

Library Advisory Board Minutes: February 11, 2025For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, February 11, 2025. The meeting began at 5:05 pm.

Board members present were: Clare Wilkinson, David Jarvis, Domiè Newton, Ingrid Jacobson, Jade Chan, Joe Marquez, Kate Fleming, Kelsey Fong, Kristi Ketchum, London Sorcinelli, Madison Riethman, Nikia Kae Solbjor, and Tia-Theo Thompson. Cassie Duprey, Megan Parrott, Naomi Margolis, and Taryn Sauer were unavailable.

Staff members present were: Annie Lewis, library director; Johnette Easter, HR Director; Jon Worona, director of innovation & technology; Katie O'Dell, bond deputy director; Katie Shifley, finance & facilities director; Kim Sutton, director of marketing & communications; Kirby McCurtis, location services director; Maddelyn High, management analyst; and Sonja Ervin, equity & inclusion manager.

Commissioner Vince Jones-Dixon, District 4, Multnomah County; Jackie Starr, Executive Director, Friends of the Library; and three members of the public were also in attendance.

WELCOME & CHECK-IN

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video or phone and participated in a warm-up conversation in virtual breakout rooms.

Library Director Annie Lewis introduced Commissioner Vince Jones-Dixon, the county's new District 4 commissioner and LAB's designated board liaison.

UPDATES FROM LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

Lewis shared recent systemwide updates and highlights from the Director's Report, including:

- Several programs and events:
 - The [Everybody Reads](#) program, noting that all free community books are now distributed; and encouraging LAB members to attend the author event on March 11.
 - The grand opening of [North Portland Library](#) in February. Lewis thanked folks who made it out to opening celebrations.
 - [Black History Month](#), which includes a number of library events
 - A very successful [Lunar New Year](#) celebration on February 2
 - A new partnership with [Portland Winter Light Festival](#), with light displays at Central and Midland libraries

- Progress on a temporary location for limited services during the bond-related closure of [St. Johns Library](#).
- A reminder that Dave Ratliff is still serving in an interim capacity as Deputy Director. A recruitment is underway now, through the end of February, for a permanent deputy.

Lewis also gave a high-level overview of the library's staffing plan (detailed operational planning); offering to schedule more time with LAB for future conversation if desired.

Lewis reminded that MCL has been engaged in an effort to plan for staffing new, larger spaces and services as a result of the bond. The library, like the county and city, is also facing budget shortfalls due to post-pandemic impacts of declining property tax revenues. The library does not have additional resources to add staff, and needs to meet staffing needs with existing resources.

Lewis highlighted some changes on the horizon, reflected in the library's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget, including scale-down of outreach services to focus on core library services that MCL can provide best. These library staff members are being resigned to library locations or to the library's community engagement team, which is focused on providing library services to folks who have very limited access. Another change is the sunseting of three programs (at the end of this school year) that were initially established with limited grant funding: SchoolCorps, Books2U, and Listos para el Kínder. Lewis shared that these were difficult decisions, but necessary in order for the library to manage staffing into the future. Library leadership is working to support staff through these transitions, and to refer folks to other similarly-focused resources at the library and out in the community. In addition, the library is transitioning from in-house Library Safety Liaison positions to fully contracted security.

BOARD BUSINESS

Meeting minutes for the January 14, 2025 meeting were approved with no changes.

LIBRARY BOND UPDATES

Bond Deputy Director for the library, Katie O'Dell, joined to share an overview of and progress on the [library bond](#). O'Dell last joined LAB for bond updates in 2023. O'Dell shared context on the bond measure, noting that this work is now about halfway complete. O'Dell explained that this work is organized across a Bond Program Management Office. O'Dell shared highlights and images of progress so far, including opening of the library's new [Operations Center](#), and three public library locations that underwent rebuilding and/or major renovations ([Holgate](#), [Midland](#), and [North Portland](#) libraries). O'Dell shared that reception from Holgate and Midland library patrons has been positive, and door counts, checkouts, and meeting room use are very high. The renovated North Portland Library just opened (a historic renovation project), and features a new Black Cultural Center. Six of eleven planned "[refresh](#)" projects are also now complete.

O'Dell reminded that several major projects are still actively under construction and generating excitement: [Albina](#), [Belmont](#), [Northwest](#), [St. Johns](#), and [East County](#) libraries.

In response to a question, O'Dell explained how the library decided which locations to completely rebuild or renovate and what to refresh, including several factors: cost; impacts to the overall library system; opportunities to move from leased to owned buildings; and spreading impact throughout the county and particularly adding more library space in East County.

In response to another question about, and appreciation shared for, the Rockwood Makerspace, O'Dell responded that the new East County Library will have a large Makerspace-type offering. O'Dell explained that the library's approach in new buildings is to create flexible creative learning spaces that can be used by the library, its partners, and community members for many different purposes.

Lewis and LAB members thanked O'Dell for sharing information and her enthusiasm for this work.

CLOSING

LAB liaison Maddelyn High reminded that the March LAB meeting is off-schedule, one week earlier than usual on March 4. This meeting is also a hybrid meeting, and High encouraged folks who are able to join in person at Midland Library to do so.

The meeting adjourned at 6:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Maddelyn High, director's assistant
Multnomah County Library, Oregon