

Library Board Meeting 1.27.2026



Attendees

Board Member Present: Keith Barrett, Brittany Katz, Leon Shahan, and Scott Webb.

Others attending: Director: Keisha Parks, Director of Ocoee River Regional Library: Liz Schreck, and President of Friends of the Library Association: Lynn Dunlap.

Minutes

- Library café operations and staffing challenges
 - Current operator is on mission travel; plans to reopen March 9 and seeks an employee. If no hire by the end of June, she will close.
- Regional Update
 - Digital formats continue to grow; some libraries reach 50%-60% of total service in digital.
 - Encouragement to make data-driven budget decisions across formats.
 - Plan to analyze digital vs. physical percentages across libraries.
 - AI-related asynchronous webinars added to Niche Academy (e.g., ChatGPT, grant writing with AI, programming).
 - Three-part “Connecting the Dots: Turning Research into Results” series; final session postponed to February due to weather/connectivity.
 - Feb 3: Presentation by Friends of Penske Libraries president for Friends groups.
 - Region-wide training to be hosted at the library on December 3; library will be closed that day to allow staff participation; open to other regions.
 - Tennessee 250 grant cycle deadline was January 26.
 - Carnegie Foundation awarded \$10,000 gifts to operating Carnegie Libraries; regional recipients: Harriman and Etowah.

- Digitization hub pilot project is being finalized; equipment will be available by application for print materials (no microfilm).
- Open records request from Chattanooga Times Free Press
 - Some libraries received interview and open records requests.
 - Locally, the request seeks approved minutes and the review report to the Secretary of State.
 - Minutes not yet approved; response within seven days per Tennessee Code was communicated and accepted.
 - Guidance: consult local legal counsel to ensure proper fulfillment.
- Approval of minutes and reports
 - Motion made by Leon Shahan and seconded by Scott Webb.
 - Finance report: mid-year spending just under 50%; overall on track.
 - No additional questions on committee reports.
- Construction and facilities updates
 - Engineering final report pending; apologies received; hoped for last week/this week; still not delivered.
 - Water damage repairs: most completed; baseboards still unfinished. The city received insurance funds and will transfer by the end of this week, enabling remaining fixes.
 - Ceiling tiles replaced ahead of hosting a “chamber coffee” event.
 - Chamber coffee scheduled second Tuesday of February at 8:30; planned in-library event space.
 - The historical branch “Old Christmas Tea” was successful; raised funds and increased awareness.
 - FOLA Book Nook | Phase 1 completed (bright, inviting); Phase 2 storefront with bookshelves ordered; deposit paid; 2-3 months lead time.
 - Memorial gardens for Anne McReynolds planned at History Branch and main library; funded.
 - Carmichael House:
 - Paint touch-ups done but work incomplete.

- Gutter installation pending; triple window issues noted.
 - Flat roof not up to standard; roofing contractor must return; delays due to weather.
 - Considering reissuing the bid process due to broader scope from Franklin's assessment; prior quotes may no longer be valid. Consensus: rebid is appropriate.
- Tuition reimbursement and budgeting
 - Policy requires board approval for tuition reimbursement.
 - Kerisa requested \$1,350 for MLIS/MLS semester; previously supported; recommended by the director.
 - Jennifer will start in fall; two applicants are expected then.
 - Motion made by Leon Shahan and seconded by Scott Webb. Motion passed to approve Kerisa's current reimbursement.
 - Budget planning:
 - Year 2 of a 3-year plan to raise wages; seeking 8% increase on salary line for next two years.
 - Recommendation to budget enough in tuition reimbursement line item to cover both students next year; general agreement to include and address with total budget.
- Staffing update
 - New afternoon bookmobile staff: Chris Solt.
 - New evening reference staff: Samantha Avans
 - Trustee orientation scheduled for January 29 (Thursday), in Jarnigan space; logistics coordinated.
- Bookmobile status
 - Currently operational after prior downtime (two months this year without service).
 - Discussion with foundation on procuring a new bookmobile; past vehicles were pre-owned and prone to issues.