

RAILS BOARD ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

February 10, 2022 | 3:00 p.m.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order
Robin Helenthal, Advocacy Committee chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.
Helenthal read the following: In accordance with the Governor's Emergency Proclamation, the RAILS Board of Directors finds an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent and believes it is in the best interest of RAILS to hold a virtual meeting to perform essential business.
2. Roll Call of Committee Members
Goyer called the roll of Committee members.
Zoom: Alice Creason, Juanita Harrell, Robin Helenthal, Thomas Stagg
Absent: Sarah McHone-Chase, Amy Walsh
3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements
Guests in attendance at RAILS Burr Ridge: Monica Harris (*ex-officio*)
Guests in attendance via Zoom: Dan Bostrom, Deirdre Brennan (*ex-officio*), Karen Goyer (minute taker), Dianne Hollister, Stacy Palmisano, Wesley Smith, Mary Witt (*ex-officio*)
There were no announcements.
4. Public Comments
There were no public comments.
5. Consent Agenda
 - 5.1. Adoption of the Agenda
 - 5.2. Approval of the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee Minutes of January 13, 2022

Alice Creason moved, and Thomas Stagg seconded, that
THE RAILS BOARD ADVOCACY COMMITTEE APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

Roll call was taken. Ayes: Alice Creason, Juanita Harrell, Robin Helenthal, Thomas Stagg. Nays: none.
Absent: Sarah McHone-Chase, Amy Walsh.
6. Unfinished Business
 - 6.1. Report on ILA Legislative Meet-up
Multiple committee members attended legislative meetups. The Central Illinois Library Legislative Meet-up was not well attended by legislators while the South Suburban Meet-up was well attended. Due to the virtual format, guests do not have the ability to comment. The RAILS staff and committee members were unable to respond when a representative posed questions about the statewide database. Legislators at the West Suburban & Chicago Meet-up expressed support for the St. Charles Public Library closure that was due to staff harassment over face mask requirements.
 - 6.2. Discussion of questions for Illinois Secretary of State candidate forum
ILA has not confirmed whether questions will be submitted to legislators in writing or presented in a forum. Since the candidates have not been finalized, it was decided to postpone discussion of the questions.
7. New Business
 - 7.1. Specialized library advocacy

Dan Bostrom, RAILS Member Engagement Manager, outlined the challenges the Special Libraries Association (SLA) is facing. Declining enrollment, loss of revenue, increasing expenses, and loss of local chapters are the issues SLA is experiencing. RAILS sees a small decline in special library membership annually. Bostrom detailed the factors of decline and noted that RAILS currently supports specialized libraries through site visits, networking, collaboration, continuing education, and the My Library Is. . campaign called Specialized Library Spotlight. Feedback gathered from specialized librarians outlines ways RAILS could support them: develop best practices for demonstrating ROI, offer more continuing education for specialized libraries, offer funding through grants, post more specialized library jobs on the RAILS job board, and continue to partner with SLA Illinois and SLA National.

Harrell shared that her experience using the RAILS job board resulted in obtaining quality job candidates.

7.2. Discussion of RAILS Strategic Plan relating to Advocacy Committee

Brennan noted that RAILS staff do not do advocacy work directly. RAILS works with other organizations in their advocacy efforts. Advocacy work by the board members is appreciated. The RAILS Strategic Plan goals that relate to advocacy were highlighted: Goal 3 - assist libraries in preparing for the future by leveraging influence, help libraries demonstrate their value; Goal 4 - strengthen the library community and expand services to all with collaborative relationships related to advocacy, information sharing, and universal service.

7.3. School data and advocacy

RAILS is using the annual library certification form to gather data about school libraries including the job title, education level and FTE of school library staff. The data is needed to better advocate for school libraries. The RAILS research assistant will gather data difficult to obtain from the form. RAILS worked with AISLE (Association of Illinois School Library Educators) to formulate the data gathering questions. RAILS plans to continue to collect data in the future.

There was discussion about school districts using the school district library grant money for expenses that are not library related. Brennan will discuss with AISLE staff whether there is a way to determine how grant money is spent and consider including the question in the data gathering by the research assistant. Stagg suggested members contact the schools in their district to inquire how the money was spent.

7.4 Legislative update

HB4092 for the statewide database package was filed last May but has not moved out of the rules committee. RAILS' worked with Senator Laura Murphy and Gail Bush on expanding the Cards for Kids Act and that (SB3497) vote is expected in the next couple of weeks. The current Cards for Kids Act mandates libraries participating in a nonresident program must waive fees for minors in unserved areas whose family qualified for reduced federal lunch program. The expansion is not a mandate but will expand library service to any minor under the age of 18, regardless of their qualification for reduced lunch. The Cards for Kids expansion will be a great improvement in library service for children in Illinois.

ILA is working on equitable eBook pricing for libraries which has support in the legislature and funding broadband for libraries that are not able to provide good broadband access to their public.

There is a proposed increase in library system funding of an additional \$2.8 million from the Illinois Secretary of State. The distribution of the money will be based on the 2020 census population numbers which increased in the RAILS area and collar counties and decreased in the Illinois Heartland system area.

8. Meeting Recap and Agenda Building for the Next RAILS Board Advocacy Committee Meeting
The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held on March 10TH at 3:00 pm. The next steps and topics for the March meeting agenda are:
 - Reports on ILA Legislative Meet-ups
 - Legislative update
 - Research into how school per capita grants funds have been used

9. Adjournment – Robin Helenthal
Helenthal adjourned the meeting at 3:48 p.m.