

The Worcester County Library Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, November 11 at the Ocean City branch. Members present were Jeff Smith, Nancy Howard, Vicki O'Mara, Kathryn Culbertson, Sandra Buchanan, and Jocelyn Briddell. Patricia Tomasovic was absent.

Also present were Jennifer Ranck, Director; Betsy Gravenor-Stacey, Assistant Director; Amy Parker; Business Manager; Julie Presley, Ocean City Branch Manager; and Nicholas Barnes, Technical Services Manager.

Regular meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m. by Mr. Smith. Recording device was acknowledged.

Ms. Presley reported that October was a fantastic month for the Ocean City branch. They held a Pumpkin Painting Party, which drew an attendance of 11. The FrankenSTEAM Dough Creature program on October 8 drew a fully engaged group of 10. Local storyteller Andy Nunez hosted a fascinating presentation on the Ghosts of the Eastern Shore on October 23, which drew an attendance of 11. Michael Hayes (Assistant Branch Manager) planned and presented an elaborate Murder Mystery program, which invited patrons to locate various clues hidden throughout the library to solve a mystery. Our dedicated Knitting Group that meets every Tuesday at 10:30 am has once again offered to knit winter hats for community members in need. Ms. Presley is happy to report that Tina Kahl has completed the Early Start LATI program. The planter in front of the building needed love and attention, thank you to Avery Castellani's mother who brought it back to life.

A motion to accept the minutes from the October 14, 2025 meeting was made by Ms. Howard, seconded by Ms. O'Mara. All present were in favor.

Correspondence – The Youth Services Division of Maryland Library Association highlighted Pocomoke's Paint with Bob Ross program this past summer. OC Today-Dispatch and Bayside Gazette had articles on the Ocean Pines featured artist and our upcoming events. OC Today-Dispatch had pictures of the Republican Women of Worcester County presenting donation checks to our five branches. WBOC highlighted free healthy-eating cooking classes at the Berlin library. OC Today-Dispatch had an article on Library board members sought. The Baltimore Sun Local News reported on Worcester County denies funding for children's porch at new Pocomoke library. No comments were made on the statistics.

Financial Report – Ms. Parker reported on the October 2025 monies sent to the County Commissioners. Ms. Howard inquired about the periodical budget and Ms. Ranck noted we are also receiving the Daily Times invoices monthly. Ms. Ranck said the pop-up had a wiring issue so it was repaired by the County. Ms. Ranck also said we have not been spending much in the book budget due to changes in vendors, but we will catch up. Ms. Culbertson entered the meeting at 9:41 a.m. A discussion about annual pest control inspections followed.

Administrative Report – Board members received a copy of the Administrative report to review before the meeting. Ms. Ranck said Mary Cathell left in September. The position will remain open until the Tech Department moves to the Ocean Pines branch. Berlin's Haunted Laboratory was held over four days and welcomed 1,097 people. Jim Meckley is stepping down in January and Lisa Schoch was elected president of the Friends of the Ocean Pines Library. There is also a bookkeeping position opening for the Friends Group. In Ocean Pines, former sportscaster Rick Manick led a Baseball Talk about the World Series, the Baltimore Orioles, and next year's season, and interviewed Stephen Decatur High School graduate Hayden Snelsire, now a pitcher in the Tampa Bay Rays' minor-league system. Snelsire is the

grandson of Assistant Manager Frank DeLuco. Ms. Ranck noted Pocomoke had a slower month because of the work downtown repairing water lines. Ms. Ingrassia, Ms. Punches, and Ms. Ranck went to Douron yesterday to pick out furniture and finishes for the new Pocomoke library. With the possible move of Snow Hill, the branch has been weeding. Ms. Herz continues to send proxy packets to the jail. Local yearbooks seem to be popular for local history questions. The Pop-Up had a busy October with 500 people visiting Harbor Days. The Longwood Gardens bus trip has sold approximately 34 tickets so far, and tickets are still available.

Assistant Director's Report – A copy of the Staff Development report was sent in each board member's packet to review before the meeting. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey attended "Gamifying the Classics," of the Maryland State Library Agency's Programming, Outreach & Workforce Development webinar series. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey said we should explore this type of reading challenge. Earning buttons for reading classics provides extra motivation. Ms. Kahl did a fantastic job with Early Start LATI. Lexi Orf has started the Early Start LATI program, as well. Allison Blakeman has received nine credits so far in an MLIS program and has met all requirements to be considered a Library Associate (LA). Her progress has been reviewed by MSDE and she is exempt from having to complete the Advanced LATI program. The next meeting of the Strategic Plan Oversight Committee is scheduled for Monday, November 17 at 3:00 pm via Zoom. Items on the agenda include discussion of participation in the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (MCAAHC) Book Drive, which started on November 1 and will continue until June 19, 2026 (Juneteenth). The library's role will be to advertise the book drive with Ms. Orf's help. Ms. Howard asked what genre they are looking for. Ms. Ranck said African American culture. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey mentioned SRLC has a Malcolm X display they can loan out to libraries. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey noted that the Tech department will be moving the first week of December to Ocean Pines. Mr. Smith asked about the strategic plan. This will be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Smith noted we will table library policy review until the December meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Pocomoke Project – Dawn Mackes and Nicole Punches toured the building with Ms. Ranck and architect Jeff Schoellkopf after the October progress meeting. Mr. Schoellkopf helped them to visualize the space. Ms. O'Mara asked about the stained-glass windows. Ms. Ranck said we might be getting one instead of two. The glass will need repairs, costing approximately \$2,500. A new stained-glass shop opened in Pocomoke. The windows will be on long-term loan and will not be installed as traditional windows. Ms. Ranck said they will most likely be displayed in the adult reading area. According to Keller's schedule, substantial completion is slated for April 2026. The next progress meeting will be held on November 19. The County Commissioners would like a tour of the building. Ms. Ranck asked the County Commissioners last Tuesday for support to add the children's porch, but it was denied. The Foundation members have been asking for support from the community. Ms. Culberson asked for a cost estimate; Ms. Ranck will get an updated estimate. There is a walkway to the porch so there is no need for sprinklers, but it will need electricity. Dr. Briddell asked about the board's fiduciary responsibility. Ms. Ranck mentioned unspent end-of-the-year funds and being able to utilize those for capital improvements, with County Commissioner approval. Fiscal oversight will be added to the January agenda.

Snow Hill Project – The final IT & Security plans are being reviewed by the County. Once the project goes out to bid, the process takes about four weeks and then there will be a couple of weeks to “mobilize.” The Commissioners approved the library’s request to apply for an American Library Association “Libraries Transforming Communities” grant. If awarded, the branch hopes to add a handicap ramp at the garden entrance. The grant application is due December 12. The plumbing, electrical, and prep for HVAC will be done in the first phase. The plan is to expand the local history room, increase the size of the children’s area, create a new branch manager’s office, and add a study room. The temporary plan is to have the Snow Hill branch move to the Annex building with a very small collection. The Fire Marshall has tentatively approved this. Ms. Culbertson asked about how much collection will be available. Ms. Ranck was not certain, but less than one-third of the current collection. Interlibrary loan will help fill requests. At the temporary location patrons will be able to make copies, use two public computers, pick up materials, and there will be a small children’s programming space. Some of the adult programs will be held in the Tourism office.

Board Recruitment – Four applications have been received, with another application expected. The committee now consists of Mr. Smith, Ms. Howard, and Dr. Briddell.

Marketing Report – Prepared by Marketing Coordinator, Lexi Orf. The board would like to meet Ms. Orf at the December meeting in Ocean Pines.

Baker & Taylor – We are waiting for a response from Ingram regarding the standing order program to replace the Automatically Yours program through Baker & Taylor. This program will allow us to continue to receive books released by popular authors with minimal effort by staff.

NEW BUSINESS:

2026 Board Meeting & Library Closings – Draft schedules are included in the packet for the board’s review. Ms. Ranck pointed out that July 4 is a Saturday, so we will be open on July 3 and closed on July 4. This would give the full-time staff a floating holiday. There was discussion about being open or closed on Saturday, December 26, 2026, with the board deciding to close. A motion to approve the 2026 Library Closings was made by Ms. O’Mara and seconded by Dr. Briddell. All present were in favor. A motion to approve 2026 Board Meeting dates was made by Ms. Culbertson and seconded by Dr. Briddell. All present were in favor.

Mr. Barnes introduced himself to the board.

Ms. Buchanan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:04 a.m.; Dr. Briddell seconded. All present were in favor.

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at the Ocean Pines branch at 9:30 a.m.

Amy Parker