



REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, May 23, 2025 | 10:00 AM

RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center

Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Rene Leyva, RAILS Board President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, May 23, 2025, at the Rockford RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.

2. Roll Call of Members

Fister called the roll of the Board members.

RAILS Burr Ridge: Monica Caldicott, Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski

East Peoria: Alex Vancina

Absent: Jean Carroll, Dianne Hollister

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests in Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Sharon Swanson, Kate Niehoff, Stacy Palmisano, Nincy George, Galin Iliev, Tim Prendergast

Guests in East Peoria: Kendal Orrison, Antony Deter arrived at 10:15 a.m.

Guests on Zoom: Mandy Saia, Mary Kate Murray, Maggie Thomann, Ryan Hebel, Emily Bailey-designated note-taker

4. Public comments

There were no public comments.

5. Consent agenda - Rene Leyva

5.1 Adoption of the Agenda

5.2 RAILS Board Minutes of April 25, 2025 Regular Meeting

5.3 Approval of Disbursements: April 2025— Sharon Swanson

Hovanec moved and Voitik seconded to approve the consent agenda. A roll call vote was taken:

Ayes: Monica Caldicott, 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 April 30, 2025, an unassigned general fund (\$27.4 million) cash and investment balances would fund an estimated 23.2 months of budgeted FY2025 operations. General fund revenues through April were approximately \$16.69 million, \$1.29 million above budget, primarily due to the early receipt of the federal portion of the Area Per Capita

Grant in February. Swanson reported that the Federal Reserve held the interest rates steady and should continue at the conservative level due to the slingshot news related to the tariffs. RAILS was awarded a total of \$213,625 of unbudgeted special grant funding to support the ongoing development and enhancement of L2 and the world language cataloging services program. RAILS's general fund expenditures through April of over \$13.05 million were approximately \$1.86 million below budget, primarily due to below-budget Library Materials expenditures from the EBSCO group purchase, contractual expenditures, and vehicles due to favorable fuel prices. RAILS is at the end of our five-year agreement with our auditing firm, Lauterbach & Amen. Three proposals were received, including nearly identical submissions from both Lauterbach & Amen and Sikich. We decided to move forward with Sikich to get a completely fresh set of eyes on our practices and our financial statements as was highlighted as a benefit by Karen Voitik at our last board meeting.

7. Reports

7.1 Report from the RAILS President

Leyva attended the Atlas Annual Trustee Day, and he and Jen Hovanec presented the Trustee training portion of the event. It was a great turnout and was held at the gorgeous Orland Park Library.

7.2 RAILS Board Committee Reports – Committee Chairs

There were no additions to the Committee 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 announced the retirement of Executive Assistant, Emily Bailey on July 11. She is delighted to announce that Stacy Palmisano has been hired to fill that position as of July 14. Stacy's position of Special Projects Coordinator will be posted soon.

She announced some changes regarding the IMLS funding and highlighted the April 28 Chicago Tribune article featuring RAILS delivery service. The article did a great job of explaining the intricacies of Interlibrary Loan and she gave a shout out to the delivery Bolingbrook staff to be interviewed and photographed as a part of their busy day.

On May 13, a separate federal judge has now ruled to halt the dismantling of the IMLS. The judge ordered that the Administration refrain from any further action to eliminate IMLS, restore all staff, and resume the process of releasing awarded funds. This is the result of a lawsuit filed on April 4 by 21 states, including Illinois. The court ordered a status report within seven days. Some grants are now being reinstated, including the Illinois Fire Institute Services Grant and some Grants to States program funds.

She thanked the board for their support of the RAILS In-Service Day as it is a great opportunity for staff to get together and learn and make connections.

Harris and Anne Slaughter I presented during public comment to the Cook County Board Finance Committee meeting on May 14 to support a resolution to provide funding to RAILS for establishing a digital navigator network through libraries in suburban Cook County. The resolution was approved with overwhelming support and allows RAILS to receive \$850,000 through Cook County's Equity Fund to plan and administer a program to provide funding directly to Cook County public libraries for the implementation of digital navigator services. Slaughter will present to the RAILS Board on this exciting grant opportunity, and other topics related to digital equity, at our June meeting.

Harris is facilitating an upcoming event on June 5 with Lily Zheng, author of *Reconstructing DEI* and *DEI Deconstructed*, for a conversation about how Fairness, Access, Inclusion, and Representation principles can be specifically applied to libraries. More about the event can be found [here](#).

The new Explore More Illinois rebranding is complete and includes a new logo, brand colors, and vibrant new marketing materials that reflect the curiosity and convenience of Explore More Illinois. More than 700 public libraries in Illinois currently participate in this program, giving their patrons access to around 80 attractions. Participating libraries received new promotional materials via RAILS Delivery including a poster, bookmarks, and a window cling. RAILS participated in the Reaching Forward North conference in Rosemont, IL. Over 560 people visited the RAILS booth. This year, the booth included an activity for attendees to talk about one thing that they love about their library.

The new leadership program "Catalyst" will be launched in the fall. A pilot session included 13 staff from member libraries of different types, with a mix of roles and leadership experience, who joined a coaching session with leadership expert Becky Thalmann. The session focused on self-leadership and exploring personal leadership styles.

Harris clarified some details regarding the Cook County Digital Navigator network, saying that it is a Cook County Equity Fund initiative not affected by the IMLS funding and there are possibilities that once established, it could be expanded to include the entire RAILS service area if additional funding could be identified.

7.3.2 World Language Cataloging Services Program

Nincy George stated that in every successful library there is a dedicated cataloging team making sure patrons can easily find what they need. RAILS supports the cataloging for our members with practical, hands-on training in cataloging and classification topics, as well as supplementary sessions on various cataloging-related topics. The iCAMP Program (Illinois Cataloging Mentorship Program) is a year-long program designed to support all levels of current and aspiring cataloging staff. The first year comprises 75 mentees guided by 24 mentors. The RAILS World Language Cataloging Services Program is a valuable statewide resource for Illinois libraries of all types, offering original and copy cataloging for materials in world languages, including English, that are part of the library's regular collection with no cost to libraries. Advantages to members are: Enhances Resource Sharing; Supports Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Expands Access to World Language Materials; Promotes Cultural

Inclusivity; and Removes Barriers to Acquiring Diverse Materials. George shared statistics that showed the ongoing surge in interest and demand for the World Language Cataloging Services Program since 2022, including beginning with 13 languages and in FY 2025 has grown to 27 languages cataloged. Caldicott congratulated George and the program and hoped that many more school librarians would take advantage of the services. George said mentors have at least 5 years cataloging experience. Gregory said all aspects of this program are greatly appreciated. Milavec said the World Languages Program have allowed libraries to offer more language collections and better serve their patrons.

7.4 Illinois State Library Report- ISL Staff

Saia reported that the School Library grants have not been canceled. Please refer any questions to the State Library. All are okay, and the Budget Resolutions should be passed by the end of the month. SB 1550, which allows for grants for security and libraries has passed. The Letters About Literature contest was held for students in grades 4 – 12 who are invited to read a book of their choice, reflect on it, and write a personal letter to its author explaining the impact this work had on them. All three winners are from RAILS Libraries. They are always looking for judges for this contest. The Spotlight on Literacy contest awards adult learners and their tutors.

8. New Business

8.1 Approval of SAPC Operational Plan

Harris reviewed the memo regarding the Operational Plan. Some new services are a part of the plan, such as Advocacy, Broadband and Data Driven Analysis and Evaluation. Caldicott appreciates the data that is used for advocacy. Such as “what you don’t know, can hurt you!”. Milavec moved and Caldicott seconded to approve the RAILS FY2026 Operational Plan as part of the System Annual Per Capita Grant application. The motion was unanimously approved.

8.2 Budget Planning Update

Harris reported that the Illinois State Library, instructed us to budget based on receiving level funding of \$11,871,714 from the System Area and Per Capita Grant. Grant revenues also now include a \$850,000 grant from the Cook County Digital Equity Fund to lead the design and implementation of a Digital Navigator Network for suburban Cook County libraries. At the last Federal Reserve meeting on May 7, interest rates once again remained level. We are budgeting anticipated average interest income of 2.9%, which was the lowest of the range of projections that were published following their March meeting. Regarding the tariffs discussion, we are budgeting on current knowledge not speculation. The [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#) for the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin area was released on May 13. Area prices were up 3.7% from a year ago for all items except for food and energy. We expect to present personnel projections for wages and benefits expenditures at a 4% COLA. There will be an 11% increase in health and dental insurance for personnel. We are planning a laptop replacement for July. To further combat check fraud, we are budgeting for the implementation of an EFT module in our accounting system which will allow us to convert more vendors over to ACH payments.

8.3 Executive Director Evaluation Update

Leyva thanked the Board members for completing the evaluation. He will send the compiled results which will be discussed at a closed session at the June meeting. The Board will also determine the change in compensation for the Executive Director to coincide with changes in compensation for all other RAILS staff at the start of the new fiscal year. Gwen Gregory and I will meet with the Executive Director and discuss the findings and recommendations of the compiled evaluation.

9. Board Development

9.1 Library Advocacy for Trustees

Prendergast, a member of the ILA Advocacy Committee, reviewed the new package: “Ready, Set, Advocate” <https://www.ila.org/advocacy/ready-set-advocate> . It includes three modules of presentation recordings and presentation slides. They are designed for individual viewing, to present at a board or staff meeting, or to be shown as part of a continuing education opportunity. Toolkit pages are available in a comprehensive publication or organized by topic for ease of use. He has found that not every method of communication works for all people, and everyone has to find their comfort zone. For instance, someone less outgoing could consider partnering with others on a joint advocacy project.

10. Board Member Reports

Voitik reported Shorewood-Troy Public Library was honored with the Illinois chapter of the National School Public Relations Association’s Advocacy to School Staff Award for the library’s deep commitment to the schools in their district. Caldicott reported that her library is changing their non-fiction section into non-fiction genres, and it is a significant undertaking. The purpose of the change is so that students have better access to non-fiction subjects they enjoy. Hovanec reported that next week, LACONI is hosting their annual Trustee banquet, and authors in attendance will be available for book signings. Harris and Cutshall will be conducting author interviews as well.

11. Meeting recap and agenda building for the next RAILS Board meeting Friday, June 20, 2025. Leyva noted that the June meeting is the 3rd not the 4th Friday of the month due to the ALA Conference. The agenda will include a Broadband Update with Anne Slaughter and Tom Stagg will be joining us to talk about Engaging Potential Trustees.

12. Closed Session

Leyva said that the Board will move into closed session to discuss matters pertaining to closed session minutes as per 5 *Illinois Compiled Statutes, chapter 120, paragraph 2, section 2(c)(21), which states:*

Exceptions. A public body may hold closed meetings to consider the following subjects:

- (1) The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body;*
- (2) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their*

representatives or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees;

(11) Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending;

(21) Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06.

Milavec motioned that the Board moved into closed session. The motion was seconded by Porter and a roll call vote was taken: Monica Caldicott, Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: None.

Porter motioned that the Board return to open session. Hovanec seconded and a roll call vote was taken. Monica Caldicott, Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: None. Absent: Monica Caldicott. The motion carried.

13. Actions in Follow-up to Closed Session

13.1 Six-month Review of Closed Session Minutes (action requested)

Kowalcze moved that the closed session minutes of January 26, 2024 and March 22, 2024 remain closed and the minutes of November 22, 2024 and June 21, 2024 be open. Yanikoski seconded and the motion was approved on a roll call vote of 10 to 1: Ayes: Jenny Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: Karen Voitik

14. Adjourn

Leyva adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.