24-25 in Richmond, and the Virginia Library Association Conference from October 18-20 in Norfolk.

Report of the Treasurer – Treasurer Debbie Knick provided a report of July 2026 revenues and expenditures, as well as a report of the library funds invested through the Virginia Investment Pool. Bonnie reviewed the reports with the Board.

Committee Reports:

Buildings & Grounds – no report

Communications – no report

Expansion/Renovation – John presented an updated floor plan. Noted that it will no longer be a two-story building. The project will now be on one level. It would include the library, community center, and a commercial kitchen. Made note of the error in the first presentation and emphasized that the library would not be named Rush River Library. Showed a new circular entrance which would be a shared entrance to library and community space. The design is not final and is still under discussion. Michael Chamowitz posed two questions – 1.) has the design team approved this design with Mr. Akre (no, the design has not been finalized or approved yet by the rush River team) and 2.) is there a budget for the design team to work on? There is mention of a budget in the lease agreement, but it has not been established. Amanda noted the updated designs would be posted on our website.

Finance – Patti asked Bonnie to share the update. Bonnie shared that the final state revenue for FY27 is going to be \$5,406 more than we originally planned in the budget. Amanda has recommended that 25% be used to cover her salary (no change in the salary, just how it is funded) and then the balance would be used for children's programming. Victoria made a move to approve. All in favor. Bonnie will bring this to BOS meeting.

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Negotiation – Victoria will be in touch to review new drafts of agreements.

Personal – no report

Policy – no report

Victoria moves to bring the board to closed session. Read the attached statement, reporting the reason(s) for the closed session and citing the relevant Code section(s).

John – I

Michael – I

Liz – I

Victoria – I

Maureen – I

Bonnie – I

Kit – I

Patti – I

Jen – absent

Went into closed session at 5:23 p.m.

Closed session – Review of the latest agreement with Michael Goodwin.

Went back into public session at 6:54 p.m. Victoria moves to bring the board back to public session. Read the statement for certification of the closed session.

John – I

Michael – I

Liz – I

Victoria – I

Maureen – I

Bonnie – I

Kit – I

Patti – I

Jen – absent

Old Business – approval of Gil's expenses. All in favor.

New Business – The Board reviewed a proposal from an attorney to serve as our General Counsel. Her rate is \$400 hour. Is not requiring us to send her a retainer. Can call with any questions we have. Victoria motioned for approval of the proposal with an initial budget of \$25K. Michael Chamowitz suggested an amendment that all communication with General Counsel is coordinated through the chairperson. All voted in favor.

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Open Discussion – Negotiation Committee will continue its work through September with to the next meeting with Rush River to be scheduled during September. Once negotiations reach the point of the Negotiating Committee believing the draft agreements are in the optimal state, the drafts will be released simultaneously to the trustees and the public. Following that, there will be a 30-day period during which the public can submit written comments to the library board. Thereafter, we will determine the schedule for next steps.

Motion to adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Submitted by Liz Conley

Victoria Fortuna, President

Date

MOTION TO CONDUCT A CLOSED MEETING

I move that the Rappahannock County Library Board of Trustees conduct a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3711 A of the Code of Virginia for the purpose of:

2.2-3711.A(29) – Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body; and

2.2-3711.A(8) - Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter.

The subject matter of the closed meeting will be:

1. Discussion of terms of a potential gift lease and operating agreement for library space.

RECORD OF VOTE AS TO THE AFORESAID MOTION

	MOTION BY	SECOND	ABSENT/ ABSTAIN	AYE	NAY
John Beardsley				✓	
Jen Cable			Absent		
Michael Chamowitz		✓		✓	
Liz Conley				✓	
Victoria Fortuna	✓			✓	
Maureen Harris				✓	
Bonnie Jewell				✓	
Kit Johnston				✓	
Patti Peterson				✓	

CERTIFICATE

Do each of you certify that to the best of your knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by the Library Board of Trustees in the closed meeting?

	AYE	NAY	Absent/Abstain
John Beardsley	✓		
Jen Cable			Absent
Michael Chamowitz	✓		
Liz Conley	✓		
Victoria Fortuna	✓		
Maureen Harris	✓		
Bonnie Jewell	✓		
Kit Johnston	✓		
Patti Peterson	✓		

The aforesaid Motion and Certificate were adopted in open session at a public meeting of the Rappahannock County Library Board of Trustees on 27 August 2026, by roll-call vote as shown above. The Certificate was adopted immediately after the closed meeting at a reconvened open meeting.


Victoria Fortuna

President, Rappahannock County Public Library Board of Trustees