

DEARBORN PUBLIC LIBRARY
LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING
Henry Ford Centennial Library - Room 111
Wednesday, October 08, 2025
Proposed - AMENDED

Commissioners:

- Chairperson Dr. Cheryl Hawkins - Present
- Vice Chair Ali Dagher - Present
- Secretary/Treasurer Jihan Jawad - Present
- Adam Abusalah - Present
- Gerilyn Biggs - Present
- Amira Haidar - Present
- Dr. Ryan Lazar - Present

Library Administration:

- Library Director Betty Adams - Present
- Assistant Director of Technical Services Mark Hancock - Present
- Assistant Director of Programs & Services Rebecca Hermen - Present
- Assistant Director of Operations Patty Podzikowski - Present
- Office Assistant III Daniel Smith - Present

Council President Michael Sareini was present on behalf of City Council

Deputy Corporation Counsel Brad Mendelsohn was in attendance on behalf of the City Legal Department.

Director Michael Kennedy and Deputy Director Corey Jarocki were in attendance on behalf of the City Finance Department

Chairperson Kayne Karnbach was in attendance on behalf of the Historical Advisory Commission

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 PM.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

III. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

IV. Approval of Minutes - September 10, 2025 regular meeting

Chairperson Hawkins advised that the discussion of MLA conference attendance include comments by Deputy Corporation Counsel Mendelsohn regarding regulations on City employees. She further advised to clarify the resolution to this discussion. **Item tabled.**

- ~~Motion to approve as amended made by Vice Chair Dagher, seconded by Commissioner Biggs. Motion carried.~~

V. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Hawkins advised that Sareini and Kennedy present their items before moving forward with the rest of the agenda. She further advised to table the consent agenda for lack of reports.

- Motion to approve made by Vice Chair Dagher, seconded by Commissioner Lazar. Motion carried.

VI. City Council Items (Sareini)

Council President Sareini informed the Library Commission that Director Adams had not been present at several City Council meetings, and was in violation of a City ordinance requiring department directors to attend. He warned that further absences would result in misdemeanor charges against Adams.

Director Adams clarified that she believed she was an employee of the Library Commission, and not the City. She inquired if directors of other commission-run departments had the same requirement to attend, citing the City's HR department as an example. Sareini stated that the HR department was purposely left out of the ordinance.

Deputy Corporation Counsel Mendelsohn clarified that the Library Director is an employee of the City, and added that the resolution states which departments are required to send a representative.

Vice Chair Dagher asked Director Adams to explain her absences from the City Council meetings. Adams stated that her children were sick on two occasions, and personal illness accounted for another absence. She further stated that notice was given in each instance and a representative was present on her behalf. Sareini stated that Adams had been absent from five of the last 15 meetings and demanded the Commission take action.

Vice Chair Dagher asked Adams if she ~~felt~~ **understood** that she was an employee of the City. Adams explained that she thought that she was an employee of the Library Commission, not the City, but had been told both. He asked who was sent to Council meetings on Adams's behalf. The group confirmed that Assistant Director Hermen was present for four of the absences.

Commissioner Biggs asked if the ordinance was clearly written and sent to all relevant departments. Sareini confirmed it was.

Assistant Director Hancock noted that the Historical Museum is under the purview of the Library, and asked if a Museum representative was sufficient for attendance. Sareini stated that it is not. Hancock further inquired if there is a limit in the ordinance on how many times an alternate could be present at the meetings. Sareini said that there is not, and it was not considered at the time the ordinance was written.

Director Adams stated her intent to resign her position as of October 29. A written resignation will be submitted to Chairperson Hawkins. Sareini requested that the Commission send the resignation to City Council.

Director Adams asked Council President Sareini if there had been any one-on-one discussion prior to the request to be added to the agenda. Sareini affirmed there was no prior discussion pertaining to the attendance at City Council meetings with Director Adams.

Sareini departed the meeting at 5:28PM

VII. Financial Report (Kennedy)

Finance Director Kennedy presented to the Commission a memo drafted in February 2025 explaining the annual budget process, revenue sources for the Library, and expenditures.

Kennedy explained that the Library fund was initially a part of the City's general fund. As of 2013 it is funded by a dedicated 1.0 mil approved by voters, and up to 1.0 additional mils levied by City Council; the latter rate is currently .54 mils. Additionally, the Library receives funding from the State of Michigan through the Local Community Stabilization Act, and records revenues for services, room rentals, and investment interest.

Kennedy highlighted Library expenditures, including personnel salaries and benefits, operating costs, debt services, repairs and maintenance, and capital projects. He reviewed fees for City services, and shared items with cost allocations.

The February 2025 memo can be read in full on page 6.

VIII. Library Director's Resignation

Commissioner Lazar expressed surprise and sadness at Director Adams' verbal resignation, noting that the board was excited for her passion and vision for the Library. He asked her to elaborate on her decision.

Adams said that it was a difficult choice, and reiterated that it was not for lack of support from the Commission. She said that she had not received any proactive guidance or transparency of authority for respective roles from the City since she had started two and a half years ago, and felt hindered by tensions and pervasive feelings of disrespect. She urged the board to document fiduciary responsibility, and to make decisions within the boundaries of a PA 164 library system. She stated the team at the Library needed support,

and that there were gems within the Library that deserve recognition for the continued advancements which are made, despite the lack of clarity from administration.

Director Adams departed the meeting at 6:03PM

IX. New Business

A. Michigan Library Appreciation Month

Assistant Director Hermen noted that October is Michigan Library Appreciation Month, and overlaps with Banned Books Week. A resolution for City Council has been developed.

B. Calendar Dates for Library Commission Meetings

Item tabled.

C. Outstanding Projects

Item tabled. Deputy Finance Director Jarocki will forward a list of projects to the Commission.

X. Historical Museum

Historical Advisory Chairperson Karnbach reported that a full-time office manager has started since the last Commission meeting.

He reported that space has been consolidated at the McFadden- Ross House, and new additions are being made to the archives. He reported that items from Esper Branch have been added to the collection, and items at the Gardner House have been inventoried.

He reported the success of the Vintage Sale in August, and outreach at coffee shops in the south end of Dearborn.

He discussed ongoing efforts by staff to repatriate Native American artifacts held by the Museum, noting that several tribes throughout Michigan and Wisconsin have been contacted.

XI. Old Business

A. Library Commission Roles & Responsibilities

Item tabled.

B. Library Director Performance Review

Item tabled.

XII. Public Comment

No further discussion.

XIII. Next Meeting - November 12, 2025

XIV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Lazar, seconded by Commissioner Haidar. The meeting adjourned at 6:14PM