
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD

Thursday, June 18, 2026 | 1:00 PM

RAILS Burr Ridge

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

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Gwen Gregory, RAILS President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on Thursday, June 18, 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, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Jennifer Hovanec, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski.

RAILS East Peoria: Ron Holohan, Roberta Parks

Absent: Amanda Kowalcze

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests at Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Sam Daly, Ola Gronski, Leila Heath, Kate Niehoff, Laura Nemeth, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Justin Schmidt, Anne Slaughter, Sharon Swanson

Guests on Zoom: Mark Hatch, Ryan Hebel, Mandy Saia

4. Public comments

There were no public comments.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1. Adoption of the Agenda

5.2. RAILS Board Minutes of May 22, 2026

5.3. Approval of Disbursements

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

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported that through May, both the General fund and expenditures were above

budget. General fund revenues were above budget primarily due to higher-than-anticipated interest rates throughout the fiscal year, partially offset by timing differences between budgeted and actual reimbursement revenues. General fund expenditures were above budget and are primarily due to the November transfer of \$1,850,000 from the General fund to replenish the Capital Projects fund. Vehicle expenditures were below budget primarily due to the usual monthly delay in paying the fuel card invoice and lower-than-budget fuel prices during the first eight months of the fiscal year. Fuel prices have increased an average of \$.64 per gallon per month since the end of February. In May, there was a temporary increase in vehicle expenditure due to catalytic converter theft, which caused additional damage to surrounding sensors.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

Gregory acknowledged the four outgoing board members and thanked them for their dedication and service on the RAILS Board: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Jennifer Hovanec, and Alex Vancina. Each outgoing board member was given a plaque of appreciation.

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

Harris thanked Gwen Gregory for her service as Board President over the last year. Harris mentioned that the Western Illinois University library staff were recently reinstated after finding that their 2024 firing went against . On June 16, RAILS was awarded a Palmer Marketing Award for its advocacy work that focused on funding the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Harris thanked the RAILS staff who worked on those advocacy efforts. In federal funding news, on June 5, the House Appropriations Committee approved level funding for the IMLS, and two bills advanced that would “restrict schools nationwide from classroom discussions and materials related to LGBTQ+ identities and race”. The CHARLIE Act (HR 8705) and the Stopping Indoctrination and Protecting Kids Act (HR2616). Harris reported

that at the May 28 Illinois State Library Advisory Committee (ISLAC) meeting, they discussed an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) award given to the Illinois Heartland Library System, which will provide technology funding for under-resourced libraries statewide. RAILS will participate in a Michigan Library Association webinar on eBook Advocacy in August. Harris also shared her recent appointment with the Public Library Association's Budget and Finance Committee for a two-year term from July 2026 to June 2028.

7.3.2. RAILS Service of the Month: Explore More Illinois

Marquez, Special Projects Librarian, presented the service of the month report on Explore More Illinois (EMI), an online cultural and recreational pass program open to all Illinois public libraries. Currently, 471 libraries and 78 attractions participate in the program, with a total of 19,600 reservations made since its launch. Marquez highlighted that in 2025, over 80% of EMI offers provided free or discounted admission and that reservations increased by 32%. Another statistic shared was that the number of unique users logging into Explore More Illinois nearly doubled, from 36,661 in 2024 to 72,533 in 2025. An upgraded data dashboard for libraries and attractions is in development, and adding more downstate attractions is a priority for this year.

7.4. Illinois State Library Report

Saia reported that Public Library Per Capita and Equalization Grant award letters have been sent, totaling \$20.5 million to 640 libraries. Due to a change in the equalization aid formula, 88 libraries have received grants, up from 17 in previous years. Thirteen libraries will receive construction grants, and 60 libraries will receive security grants in FY2026 and FY2027, totaling \$2.7 million. All the grants mentioned will be formally reported at the June 23rd press conference with Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias. In celebration of America 250, the capital complex in Springfield will host several events in July. Also reported, Karen Egan will represent the State Library along with 55 other Illinois librarians from public libraries with less than 5,000 patrons, at the America 250 Convening with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The convening will be in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the event will focus on the future of small libraries in America. Finally, positive feedback has been received for the statewide free database program, Illinois Reliable Information Sources (IRIS).

8. New Business

8.1. Report on Board election and recommended slate of officers

Vancina, Chair of the RAILS Board Nominating Committee, reported that the committee met on June 3 to ratify the election results. Voter turnout was 20.6% of the RAILS membership. A voting guide was mailed, and a strong social media campaign was

launched. In addition to ratifying the election results, the Nominating Committee proposed a slate of Board officers for FY2027.

8.2. RAILS Organizational Chart and Pay Grade Assignments

Harris discussed the changes to both the RAILS organizational chart and the pay grade assignments. RSA staff were removed from both documents due to their January 1, 2026, departure from RAILS to an independent employer. Two staff adjustments were made. The pay grade assignments were reviewed by HR Source and recommended a 2.1% increase. A full salary benchmarking is planned for FY2028.

Vancina motioned to approve the changes to the RAILS Organizational Chart and the Pay Grade Assignments as presented. Gove seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Roberta Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

8.3. Draft FY2027 Calendar for RAILS Board meetings

Included in the meeting packet was a draft of the RAILS Board Meeting schedule for FY2027. To align with our fiscal year transition, only the proposed July meeting date will be approved today, and the remainder of the FY2027 schedule will be formally approved at the July meeting. Two meetings will potentially be held off-site.

Porter motioned to approve the RAILS Board orientation and the RAILS Board meeting date of July 24, 2026. Yanikoski seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

8.4. Executive Director FY2027 Goals

Harris thanked the Board for submitting her evaluation. Goals were drafted after a discussion with Gregory and Yanikoski. After reviewing the five draft goals, no additional changes were made.

Voitik motioned to approve the FY2027 Executive Director's goals as presented. Yanikoski seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

8.5. New Member

Filapek introduced the two libraries that are asking for RAILS membership. St. Mary Nativity School's library serves about 150 PK-8 students as a multi-purpose space for class visits, after-school care, reading, homework, story time, book fairs, and paws-to-read activities. Librarian Susan Ford, who has served for two years, is finalizing automation and looks forward to deals and discounts, library connections, and statewide database resources. Ridgeland School District 122 in Oak Lawn, IL, serves

about 2,220 students across one middle school and four elementary schools, each supported by a dedicated library paraprofessional. The district contacted RAILS for library staff training and is interested in the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, the school library per capita grant, and additional resources for paraprofessionals and staff.

Caldicott motioned to approve Ridgeland School District 122 and St. Mary Nativity School as new members of RAILS and to submit the request to the Illinois State Library for final approval. Hovanec seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

8.6. Strategic Plan Update

Filapek reported on the progress of the strategic plan. The RAILS executive team will take part in a strategic planning workshop on June 23, and the Board will hold its workshop on June 30 as the next step in the planning process. During the workshop, Board members will review survey results, the member assessment report, and other gathered information. They will discuss where RAILS should focus its efforts over the next several years and help shape priorities for future goals and objectives. Board members will also review RAILS' mission and vision statements. Consultant Cindy Fesemeyer will lead the workshop.

9. Board Development

Harris reported that planning for the upcoming fiscal year board development calendar is underway, with monthly meeting agendas designed to continue supporting the Board's work and leadership. After discussion, a solid list of topics was created, such as small and rural libraries, mental health initiatives, legal practices, and the unserved in Illinois.

10. RAILS Board Member Reports

Gregory shared that Northern Illinois University will receive funding from two National Endowment for the Humanities grants. Hovanec discussed the issue libraries in Cook County face with delayed tax payments due to the county's complex tax system. A coalition of libraries has been formed to gather data on this issue, and RAILS started a listserve to assist affected libraries in communicating and sharing information. Gove shared that the Talcott Free Library District has seen an increase in summer reading registrations, with over 600 people registering in the first week.

11. Meeting recap and agenda building: The RAILS Board orientation and meeting will be held on Friday, July 24, 2026

The board orientation and meeting will be held on Friday, July 24. The day will start with an orientation at 9:30 am, followed by lunch at noon, with the regular board meeting beginning at 1 pm. The meeting agenda will include the approval of the FY2027 board

meeting calendar, the new board members' Oath of Office, a vote on the slate of RAILS Board officers, a discussion of the board committee assignments, and the election of an at-large member to the Executive Committee

12. Adjourn

Gregory adjourned the meeting at 2:49 pm.