

The Worcester County Library Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, January 13 at the temporary Pocomoke branch. Members present were Jeffrey Smith, Nancy Howard, Kathryn Culbertson, Sandra Buchanan, and Jocelyn Briddell by phone. Vicki O'Mara was absent.

Also present were Jennifer Ranck, Director; Betsy Gravenor-Stacey, Assistant Director; Amy Parker; Business Manager; Dawn Ingrassia, Pocomoke Branch Manager; Nicole PUNCHES, Pocomoke Assistant Branch Manager; Amanda Laick, Mobile Services Coordinator; Shelby Windsor, Mobile Services Assistant and Jennifer Pflaumer, recent board member candidate.

Regular meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m. by Mr. Smith. Recording device was acknowledged.

Dawn Ingrassia said Nicole PUNCHES hosted a Dickens-themed murder mystery roundtable that was a huge success. Lisa Voss led a DIY Christmas Gifts for Teens program that gave participants a chance to create fun and practical gifts for friends and family. Teens made sugar scrubs, beaded pens, bookmarks, and other thoughtful handmade items. Jack Pruyne has been with the library for over a month and has already been a wonderful addition to the branch.

A motion to accept the minutes from the December 9, 2025 meeting to be amended on page 2 – change “Program Policy” to “Board Policy Manual” was made by Ms. Buchanan, seconded by Ms. Howard. All present were in favor.

Correspondence – Bayside Gazette and OC Today-Dispatch featured our upcoming events at the library. Mr. Smith noted the library ads have a nice layout.

Financial Report – Ms. Parker reported on the December 2025 monies sent to the County Commissioners. Ms. Ranck said overall we are good, no concerns. We will catch up on the spending down the book budget. Ms. Culbertson asked which branches have geothermal. Ms. Ranck said Berlin and Ocean City. Even though the Pocomoke branch will not have geothermal, Ms. Ranck is hoping other features in the new building will help reduce operating costs. Mr. Smith noticed an increase in visitors in December. Ms. Howard asked if we have an annual total of visitors. Ms. Ranck said over 300,000 people visited the branches in FY 25.

Administrative Report – Board members received a copy of the Administrative report to review before the meeting. Mr. Smith asked Ms. Laick for an update about the Pop-Up library. Ms. Laick mentioned the December Holiday parades; the Pop-Up placed in both the Snow Hill and Ocean City parades. The parades have been a good way to reach people who may not know that the library has an outreach vehicle. The Pop-Up has been invited to offer summer reading programs at the Berlin Activities Depot. Ms. Laick thanked Lexi Orf for her help in highlighting and promoting the Pop-Up. Ms. Howard asked if the Pop-Up has visited the Boardwalk; unfortunately, that has not happened due to parking limitations, but the Pop-Up may be adding the 50plus Center in Ocean City to the regular rotation. Ms. Ranck said Michelle Ernat is resigning effective March 13. Snow Hill is getting ready to move to the temporary location at Bank Street. Berlin is seeing an uptick in children's program attendance. The Ocean City train garden was a hit and staff bundled books for all ages as a giveaway in December. Fiber Friends held their Hat & Scarf Sale in the lobby and donated a total of \$620 to the Friends of the Ocean Pines Library. Ms. Herz applied for an ALA grant in hopes of securing funds for an ADA ramp to be installed at the garden entrance. Ms. Ranck noted over 1,300 people attended youth services programs in December. Fika Coffee Roasters hosted a program for adults, and

Screen Painting with local artist John Lampieri was another success. Ms. Ranck said the next Foundation meeting is next Tuesday. We have reached the funds needed for the children's porch in Pocomoke, with the help of the grant from the Zaffere Foundation.

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 reported that Brittney Herz successfully renewed her Professional Librarian license through the Maryland State Department of Education for another five years. Five staff members are due for their certification renewals this year. Rachel Jones completed a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science and successfully applied with MSDE for her Professional Librarian license. Amanda Laick and Shelby Windsor have enrolled in the Early Start LATI Program as part of the January 2026 cohort. Avery Castellani and Angie DiMarco are enrolled in the Winter 2026 cohort of Advanced LATI. The Strategic Plan Oversight Committee shared the updated display and programming calendar with all staff. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey said feedback was received from the staff to make the updates. The next meeting will be on Monday, January 26, and the committee will be discussing goals for 2026. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey also said she received more guidance on the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture book drive. A survey was shared with library staff and the Board of Trustees to solicit feedback about the current library website. Twenty-two responses have been received. Comments about layout, ease of navigation, search features, and other topics will be used to help develop a new website. Ms. Culbertson asked if the responses were based on patron experiences and the answer is yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

Pocomoke Project Ms. Ranck said that the board is welcome to tour the new building after the meeting. Efforts to dry in the building continue as water is still getting inside. The furniture package was approved at the December 16 Commissioner meeting. The next project meeting is scheduled for January 21. It appears that we are looking at a May date for the building to be completed.

Snow Hill Project The project still has not gone to bid. The temporary library is moving along. Staff plan to hold most programs offsite, including story time at Parks and Rec and utilizing the space at the Tourism office on Green Street for adult programs. Final details concerning doors and access control are being developed.

Library Policy Review Ms. Culbertson updated the table of contents. Other items that need to be included include the accommodation policy, grievance policy (once approved), and the tuition reimbursement policy. A draft will be shared at the June meeting and the board will approve at the September meeting.

Grievance Procedure A draft policy was passed out. Forms will be kept by the library director. Dr. Briddell noted that procedures should be reviewed by an attorney. The sub-committee will meet again to tweak changes so the board can vote on the policy at the next meeting. Ms. Ranck will update the branch managers at this afternoon's communications meeting.

Board Recruitment Ms. Ranck said the board's nomination was sent to the County Commissioners for their approval. They requested additional biographical information and we are awaiting their decision.

Marketing Report A copy of the marketing report was included in the packet. Ms. Howard said this is impressive.

NEW BUSINESS:

Library Legislative Day is scheduled for February 10, 2026, in Annapolis. Please let Ms. Ranck know if you would like to attend. ESRL will make appointments for us to meet with our local legislators. The February board meeting has been moved to Tuesday, February 17.

FY 2027 Budget Ms. Ranck passed out a FY 2027 draft budget. Ms. Ranck increased gas, phone and software line items. Pocomoke had to be projected. Ms. Ranck noted no consulting design fees this time. The only capital projects Ms. Ranck would recommend will be Ocean Pines bathrooms in the next two to three years.

Ms. Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:59 a.m.; Ms. Buchanan seconded. All present were in favor.

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Berlin branch at 9:30 a.m.

Amy Parker