
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD

Friday, May 22, 2026, | 10:00 AM

RAILS Burr Ridge

RAILS Burr Ridge, 125 Tower Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Gwen Gregory, RAILS President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on Friday, May 22, 2026, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.

2. Roll Call of Committee Members

Palmisano called the roll of the Board members.

RAILS Burr Ridge: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski.

RAILS East Peoria: Ron Holohan, Roberta Parks

Absent: Jennifer Cutshall, Carolyn Sennett

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests in Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Kurt Asprooth, Joe Filapek, Leila Heath, Galin Iliev, Laura Nemeth, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Anne Slaughter, Sharon Swanson, Guests on Zoom: Ryan Hebel, Laura Keys, Mary Kate Murray, Jessica Silva

4. Public comments

A public comment was submitted by Kate Hall, Executive Director at Northbrook Public Library in Northbrook, IL. In the comment, Hall urged the RAILS Board to reach out to their senators to support fair eBook licensing terms for the Illinois House Bill (HB) 5236.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1. Adoption of the Agenda

5.2. RAILS Board Minutes of April 24, 2026

5.3. Approval of Disbursements

Hovanec moved to approve the consent agenda. Gove seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported that the General fund revenues through April were above budget, primarily due to the earlier-than-anticipated receipt of the federal portion of the System Area and Per Capita grant funding. Investment income through April was above budget. General fund expenditures through April were above budget primarily due to the November 2025 approved transfer from the General fund to replenish the Capital Projects Fund. The personnel expenditures, travel, continuing education, and library materials expenditures for eRead Illinois were all below budget. Fuel prices rose from an average tax-exempt rate of \$3.42 per gallon in March to \$3.94 per gallon in April, well above the budgeted \$3.14 per gallon.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

There was no report from the RAILS President.

7.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports

7.2.1. Advocacy Committee

7.2.2. Consortia Committee

7.2.3. Executive Committee

7.2.4. Policy Committee

7.2.5. Resource Sharing Committee

7.2.6. Universal Service Committee

Nothing additional was added to the committee report document found in the packet.

7.3. RAILS Reports

7.3.1. RAILS Monthly Report – Monica Harris

Before giving the RAILS monthly report, Harris congratulated trustee Monica Caldicott on her school, Vernon Hills High School in Vernon Hills, Illinois, for receiving the National School Library of the Year Award. The national award is provided by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), which annually recognizes school libraries that excel in implementing the AASL's National School Library Standards. Caldicott shared that the library will host a big party for the students in the fall.

In the RAILS monthly report, Harris highlighted that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted at the end of April to establish a new competitive bidding portal for the federal E-Rate program, which helps provide affordable broadband and communication services to schools and libraries nationwide. On June 3, the American Library Association (ALA) will co-host a free webinar to address the FCC's

recent change. Federal bill HR7661, which threatens to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, continues to be closely monitored by ALA. Harris thanked Filapek for attending the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Public Policy Committee (PPC) meeting held in Bloomington on May 4. Both Illinois House bills, HB4261 and HB5236, have been referred to the Illinois Senate for consideration. On May 7, all RAILS staff came together for the annual RAILS Staff In-Service for a day of learning and connecting. Harris thanked the board for their approval to close operations so staff could attend in person at Joliet Junior College. Special thanks were given to Mary Kate Murray as project manager for this year's in-service event. On June 16, RAILS will receive a Palmer Marketing Award presented by the Chicago American Marketing Association. RAILS' Communications team is being honored for their work on the Institute of Museum and Library Service (IMLS) advocacy campaign. The RAILS Catalyst leadership program ended on May 12 with an in-person event. Illinois State Library Deputy Director Dr. Jade Kastel was in attendance. The RAILS Deals and Discounts team has been compiling and analyzing data from a recent survey asking Illinois libraries to share their e-book expenditures. A report on the data will be shared when available. Harris announced that she was recently appointed to a three-year term on the Lyrasis board.

7.3.2. RAILS Service of the Month: RAILS Data Update

Halter, Data Analysis Manager, presented the RAILS Service of the Month report on all things data. The data team provides strategic support to RAILS both internally and externally. Some recent projects include data work on the Cook County Navigator Grant, the creation of a new interactive resource-sharing map, a strategic planning survey for RAILS members and staff, the Slate dashboard, and data training opportunities. Halter announced that starting soon, he will be involved in the new Consortial Data Working Group, which will be a working group of the RAILS Consortia Committee, and will focus on data collection and the delivery count report. Data team member Janette Derucki is a co-host on the *Can't Shelve This* podcast, which focuses on the importance of school libraries and has recently reached 16,000 downloads. The podcast is a collaboration with Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS). Halter shared that a RAILS Data website is in development and that it will serve as a central hub for all RAILS data projects.

7.4. Illinois State Library Report

Laura Keys, Data Coordinator for the Illinois State Library, joined the meeting to give the State Library report. The Library Security Grant awards are being finalized. The grant is historically the most popular, with requests totaling over \$7 million. Keys reported that the Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Aid Grant awards are forthcoming. The Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) will meet in Springfield on May 28. As of today, there is no final word on the Secretary of State's or the State Library's budget, but it is believed that the State Library will be in a good position for grant awards. Steven Ward recently joined the State Library from the Illinois State Archives and will work with government documents. Illinois America 250 Passport booklets have been sent to all public libraries in the state. In celebration of America 250, an Illinois maps exhibit will be on display in Springfield, and on July 17 and 18, the state capital complex in Springfield will host an America 250 celebration. All are welcome to attend the celebration.

8. New business

8.1. Best Practice in Closed Session

Kurt Asprooth from the law firm Ancel Glink joined the meeting to present best practices in a closed session meeting. Closed session meetings are allowed under the Open Meetings Act (OMA) with narrow exceptions. Common discussion topics in a closed session include property sales and purchases, personnel matters, collective bargaining agreements, and litigation. All exceptions must be listed on the agenda and spoken aloud word-for-word prior to moving into closed session. Asprooth cautioned that the discussion should stay on topic. Any additional topics not on the agenda, apart from those listed, are prohibited. A roll call is taken to enter and to exit a closed session, and no votes are taken while in a closed session. Brief minutes are to be taken, and a verbatim recording is required. Asprooth also discussed the meeting minutes, their content approval, approval to open the minutes, and the destruction of the recordings. There is no obligation to open any closed session minutes, but a public body must review all remaining closed session minutes every 6 months. Lastly, a board can go into a closed session at any time, even if it is not listed on the meeting agenda.

8.2. Approval of SAPC Grant Application and FY2027 Budget

Harris thanked Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias for the System Area Per Capita Grant (SAPCG) funding RAILS received in FY2026. The state requested that the RAILS budget for FY2027 remain at the FY2026 level. The prepared budget is conservative, assuming level funding. Among the list of items with forecasted rising costs are eRead Illinois, infrastructure updates, fuel costs, pay grade updates, energy costs, health and casualty insurance, and vehicle replacement. Due to rising costs, the General fund is budgeted with a deliberate deficit, reflecting a strategic decision to utilize reserves.

RAILS will continue to be disciplined with cost savings.

Vancina motioned to approve the System Area and Per Capita Grant application and the FY2027 budget, and to send to the State Library for final approval. Porter seconded, and a roll-call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

8.3. New Member

Silva presented the background of the Japanese American Service Committee's (JASC) Legacy Center. Located in Chicago, the Legacy Center offers services such as adult care, language and cultural programming for adults and children, and preschool cultural classes. The Legacy Center's archive/library was established in 1999 with a collection of letters, photo albums, uniforms, and handcrafted musical instruments. The library is currently organizing its reading room to make its collection more discoverable and revising its website.

Kowalcze motioned to approve the membership of the Japanese Service Committee's Legacy Center and to submit it to the State Library for final approval. Voitik seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

8.4. Strategic Plan Update

Filapek reported that most of the information-gathering stage of the strategic planning process has been completed. Consultant Cindy Fesemyer conducted a series of interviews and focus groups to gather feedback from a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The member survey concluded on April 22, with nearly five hundred responses from across the RAILS membership received. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee recently met and discussed the results. Board members Gwen Gregory and Catherine Yanikoski are part of the committee. Board members will have the opportunity to review the survey findings and a summary of the interviews and focus groups in advance of the Board Strategic Planning Workshop scheduled for June 30.

A break was taken from 11:30 am to 11:40 am.

9. Board Development

9.1. RAILS Library Demographic Profile Project

Everson, RAILS Data Analyst intern, presented a data collection project titled "*Anatomy of a Public Library*". The purpose of the project is to develop interactive library profiles for all 413 RAILS member public libraries, using easy-to-understand visualizations of core statistics, service area demographics, and county-level comparisons. Everson

collected data from the Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR), along with demographic and housing estimates, and limited language-speaking status from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Data 2023. Everson shared the Tableau dashboard and demonstrated how county-level comparisons with peer libraries are generated. On June 9, Everson will demonstrate the dashboard at the *RAILS Online Roundtable: Library Demographics*.

10. RAILS Board Member Reports

Caldicott announced her appointment as President of the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE).

Voitik shared that past board member Tom Stagg recently received his Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) from Chicago State University.

11. Meeting recap and agenda building: RAILS board meeting, Thursday, June 18, at 1:00 p.m. The agenda for the June meeting will include the proposed FY2027 slate of officers, a discussion of the organizational chart, and the FY2027 compensation chart. The service of the month will be Explore More Illinois.

12. Closed Session

The Board will move into closed session to discuss matters pertaining to the following, as per *5 Illinois Compiled Statutes, chapter 120, paragraph 2, section 2(c)(21)*, to discuss matters listed below:

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.

(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.

Porter motioned to move into closed session. Voitik seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

Hovanec motioned to move into closed session. Voitik seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen

Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

13. Actions in Follow-up to Closed Session

13.1. Six-month Review of Closed Session Minutes

Voitik motioned to dispose of the closed session recordings of December 12, 2022, January 4, 2023, and January 5, 2026. Porter seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

Gove motioned to open the closed session minutes of December 12, 2022, January 4, 2023, January 5, 2023, and January 23, 2026. Caldicott seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

13.2. Executive Director Evaluation

Vancina motioned to increase the RAILS Executive Director's salary to \$224,000.00. Gove seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Emily Porter, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.