

REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, June 20, 2025, | 1:00 PM

RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center

Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Rene Leyva, RAILS Board President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 20, 2025, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.

2. Roll Call of Members

Fister called the roll of the Board members.

RAILS Burr Ridge: Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski

Absent: Monica Caldicott, Jenny Cutshall

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests in Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Sharon Swanson, Kate Niehoff, Grant Halter, Laura Nemeth, Tom Staggs, Megan Gove

Guests in East Peoria: None.

Guests on Zoom: Greg McCormick, Mark Hatch, Jessica Silva, 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 May 23, 2025 Regular Meeting

5.3 RAILS Board Minutes of May 23, 2025 Closed Session Meeting

5.4 Approval of Disbursements: May 2025— Sharon Swanson

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

Ayes: Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, 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 May 31, 2025, an unassigned general fund (\$26.5 million) cash and investment balances would fund an estimated 22.4 months of budgeted FY2025 operations. General fund revenues through May of \$17 million were approximately \$604 thousand below budget primarily due to: pass-through database programs, less fuel surcharges, and the elimination of an open RSA position. Swanson reported that RAILS was awarded \$213,625 of unbudgeted special grant funding to support the ongoing development and enhancement of L2 and the world language cataloging services program. RAILS' general fund expenditures through

May were approximately \$1.9 million below budget, primarily due to below-budget Library Materials expenditures from the EBSCO group purchase, contractual expenditures, and lower travel expenses. Buildings and Grounds expenditures as well as Delivery Supplies are above budget due to the lease of additional space at Bolingbrook and the purchase of equipment for the increased sorting operation at Bolingbrook.

7. Reports

7.1 Report from the RAILS President

Leyva had no report.

7.2 RAILS Board Committee Reports – Committee Chairs

Vancina announced RAILS has three outgoing board members: Dianne Hollister, Rene Leyva, and Julie Milavec. They were presented plaques that read: “In Sincere Appreciation for Your Service to the RAILS Board.” Leyva expressed gratitude regarding his year as president of the RAILS board and encouraged board members to share information about RAILS with their colleagues. Leyva spotlighted RAILS staff and, specifically, the RAILS Communications team for all the resources they have provided. Gregory thanked the members of the Policy Committee for all their work in the past year.

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 that due to the retirement of Executive Assistant, Emily Bailey, this is her last RAILS Board meeting. She thanked Bailey for all her assistance throughout her tenure at RAILS. Harris provided updates on the status Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funding: the Government Accountability Office found the Trump administration in violation of the 1974 Impoundment Control Act by withholding funds approved by congress, which may affect the ALA lawsuit against the Trump administration. She reported that the Illinois opioid antagonist bill must be enforced by January 1, 2026, pending the signature of Governor Pritzker, and that Ancel Glink will provide a memo with guidance once the bill is signed into law. Harris commended the Communications department on their work for the Board election, which received record voter turnout at 27% of membership.

7.3.2 Digital Equity Update

Slaughter reported that new program rules for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program were released, delaying construction as states rework their plans. As a result, the Connect Illinois Program, which subgrants BEAD funding, rescinded the first round of awards and cancelled the second as their Notice of Funding Opportunity is revised. Slaughter announced the cancellation of all Digital Equity Act grants, including the \$23.7 million awarded

to the Illinois Office of Broadband, which has indefinitely paused the Illinois Digital Equity Capacity Grant RAILS, CARLI, and IHLS applied for this Spring. Slaughter noted that the constitutionality of the Universal Service Fund, which distributes E-Rate funding to schools and libraries for improved internet access, is being examined by the Supreme Court. Slaughter stated Illinois House Bill 1062 “Libraries Connected” Legislation is progressing, and RAILS is partnering with Cook County to build a Digital Navigator Network for suburban libraries in Cook County. RAILS was awarded \$850,000 from Cook County’s Equity Fund to disburse by November 30, 2025.

7.4 Illinois State Library Report

McCormick stated, at the most recent Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) meeting, funding for regional library systems, the statewide database program, and programs like Cataloging Maintenance Center were identified as critical. The Illinois State Library received its final award from IMLS for this fiscal year. The federal FY26 budget only allotted \$6 million in discretionary spending to IMLS, which may change with congressional action. McCormick reported that Governor Pritzker included increases to library and literacy programs in the state budget, specifically, a \$4.6 million increase to the ISL Equalization Aid Program. ISL also received \$1 million for Secretary of State funded literacy programs.

8. Unfinished Business

8.1 Approval of SAPC Grant Application and FY2026

Harris reported the Illinois State Library has instructed us to submit an operational plan and budget based on an annual revenue of \$11,871,714, which is funding from the System Area and Per Capita Grant. She reviewed the updated services for the next fiscal year: 1. Purchase of four new delivery vehicles; 2. Development of the Catalyst leadership Program; 3. Niche Academy training program 4. New Strategic Plan; 5. Artificial Intelligence Ambassador Program to boost knowledge of how libraries use AI; 6. Infrastructure - maintain competitive salaries; replacing and updating IT systems; Follow the Capital Assessment in order to improve and maintain facilities. Swanson reported RAILS has budgeted a surplus of \$113,112 in the General Fund and \$699,000 of capital purchases in the Capital Projects Fund with no offsetting revenues. The budget reflects a few changes from last fiscal year: The new sorting operation and the additional staff and space needed to support it; The transition of RSA staff to being employed by RSA as of January 1, 2026. This shifts expenditures from Personnel to Contractual Services with support levels for all six LLSAPs remaining the same; the movement of the expenditures for the world language cataloging services program and the maintenance and development of L2 from the General Fund to the Special Revenue Fund offset by anticipated grant revenues; the Cook County Digital Equity grant that was awarded to RAILS in May; the planned replacement of all staff computers, which is budgeted in the General Fund since these purchases are under our capitalization threshold.

9. New Business

9.1 Report on Board election and recommended slate of officers

Vancina reported that the RAILS Nominating Committee met on May 29, 2025 and recommends the following slate of officers: Gwen Gregory, President; Catherine Yanikoski, Vice President; Jean

Carroll, Secretary; Amanda Kowalcze, Treasurer. The incoming President will make a recommendation to the Board to fill the At-Large Seat on the Executive Committee at the July Board meeting. Vancina reported the 2025 RAILS Board Election results: Two At-Large Seats: Yolande Wilburn - Evanston Public Library, Megan Gove – Talcott Free Library. Three Public Library Trustee Seats: Roberta Parks - Peoria Public Library, Ron Holohan - Dunlap Public Library District, Carolyn Sennett - Wilmette Public Library. One Special Library Seat: Catherine Yanikoski - Engineering Systems, Inc. He thanked the Nominating Committee members for their work. Leyva congratulated the newly elected and returning RAILS Board Members.

9.2 Catalyst Leadership Overview

Niehoff gave an overview of the RAILS Catalyst leadership development program designed in response to a need expressed by RAILS members. The program will focus on leadership skills, strengthening the foundation for thriving and resilient libraries, and providing a collaborative learning community of trusted peers. Training will be led by Becky Thalmann, a certified professional coach. Participants will attend in-person and online sessions. Early and mid-level staff in formal or informal roles are encouraged to apply. Applications will be accepted from July 15 – August 15, 2025.

9.3 Resource Sharing Map Update

Halter demonstrated the features of the new interactive RAILS Resource Sharing Map. The statewide map of RAILS, IHLS and CPLS member libraries is easier to update, adds more layers of detailed information, and can easily be shared. The map will officially launch in September 2025.

9.4 New Member

Silva presented the information for Wallace Township Library, a public library in Ottawa, Illinois with a population of approximately 650 people. They are interested in continuing education, networking, and grant opportunities. Kowalcze moved to accept Wallace Township Library in Ottawa to full membership to RAILS with final approval requested from the Illinois State Library. Hollister seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

9.5 Draft FY2026 Calendar for RAILS Board meetings

Harris reported that the draft calendar is presented to the Board to make sure that we have all the outside activities and conferences on the books. The Juneteenth holiday closure and the ALA annual conference present a challenge for scheduling the June 2026 board meeting. Official approval will be at the July meeting when the new board is seated. Approval for the date of the July 2025 board meeting is needed. Porter moved and Gregory seconded for the approval of the RAILS July Board meeting date of Friday, July 25 at 1 pm. The motion was unanimously approved.

9.6 RAILS Organizational Chart and Pay Grade Assignments FY2026

Harris presented the proposed updates to the RAILS Organizational Chart. One staff member will be promoted. Eighteen new staff members were hired in FY2025. Pay grade assignments have been updated according to the HR Source recommendation of 2.27% based on the consumer price index and the marketplace. Yankoski moved for the approval of the changes to the RAILS Organizational Chart and Pay Grade Assignments. Vancina seconded and a roll call vote was

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

10. Board Development

10.1 Engaging Potential Trustees

Stagg presented Strategies for Effective Library Trustee Recruitment. He reviewed the desired skills and qualifications: Leadership Skills; Financial Acumen; Community Engagement and Experience in Governance. He emphasized the importance of diversity and representation and Creating a Compelling Recruitment Message. He suggested looking at community leaders, local organizations and patrons, as avenues to recruiting potential trustees. Experience in library services or governance can greatly enhance effectiveness as trustees, ensuring informed decision-making.

11. RAILS Board Member Reports

Porter said she attended the AI Ambassador training through OSF and thought it was a great experience and highlighted the differences of AI use at her job compared to her work at the public library. Hovanec said the LaGrange Library expanded the Cards for Kids program to an unserved area and registered over 800 new students. Hollister said she found an article of the Tri-County Library crawl and thought it was a great idea. Participants get a map and libraries get stickers when they visit the different libraries. Hollister said the ILA Retirees Forum met and had a great meeting and invited all others to join and check out their webpage on the ILA website. Hollister encouraged the new Board members to participate in the mentorship program and thanked Tom Stagg for all his guidance throughout her tenure. Gregory announced NIU joined Find More Illinois as a lender and they are excited to see if there are any users.

12. Meeting Recap and Next RAILS Board Meeting: Friday, July 25, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Leyva announced the next meeting will be held on Friday, July 25, 2025 at 1 p.m. The day will start with new board member orientation at 9:30a.m., all board members are invited; followed by lunch at noon and the regular board meeting at 1 p.m. the agenda will include:

Approval of the FY2026 Board meeting calendar; New board members will take the Oath of Office; a Vote on the Slate for the RAILS officers; Discussion of the board committee assignments and the Election of at-large member to Executive Committee.

13. Closed Session

Leyva announced the Board will move into closed session to discuss matters pertaining to employee compensation: 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 or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity

A 10 minute break was taken.

Porter motioned that the Board moved into closed session. The motion was seconded by Hollister and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, 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. Ayes: Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

14. Actions in Follow-up to Closed Session

Carroll moved that Executive Director, Monica Harris be given a 6.27% salary increase. Porter seconded and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Jean Carroll, Gwen Gregory, Dianne Hollister, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Rene Leyva, Julie Milavec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none. The Board commented that the pay increase was based on her performance and tenure and appreciated Harris' leadership, to the RAILS Staff Board and Membership.

15. Adjourn

Leyva adjourned the meeting at 3:36 p.m.