



Meeting Minutes

Library Board

Tuesday, October 14, 2025

5:00 PM

La Crosse Public Library
Auditorium (Lower Level)

Call to Order

The Chair, Sue Anglehart, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Sue Anglehart, Jess Thill, Aaron Engel, Kathy Ivey, Katie Bittner

ABSENT: Araysa Simpson, Erin Raymus, Rosanne Northwood, Mac Kiel

STAFF: Dawn Wacek, Daniel Whitmore, Cynthia Arauz, Brooke Newberry, Amber Leibundgut-Peterson, Miranda Greeno

Agenda Items:

1 Approval of Minutes from Regular Board Meeting – September 9, 2025

Motion to approve the minutes from the regular Board meeting of September 9, 2025.

(Kathy Ivey/Aaron Engel) Carried

2 Approval of Minutes from Committee of the Whole – October 7, 2025

Motion to approve the minutes from the Committee of the Whole meeting of October 7, 2025.

(Aaron Engel/Katie Bittner) Carried

3 Approval of Bills & Financial Reports – September 2025

Motion to approve the bills and financial reports from September 2025.

(Kathy Ivey/Aaron Engel) Carried

Consensus was reached to move public comment to agenda item 4.

4 Public Comment / Other

William Bittner, resident of La Crosse, expressed to the Board that North Community Library is one of the last few third spaces on the Northside of La Crosse. Noting the value and importance of this physical space.

Barb Janssen, District 3 City Council member, shared that she has received an outpouring of concern from community members and that North Community Library is

a third space for many residents. Ms. Janssen encouraged the Board to take 30 days before voting while continuing to take input from residents.

Jerry Swim, resident of La Crosse and member of Lower Northside and Depot Neighborhood Association, expressed concern for the children that live on the Northside of La Crosse. Noting that there are multiple schools within walking distance of the North Community Library.

Rachel Lysne, resident of West Salem and Library Media Specialist at Northside Elementary School, shared how Northside Community Library is utilized for storytimes, school visits, computer access, and is a safe place for children and families during afterschool hours.

Erin Goggin, District 2 City Council member, stated that the viaduct and railroads limit access to the Main Street Library. She asked the Board to consider the children, working families, and disenfranchised community members. Ms. Goggin encouraged the Board to wait to vote until the regular Board meeting in November while continuing to take input from residents.

Liam Bittner, resident of La Crosse, shared that he and his friends love spending time at North Community Library. Noting the crafts and fun activities that take place there. Mr. Bittner expressed that he hopes the Board does not close this branch.

Kate Olson, resident of Mindoro and Library Media Specialist at Logan Middle School, shared that she has been working with Library staff to create meaningful connections between public libraries and school libraries and hopes this partnership continues. Ms. Olson also noted that transportation to Main Street Library is not accessible for all.

Abby Lee, resident of La Crosse, current School District of La Crosse teacher, and former employee of Parenting Place, echoed earlier public comments about the importance of libraries for both children and adults, third spaces, and community. Ms. Lee also shared that Parenting Place hosts play groups at North Community Library.

5 Reports

5.1 Director's Report

5.11 Vacancy Report

The Library is excited to welcome four new part-time Frontline Library Assistants: Kaitlyn Baker-Boarini, Julianna Bruemmer, Kristin Radde, and Aaron Sullivan. LPL has been short-staffed and stretched thin due to some vacancies. Having four new staff members on the Frontline team will alleviate some of this pressure.

5.12 Operations and Service Updates

There has been an outpouring of support from the community regarding the tragic loss of children's librarian, Medora Nelson-Ferris. In her honor, a flag lowering ceremony will take place at City Hall on Wednesday, October 15 at 8:00 a.m. On October 20, after LPL's staff development day concludes, the Library will open only for the Processing Grief Through Play program at 5:00 p.m. Barbara Eisenmenger, LICSW, a pediatric behavioral health consultant from Emplify Health's Department of Pediatrics, will be present at this program.

Polaris, the integrated library system (ILS) that LPL migrated to last year, allows for offsite checkout, leading to an improved ability to deliver materials during outreach

programs.

LPL will be working offline for a few days in early December as Tomah joins Winding Rivers Library System.

5.13 Construction Update

Construction is still on track. There was a small delay with moving an electrical panel, but the process is moving along with taping and mudding. Architects are investigating the potential addition of a half wall on the second floor.

6 Old Business

6.1 Service Animals Policy

**Motion to approve updated Service Animals Policy.
(Jess Thill/Aaron Engel) Carried**

6.2 Budget 2026 – Scenarios and Recommendations

Director Wacek shared with the Board a PowerPoint presentation. The Library's original 2026 budget request was \$5,451,589, this included maintaining all positions and a reduction in non-personnel lines. The expected 2026 budget is \$5,276,884. That is a reduction of 2.58% or \$174,705. At this time, additional reductions at a similar level are expected next year.

When comparing data from comparable libraries in Oshkosh, Eau Claire, and Appleton, LPL has among the highest service hours, computer use, reference transactions, professional level staff, and programs. LPL is also the only location that includes a second branch and an Archives department.

Ms. Wacek shared with the Board two reduction options:

Option A: Reduce all hours of service, programs, outreach, and Archives services. Eliminate Deputy Director and Assistant 2 positions. Add one part-time assistant position. This option maintains two locations for 2026.

Option B: Close North Community Library. Eliminate Deputy Director and Assistant 2 positions. Add three part-time assistant positions. This option redirects resources from under-utilized facility to meeting people where they are on the northside. Director Wacek asked the Board to consider the potential pros and cons of each option, data on each branch's usage, short-term and long-term impact, impact on services and community, impact on staff, and alignment with Library's strategic plan while reviewing these two options.

Library leadership is recommending option B. Considering cuts at a similar level are expected next year and maintaining North degrades Library service everywhere, which doesn't help the Northside. Leadership also shared that other opportunities are being investigated. Such as bussing to the Library via MTU, expanded partnership with and outreach to schools and the Boys & Girls Club, materials vending machines, hotspot and device checkouts, and offsite drop boxes and hold pickup lockers.

Ms. Anglehart expressed that the Library's budget is being cut for the fourth time since 2020, 11 FTE have been lost, South Community Library has been closed, and staffing

has been restructured. While the Board has tried to avoid having North closed, it now must be considered given the significant cuts LPL has experienced year after year.

Board members engaged in discussion and shared their perspectives with one another. Noting that this is not a decision to be taken lightly and that they must carefully consider what will best serve community members across the whole City when making their decision. Board members were in agreement that they should take the time to carefully consider each of the two options while continuing to listen to input from community members.

7 New Business

7.1 Bereavement Policy – Requested Addition

**Motion to approve requested addition to Bereavement Policy.
(Kathy Ivey/Aaron Engel) Carried**

7.2 RFP – Fundraising Feasibility Services

**Motion to approve posting request for proposals for feasibility study on
Library's website and social media.
(Aaron Engel/Kathy Ivey) Carried**

8 Topics for Future Meetings

8.1 Mural – Arts Board Collaboration

8.2 2026 Budget Direction Decision

Adjournment at 6:41 p.m.

**Motion to adjourn.
(Katie Bittner/Aaron Engel) Carried**