

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
1050 CURTISS STREET
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
HELD AT BETTY CHEEVER COUNCIL CHAMBERS
DOWNERS GROVE CIVIC CENTER
FEBRUARY 25, 2026, 7:00 P.M.**

TRUSTEES:

Matt Topic	President
Barnali Khuntia	Secretary
Swapna Gigani	Trustee
Dave Humphreys	Trustee
Nathan Williams	Trustee

GUESTS:

Julie Milavec	Library Director
Jen Ryjewski	Assistant Library Director
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Human Resources & Finance Manager

Minutes prepared by Human Resources & Finance Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis.

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and adequate and proper notice of the meeting having been given, the meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Matt Topic led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

All members of the Board were present.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

On a motion made by Barnali Khuntia, seconded by Swapna Gigani, it was resolved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Gigani, Humphreys, Khuntia, Williams, Topic. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Included the Consent Agenda:

- January 28, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- January 31, 2026 Executive Session Meeting Minutes
- January 31, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
- February 12, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes
- January 2026 Financial Report
- February 2026 Invoices

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Maggie Roth introduced herself as the new President of the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation. She thanked Julie Milavec for everything she has done, her leadership, creativity, thoughtfulness, and for being a wonderful part of the community. Maggie mentioned that the Foundation is partnering with EQDG for an event in April as part of the One Book One Town program series. Their event will be on April 19 at Cadence Kitchen. The details are listed on the library's website and EQDG's website.

Sohinee Roy, a Downers Grove resident, attended the meeting as it was Julie Milavec's last meeting. She wanted to share a few stories related to how important the Downers Grove Public Library is. For five years, she lived in Indian Head Park, which has no library, and before that she lived in Naperville, which has three libraries. Her criteria when looking to buy a house was that it be in a town with a public library. Downers Grove is what spoke to her and the library is part of the reason she decided to move here. She and her spouse moved to Downers Grove during the pandemic and the library helped keep them going. She thanked Julie for leading the way through that difficult time. Her favorite program is the spice program; the spices are high quality and the write-ups are great. A few years after she moved to Downers Grove, a colleague called her asking how the library is in Downers Grove, as they were looking to move. They moved in, followed by their son and grandkids. Her colleague frequently comment how much their grandchildren love the library. Sohinee used to think she wouldn't find a library as good as Naperville, but Downers Grove Public Library has beaten the odds. She said this has a lot to do with Julie and how she spearheaded progress in the library to make DGPL rival some of the larger libraries in Chicago.

6. TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Swapna Gigani reported on the library director search, noting that the Board was very pleased with the overall search process. Deiters & Todd did an excellent job. She thanked the trustees, HR & Finance Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis, Assistant Director Jen Ryjewski, library managers, and library staff for participating in the search process. It was a lot of work and a very hard decision. Heather-Marie Montilla brings a vast background of different experiences. She is coming to DGPL from Bellwood Public Library and trustees are excited for her to start in mid-April.

President Topic thanked Trustee Gigani for all the work she did coordinating with the consultants and keeping things on track. It was an orderly and well-run process. It was a difficult decision to make but the boards feels good with the decision and is happy with the process.

Nathan Williams thanked the audience for attending the meeting and specifically thanked the two Downers Grove Village Council members in attendance. As a trustee, he is mindful of his role in overseeing the library director. Objectivity and emotional distance is key, but with this meeting being Julie Milavec's last, he is going to honor her with a slight shift in tone and well-earned praise. He invited everyone to reflect on when they first met Julie. When he met her, they chatted about life journeys and she asked him why he became a library trustee. She proudly told him of her librarian lineage. She showed him black and white photos of the old library and talked about the Carnegie library. Nathan commented that Julie served the library with purpose, honored her family's legacy, upheld the library's values, and showed resilience and perseverance. She created a supportive and collaborative work culture. She managed community relations with grace, composure, and an unyielding commitment to the library's mission. Looking back at the last decade, she developed two capital improvement plans with fiscally responsible approaches to each, completed a substantial reorganization of library personnel, created two robust five-year strategic plans, promoted intellectual freedom, and supported EDI initiatives, including early compliance with ADA web accessibility, the creation

of an EDI decision making tool, and the promotion of inclusivity. She increased transparency, incorporated social services into every day library work, coordinated with the Foundation, and volunteered her time to promote library services across many communities. In recognition of her service, she was honored as ILA's Librarian of the Year and was recently nominated as an Illinois Library Luminary. He is confident she will receive that honor.

Barnali Khuntia acknowledged Julie's contributions to Downers Grove over her tenure. Barnali remembered her first meeting as a trustee. She and Julie talked about their goals for the library and quickly realized their goals were parallel. Over the last seven years, Barnali worked with Julie through highs and lows both on advisory teams and at board meetings. Julie led the library to reach record-breaking milestones. Julie also paved the way for EDI work in the community and larger library world through her commitment to the library and its values. She has the ability to lead by putting her power down and is willing to be uncomfortable. Barnali noted that are so many positive things to name and none would have happened without Julie's support, leadership, and backing. She thanked Julie for creating a wonderful library experience for everyone and said it was an honor to work beside Julie at DGPL.

Swapna Gigani commented that Julie became director around the same time she joined the board as a trustee. Julie was a mentor to her during challenging times, including COVID and the challenging political climates. Julie has always been there for her as a poised, calm, put-together presence. The general population does not realize what an asset Julie is and the depth of knowledge she has. Swapna does not know how one person can know so many legislative, technological, and policy details. She thanked Julie for being supportive, for helping the trustees do their jobs, and for inspiring staff and those around her.

Dave Humphreys commented on Julie through the lens of a community member and library customer. Julie is esteemed by the board, staff, and other librarians. She worked on strategic plans, building plans, built a five-star library with help from terrific staff, was named Librarian of the Year, and so much more. She has also been a member of this community. He worked with Julie in many respects, including Rotary Club, GroveFest, the music scholarship program, EQDG's Legacy Wall exhibition, and various Fishel Park activities. Julie worked with his church, First Congregational Church, by representing the library and herself though meeting the needs of all members of the community. Dave thanked her for being such a skilled and effective library director and for being a wonderfully compassionate and skilled community member.

Matt Topic thanked the Village Council members who were in attendance and thanked Commissioner Rob Roe, the Council's library liaison, for coming to the library to get a tour. Matt is looking forward to this relationship. Matt thanked library staff for all of their involvement in the process of interviewing library director candidates, acknowledging that staff were very committed to this process because they are very committed to DGPL. He recognized that change is hard, especially when changing from a leader that you love so much. He said that the board and staff are in it together and that staff have the board's support. Matt commented that Julie's tenure as director has included some challenging times for the community and country. She handled it all with commitment, intelligence, empathy, and patience. He and the trustees are so grateful for all she's done for the library. Her impact has mattered to the community, the country, and to humanity. He said that one of the fundamentally great things about people is that we have libraries as a way to share knowledge together. Julie will continue to inspire the next chapter of this library. He hopes she enjoys her many upcoming adventures and hopes she is proud of what she's accomplished.

7. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Julie Milavec announced that the library's new AMH (sorter) will arrive on Tuesday. Currently, there's a hole in the wall where one of the book return slots used to be, as the new sorter will only have one induction site. On Monday, the old sorter will be removed. She wished library staff luck in keeping up with all of the books being returned while the sorter is down for most of next week. Staff anticipate the new sorter will be up and running by the end of next week. Julie gave a shout out to Building Operations Manager Ian Knorr who is a rockstar and has everything planned for the removal and installation. She also gave a big shout out to Circulation Manager Melissa Willer, who spearheaded this project. She chose the perfect machine for the library that will meet all of our needs. Julie reminded everyone that the Americans in the Holocaust exhibit is coming to the library in April. The opening night will be on April 14 and everyone is invited. The exhibit is part of a grant from the US Holocaust Museum and the American Library Association. There will be a lot of programs centered on the exhibit. Staff have scheduled around 1,200 students from District 58 who will be visiting the exhibit on field trips. Julie gave a big thanks to Adult & Teen Services and Kids Room staff, who will be leading all of the tours.

Julie moved on to give a fond farewell to the Board and community. She said the past 10 years were a rollercoaster and whirlwind and every time she thought things were going to slow down, they didn't. There were a lot of smiling faces in the room and it was those people who helped get her through it. She commented that the past five years were the most challenging of her career. She has been a library director for more than 30 years and she would not have made it through without the support and good will of the folks sitting in the room. Some of her favorite trustees she's ever worked with were in the room and went through a lot of this with her. She feels trauma bonded with Swapna Gigani forever, from the multiple challenging situations they navigated together. She said that Downers Grove has always shown its love and support for this library and that made this job so rewarding. She got into this job to do something to give back and make her corner of the world better. It's going to be so strange to not have board meetings set the rhythm of her months. She is looking forward to her next chapter, which includes spending time with her mom in Florida, traveling, and welcoming her first grandchild in September. This is a perfect time for her to retire. She thanked everyone and said it has been an honor to serve the community and an absolute pleasure to be a part of DGPL.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

11. ADJOURNMENT

President Topic adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.