

**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  
APRIL 22, 2026, 7:00 P.M.**

**TRUSTEES:**

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

**GUESTS:**

Heather-Marie Montilla	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 7:00 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 in the Consent Agenda:

- March 25, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- March 2026 Financial Report
- April 2026 Invoices

**5. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ilene Briner welcomed new library director Heather-Marie Montilla to Downers Grove. She wanted to address what many residents see as clear viewpoint discrimination at the library. For the past nine years, the library has prominently celebrated Pride Month with displays,

storytimes, crafts, music, and events. These programs promote ideas about sexuality, gender, and family that many in the community do not share. Families have told her that they choose to avoid the library in June. This is real impact on the usage of a taxpayer-funded space. The library has never offered a comparable month-long celebration of Christian perspectives on family, sexuality, or biological sex. The selective promotion of one viewpoint while excluding others is viewpoint discrimination. Public institutions have a duty to remain neutral and not to elevate controversial ideologies as official. Pride events are inherently political and contested. If presented at all, they should include counter perspectives or not be included. Ilene Briner stated that objecting to these programs is not discrimination. Tax dollars should not go towards promoting these events, as some, such as Pride Storytime, use appeals that are subtle indoctrination. Librarians read books celebrating gender fluidity to preschoolers, framing it as simple fun. Organizations, such as Gays Against Groomers, were created to protect children from premature sexualisation. The book titled **The Agenda War Against Children** by Carla Curtis examines sex differences, language manipulation, and societal impacts on children and is a resource that belongs in the library for balance. There are groups like Turning Point USA or Illinois Freedom Alliance that could bring different viewpoints on family, freedom, and child protection. Many residents feel marginalized by this. Traditional families, people of faith, and concerned parents feel silenced and pushed out of their own public library. She had a simple request, which was that the library not hold Gay Pride Month this year and instead commit to genuine viewpoint diversity. The public library belong to everyone and neutrality and trust must be restored.

Laura Hois stated that it is not right to give preference and priority and an entire month to the Pride movement when so many in the community are not comfortable with it and don't believe there is any balance, fairness, or accommodation to what the whole community wants. That is the responsibility of the Board. For two years, the Board allowed the equity consultant to persuade it to push for radical changes to the library's culture and policies that violate the Constitution, civil rights laws, and the Illinois Local Library Act. Ilene Briner's previous comment conforms to what the Illinois Library Act says, which is that every library established under the Act shall be forever for the use of the residents and taxpayers of the village where located to render the use of the library of the greatest benefit to the greatest number of such residents and taxpayers. It does not say that the library can give preference to certain groups of people, which is what's been happening for years. Laura Hois supported and seconded the request that Pride Month not happen this year. Residents have the right to expect that their taxpayer dollars be spent according to what they want at their local library, yet the equity consultant said they had the power and privilege to declare that this should not be a neutral institution but should serve the historically marginalized.

Gloria Walsh-Rock welcomed the new director. She is thrilled that Heather-Marie Montilla is on board and she sincerely hopes that the board, the staff, and the director will continue its history of inclusion for the entire Downers Grove community, regardless of if they are the majority or if they are not the majority. She thinks the library does a fabulous job celebrating families and individuals throughout Downers Grove, no matter what they think or feel, who they love, or what holidays they celebrate. During storytimes and programs throughout the year, families who would be considered traditional are celebrated, animal families are celebrated, and holidays from many cultures are celebrated. She thinks that is the difference in vocabulary of what the library does. The library doesn't push; it celebrates. She feels that the library has been really great at celebrating the whole community. The library opens doors for conversations on things some people are comfortable with and things that some people are not comfortable with, and that is spectacular. She hopes that with a new director, the library will continue with its mission to do that for all kinds of families that live in Downers Grove and pay taxes to the library.

Marsha Prichason thanked the Board for the thoughtful, thorough, and extremely professional manner in which they conducted the search for a new library director. The

library has a rich tradition representing the diverse and multifaceted interests of the community. This excellent library serves all the public. She is certain that with the deliberate process of thoroughly vetting candidates, the Board has found the most qualified amongst a field of extremely talented applicants. She is sure that the Board selected a director who will continue to build upon the basic democratic principles that libraries and everything contained therein are for everyone. As we move forward, she is confident that the library will continue to be a town center for this village, inclusive in its approach, comprehensive in what it offers, and a safe and welcoming space for everyone. Marsha thanked the Board for serving everyone so well.

Janet Winningham thanked the Board and staff, who are responsible for creating an environment that attracts a hugely competent and extremely well-qualified director and others who want to be here. The Board's leadership and guidance and the staff's support for excellence and quality makes the community all the richer.

## 6. **TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

**Matt Topic** welcomed new library director Heather-Marie Montilla, noting it was a very thorough process and the Board feels wonderful about her joining the library.

**Swapna Gigani** welcomed Heather and noted that she saw Heather both at the opening of the Americans and the Holocaust exhibit as well as at the EQDG and Library Foundation's Spring Soiree event. She said it was a wonderful event with a packed house and a lot of great community members supporting the fundraiser. Trustee Gigani is excited and dedicated to continuing programming that serves all the members of the community.

**Barnali Khuntia** welcomed Heather and hoped that her first couple of weeks have gone by smoothly. She mentioned that it has been a busy couple of weeks for the trustees and the library. The reception and opening for the Americans and the Holocaust exhibit was the prior week and Trustee Khuntia urged everyone to visit the exhibit. She said it was very well done, thoughtful, and will create conversations among attendees. She thanked Program Coordinator Mary McDonald, who led the effort to get the exhibit to Downers Grove. DGPL is one of only 50 libraries in the country to host the exhibit. Trustee Khuntia also recognized the EQDG and DGPL Foundation's fundraising event, noting that it brought out an incredible crowd and a lot of community members came to celebrate the two wonderful organizations. Trustee Khuntia announced that the Department of Justice moved the ADA Title II Web Compliance deadline to April 2027, as opposed to April 2026. She acknowledged Marketing & Communications Manager Cindy Khatri and her department, because they have been so forward-thinking and started preparations for this deadline two years ago. It is an incredibly in-depth and difficult process to convert the library's website to be ADA compliant. The extension gives the library more time to train staff, get everyone on board, and introduce the community to how it is going to impact changes to the website. She commended the staff members who have been trying to get the library ahead of schedule.

**Nathan Williams** echoed Trustees Gigani and Khuntia and he welcomed Heather to the library. He was thrilled to see her at the exhibit and fundraiser events. He stated that the Americans and the Holocaust exhibit is extraordinary and powerful and it resonates with the times. Just this week, library staff added a component of local history to the exhibit and it's nice to have the local component as well. He noted that there are other ancillary events happening as well and encouraged everyone to look at Discoveries or online for other opportunities to engage further than the exhibit. Trustee Williams noted that part of the role of the library director is to build community and be present for the community so it was a pleasure to see Heather at the events. He thought it was really great that she let Program Coordinator Mary McDonald shine at the exhibit opening, as she did a tremendous job and put in a lot of effort to get the exhibit to Downers Grove. Trustee Williams also commented

that he was scrolling through reels on his phone one day and saw a reel of a person interviewing an author and it took him just a second to realize that it was the library's new director, Heather. He said her impact is far-reaching and he thinks it reflects that the Board is bringing someone in with unique characteristics. He is excited about where Heather is going to take the library. Trustee Williams said that he agrees with Janet Winningham, that the library couldn't have recruited such an amazing person to join the library if it didn't have a great reputation as a result of Julie's leadership and the staff of the library. He thanked library staff for creating a library that someone wanted to join. Trustee Williams reminded the community that with summer approaching, there will be more kids in the library. There have been some teens and tweens misbehaving so he wanted to remind kids and their parents that everyone has to adhere to the same rules and code of conduct at the library.

**Dave Humphreys** echoed the comments made about the Holocaust Museum exhibit. It is phenomenal and he encouraged everyone to see it. He noted that there are a lot of schools coming to visit the exhibit as well. Program Coordinator Mary McDonald deserves so much credit for bringing the exhibit to Downers Grove. He also recognized Marketing & Communications Manager Cindy Khatri for all of her work on the ADA web accessibility changes. Trustee Humphreys thanked the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation for an outstanding soiree, noting the large attendance numbers and commenting that it was a celebration of Downers Grove. He thanked Heather for attending the soiree as well. Trustee Humphreys commented that Pride Month in Downers Grove is declared each year by the Mayor and Village Council of Downers Grove. The library supports the declaration but does not create it.

## 7. **LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Assistant Director Jen Ryjewski noted that the American Library Association is celebrating its 150th Anniversary and the annual conference is going to be in Chicago this summer from June 25-29. Jen is going to email the trustees with more details in the event any of them would like to attend. The library is in its second week of the Americans and the Holocaust exhibit and so far, feedback has been extremely positive. There have been three days of school tours so far, with many more planned in the upcoming weeks. Jen acknowledged Program Coordinator Mary McDonald for her work on the exhibit and Teen Outreach Coordinator Jessica Staedter and Children's Outreach Coordinator Nicole Lawton for scheduling and arranging all of the school tours. Jen noted that for the second time ever, the library had its digital checkouts exceed 20,000, which accounts for about 21% of the library's total circulation. She also reiterated that the ADA web accessibility deadline has been postponed by a year. It has been a lot of work on staff and Jen thanked Marketing & Communications Manager Cindy Khatri and the Web Accessibility Team for taking on the large share of work in this endeavor. This work will ensure that people with disabilities will have equal access to the information and services the library provides. Jen highlighted some of the visible changes on the website that were made in preparation for this deadline.

President Topic highlighted the library's work on ADA web accessibility, noting that it is work being done for a very good reason, to allow people with disabilities the ability to interact with the library's website the same way everyone else can. He reiterated that everything on the library's website will need to be ADA compliant and noted that there may be some documents that cannot be made ADA compliant, so the library is going to try and find ways to still make them easy to find. He encouraged the community to let the library know if there are items they need but are no longer on the website or if there are other ways to go about this that would be helpful. He's very proud of the library's transparency record and wants to maintain that level of transparency to the fullest extent the library is able.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

### 8.1 Destroy Executive Session Recording for September 25, 2024

**On a motion made by Dave Humphreys, seconded by Barnali Khuntia, it was resolved to Destroy Executive Session Recording for September 25, 2024. Roll call: Ayes: Gigani, Humphreys, Khuntia, Williams, Topic. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.**

President Topic noted that the Open Meetings Act states that the verbatim recording of a closed session can be destroyed after 18 months if the board approves the destruction of the recording and has approved minutes of the closed meeting that meet the minutes requirements. This is a regular action that boards take, to purge old recordings that aren't necessary anymore, once the associated minutes have been approved.

### 8.2 Additional 2026 Library Closures: Oktoberfest

Staff are recommending to close the weekend of Oktoberfest by closing the building at 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 19 and closing all day on Sunday, September 20. This is a similar approach to when the library has different hours for Rotary GroveFest. Library staff used the building's gate count software to get an estimate of the traffic during last year's Oktoberfest and then an average of the rest of the year on those particular days. Last year, the event was Friday night and Saturday, and foot traffic decreased by 19% on Friday night and slightly increased on Saturday, though staff reported that on Saturday, there was a lot of foot traffic for restroom use. The event creates a lot of noise and affects the availability of parking, issues that led staff to make this recommendation. Library Director Montilla noted that she received the contact information for the District 58 Foundation, who is putting on the event, and she plans to talk with them about their vision for the event and see if library closures would impact that vision. The Board discussed the impact on employee's pay by adding additional closures, the impact to the community by removing the building's restroom access, and the role of the library as an emergency shelter for downtown events. The Board will revisit this discussion and vote next month and the community was encouraged to let the Board know if they have comments on this matter.

## 9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### 9.1 General Policy Updates

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

Last month, staff brought proposed policy updates before the Board. Since February 2025, the library has had internal guidelines and a checklist to help staff in the event there was Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) presence on library property. As a result of the recently approved Village Ordinance regarding ICE-related activities, library staff asked the library's attorney to review the existing guidelines and checklist. The attorney responded with an exhaustive seven page policy that was excessively procedural. Staff are recommending taking the rules from the attorney's policy and incorporating them into the General Policy and then taking the procedural elements and incorporating those into the Managers on Duty/Building Operations Monitors Manual.

## 10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

President Topic adjourned the meeting at 7:51 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.