

REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, March 28, 2025 | 1:00 PM
RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center
125 Tower Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Rene Leyva, RAILS Board President called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, March 28, 2025, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.

2. Roll Call of Members

Fister called the roll of the Board members.

Burr Ridge: Jean Carroll, Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski

Zoom: Emily Porter

Absent: Monica Caldicott, Dianne Hollister

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests in Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Sharon Swanson, Mark Hatch Leila Heath, Anne Slaughter, Kate Niehoff, Brian Smith, Jessica Silva, Ola Grosnki, Laura Nemeth, Nikki Zimmerman, Galin Iliev, Emily Bailey-designated note taker

Guests on Zoom: Greg McCormick, Sam Daly, Kendal Orrison, Mark Hatch, Barb Miller, Demond Warfield, Ryan Hebel

4. Public comments

There were no public comments.

5. Consent agenda

5.1 Adoption of the Agenda

5.2 RAILS Board Minutes of February 28, 2025 Regular Meeting

5.3 RAILS Board Minutes of February 28, 2025 Closed Session Meeting

5.4 Approval of Disbursements: February 2025– Sharon Swanson

Leyva announced that in order to accommodate the State library, we will move agenda item “8.4 IMLS Impacts in Illinois” to directly follow the regular Illinois State Library report, agenda item 7.4. Cutshall moved and Yanikoski seconded to approve the consent agenda with the changes stated.

A roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jean Carroll, Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported the financial reports ending February 28, 2025, an unassigned general fund (\$29.4 million) cash and investment balances would fund an estimated 24.9 months of budgeted FY2025 operations. General fund revenues through February of \$16,111,056 were \$1,339,357 above budget primarily due to the February 20 receipt of the remaining \$1,936,143.79 of the federal portion of the FY2025 APC grant funding.

Swanson reported that the Federal Reserve held the interest rates steady at their January and March meetings. Although the trajectory of the economy under a new administration is still uncertain, they felt more confident that there would be two .25% cuts in the second half of calendar year 2025. General fund expenditures of \$10,632,898 through February were \$1,662,309 below budget primarily due to lower library materials (\$839,661), contractual services (\$373,270), vehicles (\$149,772), travel and continuing education (\$98,103), professional services (\$89,728), personnel (\$84,472), and lower expenditures in nearly all other cost categories. RAILS made \$1,820 of appliance purchases for the kitchenette renovations at Coal Valley with the final payment for the renovation work on both the kitchenette and conference room renovations expected in March.

7. Reports

7.1 Report from the RAILS President

Leyva thanked the Schaumburg Township District Library for hosting the RAILS Member Update at their beautiful library. It was well attended by members and RAILS staff.

7.2 RAILS Board Committee Reports – Committee Chairs

Gregory commented that the next Policy Committee meeting is Thursday, April 17. There were no other additions to the reports.

7.2.1 Advocacy Committee – Jean Carroll

7.2.2 Consortia Committee – Alex Vancina

7.2.3 Executive Committee – Rene Leyva

7.2.3 Nominating Committee – Alex Vancina

7.2.4 Policy Committee – Gwen Gregory

7.2.5 Resource Sharing Committee – Julie Milavec

7.2.6 Universal Service Committee – Catherine Yanikoski

7.3 RAILS Reports

7.3.1 RAILS Monthly Report

Harris reported she attended the ISLAC meeting in Springfield. Anne Slaughter and Troy Brown from the Heartland Library System gave an update on the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment regarding grant applications; an Overview of the OCLC/WorldCat Discovery Subscription; the Impact of the Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Aid Grants Program; and further discussion about changes to the Multilingual Collections Update. There was a great discussion about the IMLS grants to states program and how it affects our systems and members. The Illinois Library Association link to their [bill monitoring list](#) was included in the packet and was just updated a few days ago. All bills were expected to be submitted by March and the list should be all the legislation to be discussed in this current legislative term. All

Board members should have received an email regarding the Cook County Statement of Economic Interests. After submitting your Statement, please forward the confirmation to Emily, it is included in the APC grant to the State Library. RAILS has The RAILS Communications team launched the *Numbers That Count* marketing campaign to promote an understanding of how RAILS functions and what services we provide. Every 2-3 weeks through August 2025, RAILS will share a number or statistic that highlights the work that we do, promoted via the RAILS website, RAILS E-News, social media, and email lists. RAILS received 69 *My Library Is...* grant applications with a total request of \$263,865.62. Filapek updated on the RSA Independence project. The target for the transition is now pushed to January 1, 2026 based on changes regarding the issuance of an Employee Identification Number (EIN) by the IRS, as RSA is converting from a non-profit to a for-profit entity. He thanked the RSA staff, especially Kendal Orrison and Antony Deter, as well the RSA Board for all their work.

7.3.2 Communications & Marketing Overview

Bostrom reported his job is the overview of determining how information about RAILS is disseminated. The Communications team gave an overview of their duties and responsibilities. Ola Gronski is the Digital Marketing and Communications Specialist, and she is responsible for all the RAILS digital content including the RAILS Member Update, Online Roundtable, and other online events such as the *RAILS Minute* and the *Can't Shelve This* Podcast. Jessica Silva, Member Engagement Specialist, reported on her site visits. She coordinates member meet-ups and networking groups and loves planning and attending events such as the upcoming Academic & School Library Virtual Mixer on April 24 at 4 pm or the RAILS Online Roundtable: Special Events, Anniversaries, Celebrations, and Milestones on May 8 at 2 p.m. She also facilitates the "My Library is Grant..." and is excited to award those to our members. Brian Smith is the RAILS Applications & Web Developer and is responsible for the design of maintenance of the RAILS website. He also maintains the service specific website such as "Explore More Illinois" and manages/hosts the statewide Library Directory and Learning Calendar (L2). Nikki Zimmerman, Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, produces the weekly enews, gathering information from member libraries, partner organizations and RAILS staff. She does graphic design and produces all print materials and is currently working on the rebranding for Explore More Illinois. She also attends and coordinates all conference-related duties.

7.4 Illinois State Library Report

Greg McCormick reported on the ISLAC meeting and said they are carefully watching the legislation and impact on libraries. The State Library is working closely with Secretary Giannoulas to look at any bill that is filed and any potential impact on libraries in Illinois. They are in the midst of budget development and are moving forward through the legislative process to review grants that support libraries. State budget hearings are scheduled for April in the House and Senate. The State Library has finalized the review of Public Library per capita grants and is pleased with the complete participation of all Illinois public libraries. Public library construction grants will be awarded for a total of \$870K. in light of the news regarding the funding of the Institute of

Museum and Library Services, executive order and potential implications funding for OCLC/WorldCat Discovery Subscription; First Search service; Public Library Trustee Training portals; I LEADU initiative; Project Next Generation grants; Illinois Department of Corrections Collection grants; Directors University could be at risk. All programs will be funded through FY2025. The state has been notified that the allotment from the federal government will be the same through FY2026, barring any other federal review of the funds. McCormick said the FY2026 budget is being crafted now, and the award amounts will determine future budgets. Harris commented that in times of uncertainty, libraries become more important. She encouraged all members to keep up to date and to print and share the ILA flyer included in the packet “Federal Funding for Libraries in Illinois”. She said ILA is planning a series of visits to all federal legislators. Hovanec suggested a joint statement from all Illinois entities. Leyva thanked Greg, his staff and Secretary Giannoulas for all their work and support on behalf of Illinois libraries.

8. New Business

8.1 Procedures for Board Appointments

Harris reported that the Executive Committee met on March 17 to review the Procedures for Board Appointments that was last updated in 2014. She said the committee wanted to differentiate between vacancies that had remainders of the terms of more or less than six months. The committee also added the to the Election Guide as best practices: the Nominating Period for RAILS annual Board Elections should be approximately seventeen (17) days; the Election Period for RAILS annual Board Elections should be approximately thirty-one (31) days; and the Nomination Period for all Elections will conclude on a Friday at 11:59 p.m. The RAILS Executive Committee approved the draft procedures as presented and voted unanimously at their March 17 meeting to approve it for recommendation to the RAILS Board. Milavec moved and Voitik seconded to approve the changes to the Procedures for Board Appointments and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.2 Succession Plan

Harris explained the newly developed plan is a request from the RAILS Board. The plan outlines scenarios for the absence of the Executive Director on a short-term or long-term basis, and on an expected or unexpected basis. The complete plan also includes organizational charts and an inventory of essential systems at RAILS, which were not included in this packet. The RAILS Executive Committee approved the draft policy as presented and voted unanimously at their March 17 meeting to approve it for recommendation to the RAILS Board. It is expected that this plan should be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee. Questions were raised about the spelling out of the type of leave, the duration of the leave and the return to work documentation. Daly said the issues are addressed with standard language and practices within the RAILS Employee Handbook and would be applied to any situation for the absence of the Executive Director. It was decided to add to the *Completion of Short-Term Emergency Succession Period*, “Before confirming the return to work, it is important that the Board president work with the Human Resource department to set a schedule, responsibilities transition, and a plan for communication to the RAILS staff.” This language mirrors the language in the *Completion of Long-Term Emergency Succession Period*.

Kowalcze moved to approve the RAILS Succession Plan with the additional language. Sennett seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.3 Ethical Artificial Intelligence Policy

Harris reported that the Ethical Artificial Intelligence Policy is a new policy in the RAILS Employee Handbook. She said RAILS recognizes that artificial intelligence is an emerging technology and changes can happen rapidly along with related legislation. RAILS will comply with all applicable statutes and regulations related to the use of artificial intelligence. The policy has been reviewed by legal counsel and the RAILS leadership team and if approved, will also require the creation of a procedural document to address specifics related to the use of generative AI. Vancina commended the committee on a high-level document regarding the ethics and procedure related to AI. Vancina moved and Carroll seconded to approve the Ethical Artificial Intelligence Policy. The motion was unanimously approved.

9. Board Development

9.1 Digital accessibility

Smith reported on online accessibility and RAILS websites, including steps taken during the planning of the latest website redesign and ongoing efforts. RAILS has established an interdepartmental staff committee on digital accessibility. He emphasized that guidelines require human implementation and review, and while automated tools are helpful, they don't catch everything. Technical compliance can still fail to achieve accessibility.

10. Board Member Reports

Sennett reported that the Wilmette Public Library was named Advocate of the Year by the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association Foundation. They are recognized for the profound impact on the NSSRA community, specifically staff efforts to create safe, inclusive spaces and programs for participants.

11. Meeting recap and agenda building for the next RAILS Board meeting Friday, April 25, 2025.

Leyva reported that the RAILS Board is going on the road! The Rockford Public Library will host our next meeting on Friday, April 25, 2025. The April agenda will include an eRead Illinois Update with Anna Beam and an HR Update with Sam Daly. The day will start with a tour of the newly renovated facility, followed by networking and lunch, and then the meeting at 1 p.m.

12. Adjourn

Leyva adjourned the meeting at 2:41 p.m.