



REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD

Friday, August 28, 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
Yanikoski, RAILS Board President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm, on August 28, 2026, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.
2. Roll Call of Board Members
Palmisano called the roll of the Board members.
RAILS Burr Ridge: Jennie Cottrill, Jennifer Cutshall, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Amanda Kowalcze, Joanna Marek, Carolyn Sennett, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski.
RAILS East Peoria: Rob Parks
DeKalb Public Library: Rebecca Hunt
Rockford University: Emily Porter
Waukegan Public Library: Victor Hinojosa
Private Location: Megan Gove
Absent: Tori Ferguson
3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements
Guests at Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Leila Heath, Galin Iliev, Kate Niehoff, Sharon Swanson, Jessica Silva, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Anne Slaughter
Guests on Zoom: Sam Daly, David Englebrecht, Mark Hatch, Ryan Hebel, Greg McCormick, Jessica Silva
4. Public Comments
David Englebrecht, Superintendent, Marengo Community High School District #154, gave a public comment to the Board. Englebrecht's comment focused on opposing the proposed suspension of the school district's RAILS membership, listed as agenda item 8.1.
5. Consent Agenda
 - 5.1. Adoption of the Agenda
 - 5.2. RAILS Board Special Meeting Orientation Minutes of July 24, 2026
 - 5.3. RAILS Board Meeting Minutes of July 24, 2026



5.4. Approval of Disbursements: July 2026 - Sharon Swanson

Holohan moved to approve the consent agenda. Voitik seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Jennie Cottrill, Jennifer Cutshall, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Victor Hinojosa, Ron Holohan, Rebecca Hunt, Amanda Kowalcze, Joanna Marek, Rob Parks, Emily Porter, Carolyn Sennett, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski.

6. RAILS Financial Report

Swanson reported on the July 2026 financial statements. Through July, General Fund revenue was above budget, and expenditures were below budget, while available cash and investments were estimated to support 19.7 months of budgeted fiscal year 2027 operations. Reimbursement revenues were above budget primarily due to differences between anticipated and actual invoices for several deals and discounts, primarily the Communico customer engagement platform. Revenue performance was mainly driven by invoicing and membership renewal timing, stronger-than-expected interest income, and a partial insurance settlement for a delivery vehicle declared totaled in June. RAILS had no new hires or terminations during July.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

Yanikoski thanked the RAILS team for hosting the RAILS 15th anniversary event on July 28th, honoring the participants who took part in the merger that created RAILS. RAILS will share highlights from the participant interviews throughout the year on its social media channels.

7.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports

- 7.2.1. Advocacy Committee
 - 7.2.2. Consortia Committee
 - 7.2.3. Executive Committee
 - 7.2.4. Nominating Committee
 - 7.2.5. Policy Committee
 - 7.2.6. Resource Sharing Committee
 - 7.2.7. Universal Service Committee
- Nothing additional was shared.

7.3. RAILS Reports

7.3.1. RAILS Monthly Report

Harris shared several updates: Cyndi Robinson, Executive Director of the Illinois Library Association, will retire on August 31, 2026, after 26 years of service. At the August 24 Public Policy Committee meeting, members reviewed 11 legislative proposals, including submissions from RAILS representatives, for the Illinois Library



Association's Executive Board to consider in September. Harris also highlighted two new Illinois laws affecting libraries: one amending jury laws (PA 104-0683) and another requiring prominent display of 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline information (PA 104-0808). Both laws take effect on January 1, 2027. E-book advocacy is expanding with requests for more information about the Illinois strategy from the Michigan Library Association. Recent storms also damaged a large tree at the Burr Ridge property, requiring its removal.

7.3.2. RAILS Service of the Month: Local Library System Automation Program (LLSAP) Service

Slaughter explained that Illinois law defines a Local Library System Automation Program as a consortium or network of libraries that shares collections, technology, costs, and negotiating power while receiving operational support from RAILS. Six diverse, member-governed programs serve about one-third of RAILS members and provide catalog software and related services, while RAILS supports sustainable and equitable resource sharing through no-cost delivery, operational grants, and data collection through RAILCAR. Catalog Membership Grants help libraries cover one-time joining costs. Slaughter also distinguished these programs from the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois' (CARLI) statewide I-SHARE academic catalog and highlighted ongoing collaboration through the RAILS Board Consortia Committee. The newly formed Consortial Delivery Data Working Group was created to investigate challenges with the delivery count data collection. Resource sharing is one of RAILS' strategic goals to ensure sustainable, equitable resource sharing.

7.4. Illinois State Library Report

Greg McCormick reported that thirty-nine public libraries applied for the Project Next Generation Grant. The Illinois State Library (ISL) has completed review of 25% of the anticipated School District Library Grants, which are due on October 15. In July, the system's annual report guidelines were sent and are due by September 30, except for the single audit. The state library is currently accepting Illinois Public Library Annual Reports from public libraries with fiscal years ending on June 30. The deadline is September 1. Several state library staff, including Jade Kastel and Greg McCormick, attended the Director's University event held August 11-13. The state library funds this event in association with the Illinois Library Association. This year at the Illinois State Fair, the state library highlighted Illinois authors and gave away signed books. Staff also promoted the Illinois Reliable Information Sources (IRIS) program.

8. New Business



8.1. Library Suspension

Bostrom expressed that RAILS staff did their due diligence in researching the state library's request on whether Marengo Community High School District 154 met system requirements. RAILS determined, along with ISL partners, that because Marengo CHS #154 no longer maintains a staff member whose primary duty is serving as librarian, the district fails to satisfy the statutory criteria mandated for multitype system membership.

Cutshall moved to recommend suspending the membership of the Marengo Community High School District 154, with final approval requested from the Illinois State Library. Kowalcze seconded, and the motion was passed by a vote of 13-1, with Marek being the sole Board Member to vote against the motion.

8.2. Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act Report (FOIA) for FY2026

Filapek outlined the commercial FOIA requests RAILS received in FY2026. He also discussed that Illinois public library directors and Freedom of Information Act/Open Meetings Act officers can use the RAILS FOIA/OMA Hotline to receive assistance from an Ancel Glink attorney on basic questions. RAILS provides this service at no cost to Illinois public libraries. The hotline received 116 total calls and emails in FY2026.

8.3. RAILS Six-Month Investment Portfolio Review

Swanson presented the RAILS six-month investment portfolio review. The bulk of RAILS' funds are held in two accounts with Hinsdale Bank & Trust. RAILS has FDIC coverage on the balance of both the checking and money market accounts through Wintrust's MaxSafe program. The remainder of RAILS' liquid funds are held in money market accounts with Illinois Funds and PTMA, which are both local government investment pools. RAILS' investments consist of seventeen CD's as well as a small number of US Treasury Bonds.

8.4. Strategic Plan Update

Filapek reported that our Strategic Planning Consultant Cindy Fesemeyer recently shared the initial draft objectives aligned with RAILS' four strategic goals. The objectives are currently being reviewed and refined internally, and will be presented to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee for discussion at its September 9 meeting. In October, the draft objectives will be shared more broadly with both RAILS membership and staff. Filapek explained that it is important to give members and staff an opportunity to respond to the draft objectives and help shape the final plan. RAILS remains on target to present a draft of the completed strategic plan to the Board at its November meeting.



9. Unfinished Business

9.1. Board Committee Assignments

Harris thanked the board for their dedication and time in serving on a RAILS Board Committee. RAILS staff are actively working on filling any open committee seats.

10. Board Development

10.1. RAILS Catalyst Leadership Program

Niehoff gave an overview of the RAILS Catalyst Leadership Program. The eight-month program was launched more than a year ago in response to members' interest in leadership development. A design team reviewed leadership barriers and qualities, then developed goals centered on building a vibrant profession, a collaborative community, and confident, effective leaders. The program focused on three learning objectives: self-leadership, leading others, and leading across the system without formal authority. RAILS partnered with Becky Thalmann, who developed the content, and facilitated the program. Applicants submitted an essay and a letter of support and committed to eight months of learning. The 145 applications demonstrated strong demand, and forty-eight participants were accepted. The program began in October and included workbooks, six online sessions using a coaching approach, and follow-up meetings in small teams. The program concluded with an in-person capstone event in May. RAILS plans to announce another cohort in the spring.

11. RAILS Board Member Reports

Cottrill announced a new story walk at a local park in Midlothian, with the grand opening on September 17 of the newly refurbished park.

12. Meeting Recap and Agenda Building

The next board meeting will be held on Friday, September 25, 2026, at 1:00 pm at the RAILS Coal Valley Service Center. Before the meeting, there will be a tour of the Moline Public Library and gardens. The September meeting agenda will include a review of the Audit Report and the RAILS Annual Report. The service of the month will be Delivery, and the board development topic will be the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI).

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 pm.