

APPROVED 4/15/26



LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2026

8:30 A.M.

WASHOE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX COMMISSION CHAMBERS

1001 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Reno, Nevada 89512

Library Trustees:

Ann Silver, Chair

Lea Moser, Vice Chair

Gianna Jacks, Trustee

Tami Ruf, Trustee

Marie Rodriguez, Trustee

0) Salute to the Flag led by Trustee Jacks

1) Roll Call [Non-Action Item]

- Present: Chair Silver, Vice Chair Moser, Trustee Jacks, Trustee Ruf, Trustee Rodriguez.

2) Public Comment –Three Minute Time Limit Per Person [Non-Action Item]

- Drew Ribar: Identified himself as a candidate for Nevada Assembly District 40 and criticized the Library System’s practices and the former director. Claimed library leadership sought to exclude dissenting viewpoints. Urged board members to hire a “middle-of-the-road” director to serve the entire community.
- Cliff Nellis: Questioned why only four candidates were chosen out of the 20 applicants for director. Urged the board to scrutinize the hiring process. Expressed opposition to the library’s affiliation with the ALA and urged the trustees to consider privatization. Claimed there are inappropriate materials in the children’s section.
- Lois Barton: Praised library staff. Underscored the rigor and dedication required in librarianship and commended the selection of finalists with ALA-accredited degrees. Expressed appreciation for the Friend’s donation and noted it as evidence of community backing.
- Arnie Maurins: Former WCLS director (2008-2015). Encouraged trustees to select a director based on their ability to articulate and implement a new vision, to serve a diverse community, express advocacy for the library’s community value, and serve as a transparent steward of financial and human resources.
- Sandee Tibbett: Expressed disappointment in the decision to forgo a public community survey and the perceived dismissal of community input. Criticized the County’s hiring procedure and that control was given over to the consulting firm.

Requested a motion to bring back the 12 screened candidates for a public meet-and-greet. Offered “reluctant support” for Tammy Westergard.

- Eileen Ecklund: Expressed relief that the hiring process was moving forward and showed support for a director who defends library public service values and inclusively. Noted funding shortages and that overcoming the hurdles will require sustained effort with assistance from the public. Noted that libraries are an essential part of a democratic infrastructure deserving of defense and investment.
- Judith Simon: Former Library Board trustee (2006-2010). Expressed appreciation for “strong” candidates. Urged board to reaffirm libraries as community lifelines and to continue programming for children, seniors, and working adults. Spoke against book bans.
- Nancy Cummings-Schmidt: Former WCLS director (1995-2008). Stressed the importance of selecting a new director and the library board’s role in the process. Praised library staff and thanked trustees for persevering through a difficult time. Hopes their hiring decision will stabilize and advance the library system.
- Bruce Parks: Shared qualities he did not want to see in a library director including antagonism towards trustees and preferential treatment towards certain groups. Called for a director who is responsive, apolitical, and collaborative. Criticized perceived flaws in the recruitment process and questioned if the right director would be found in the current applicant pool.
- Naseem Jamnia: Noted the nation-wide challenges leveled at libraries and the specific challenges faced by WCLS including loss of funding, book challenges, and leadership problems. Praised library staff and advocates. Urged the board to address how they will continue to support the library system and protect staff from harassment.
- Cate Salim: Noted she is a Washoe County employee but speaking on her personal time. Expressed disappointment with the time and date of the meeting, noting that it reduced participation. Called for trustees to disclose any past or

present relationships with candidates and recuse themselves accordingly. Noted bylaw compliance concerns regarding trustees potentially speaking on behalf of the board, and the requirement that all business be conducted through county email.

- Ilya Arbatman: Echoed calls for transparency. Welcomed candidates and expressed hope for a new, positive chapter. Acknowledged flaws in the hiring process but praised final candidate credentials. Proposed relationship-building with the director on behalf of Freedom to Read Nevada and other library advocates.

3) Board Comment [Non-Action Item] – Limited to Announcements, Strategic Plan Activity, Updates or Issues Proposed for Future Agendas and/or Workshops

- Trustee Jacks welcomed public attendees and clarified that the Monday morning scheduling was due to logistics and not an issue of transparency. Highlighted personal library use and advocacy for the library in her community.
- Vice Chair Moser thanked current and former library staff and the public for their comments. Commented on the growth the board has made and the value of hearing diverse perspectives.
- Chair Silver shared her excitement for the candidate selection and for the community's presence. Noted that trustees were not given the candidate resumes ahead of time and saw them for the first time along with the public.
- Trustee Ruf thanked HR, her fellow trustees, and the candidates for all their efforts in the selection process. Praised library staff for stepping in to support vacancies and expressed her optimism in choosing a new director.

4) Approval of Minutes from the Library Board meeting on January 21, 2026 [For Possible Action]

- Chair Silver noted a public comment that called Debi Stears the “Acting Director” and clarified that she does not hold that title and is being given out-of-class pay to perform the daily duties during the vacancy.
- On motion by Trustee Ruf, seconded by Vice Chair Moser, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, the meeting minutes from January 21, 2026, were approved.

5) Acknowledge \$110,000.00 Donation from Friends of Washoe County Library. [For Possible Action]

- Public Information and Development Officer Jamie Hemingway recognized the Friends of Washoe County Library for donating \$110,000 so far in Fiscal Year 25-26. These funds were raised during their book sales. Funds support library technology, materials, marketing, staff training, and summer reading prizes. Hemingway expressed her appreciation for the Friends, on behalf of the library system. A photo was taken with Friends members and a large check showing their donation.
- Trustee Ruf acknowledged the Friend’s efforts and how much goes into their book sales.
- On motion by Trustee Ruf, seconded by Trustee Rodriguez, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, donation from the Friends of Washoe County Library was accepted.

6) Discussion and possible action to consider the following top candidates: Lisa McClure; Caprice Roberson; Jessica Styons; and Tammy Westergard for the vacant Washoe County Library Director position pursuant to NRS 379.025.1 (b) inclusive, including interviewing the top candidates, selection of the Library Director and possible direction to staff regarding the negotiation of an employment contract [For Possible Action]

- HR Division Director Julie Paholke explained the recruitment process and introduced Pamela Derby from the CPS Consulting Firm. Noted the firm was chosen following interviews that included Chair Silver and Vice Chair Moser.

Shared the final vote would be conducted via ballot. Candidates had 15 minutes to review the questions prior to the interview.

- Vice Chair Moser noted that one candidate had withdrawn and they would only be interviewing three candidates.
- Pahalke stated that the interview questions were created by CPS, and HR was not involved.
- Pamela Derby from CPS Consulting Firm shared more about the recruitment process including consultation with a subject matter expert, Melinda Cervantes, a retired library director who spoke with each trustee and branch manager to better understand what they were looking for in an ideal candidate. Described national outreach including ALA, NLA, and Library Journal. Shared the recruitment was narrowed down to 12 qualified candidates, of which 6 candidates were identified for final interview. Three candidates withdrew, leaving three finalists.
- Trustee Rodriguez questioned the vetting process in regard to reference checks. Derby answered that references had not yet been checked, but extensive media searches had been done, and references would be contacted once a candidate was chosen.
- Trustee Rodriguez questioned if Vice Chair Moser and Chair Silver were involved in narrowing the candidate pool down to 6. Pahalke answered that they were not.
- Trustee Rodriguez noted the public's interest in a meet-and-greet and questioned why this had not occurred. Pahalke clarified that such meetings are not part of department head recruitments. Chair Silver questioned if Trustee Rodriguez was concerned about transparency. Trustee Rodriguez clarified bylaw requirements and said that she was speaking on behalf of public commenters who'd raised similar concerns.
- Chair Silver noted that she was unaware that the top 3 candidates had not had their references checked. Derby noted this is standard County procedure. Trustee

Rodriguez questioned process following a negative reference check. Derby said an additional meeting would take place to decide the next steps.

- Trustees expressed apprehension in proceeding with interviews without reference checks. CPS and HR further clarified the recruitment process and reiterated that references would be checked following a conditional offer, per County HR procedures.
- Trustee Jacks noted that trustees did not receive the interview questions ahead of time. She was unaware that trustees were not allowed to ask their own questions of the candidates and had prepared her own questions prior to the meeting. Pahlke clarified that follow-up questions would be allowed and noted that legal council would advise them in the process.
- Trustee Jacks expressed her frustration with the process and questioned why library branch managers were consulted by Cervantes.
- Vice Chair Moser expressed her understanding of the concerns and voiced confidence in HR, CPS, and Cervantes. Encouraged her fellow trustees to continue with the process and keep an open mind.
- DDA Herb Kaplan noted that the recruitment process had been discussed at the July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting, including the fact that Vice Chair Moser and Chair Silver would be included in the preliminary search. He also noted that the process and timeline had been discussed and approved by the board.
- Trustees agreed to continue the interview out of respect for candidates who traveled, despite their misgivings about the recruitment process.
- Interviews: Each candidate was allotted 45 minutes including a 5 minute introduction. Candidates received the questions 15 minutes prior to their interview. Trustees were allowed to ask limited follow-ups within the scope of each question.
- Candidate 1 – Lisa McClure, Introduction

- Described herself as a transformational public library leader focused on community outcomes over raw counts. Emphasized honesty, integrity, and libraries as “public good.”
- Experience spans Hartford Public Library (Youth & Family Services Director in a high-needs urban environment), Broward County Library (~38 branches; systemwide quality/branch equity; budget forecasting), and modernization roles in smaller systems.
- Shared she is known for innovation, national speaking, and grants and awards. Prioritizes empowering staff and outcomes such as academic, professional, social, cultural, and health improvements.
- Question 1: The library director reports directly to and is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. How would you build an effective working relationship with a board that is responsible for your performance, achievement of stated objectives, and approval of the strategic plan?
  - Proposed a collegial, transparent partnership with shared visioning, early alignment (no “surprises” at decision points), and regular communication. Noted the director serves as advocate both for staff to the board and from the board to staff and the wider community.
- Question 2: Given recent personnel changes and budget challenges that have impacted the Washoe County Library system, what specific steps would you take in your first 6 to 12 months to restore confidence amongst staff, the board, and library users?
  - McClure suggested a three-month organizational assessment to include listening sessions with trustees, staff, and key partners, along with a review of budgets, facilities, and reports.
  - Suggested the establishment of a one-year working plan aligned to strategic outcomes, and implementation of participatory management.
- Question 3: As Washoe County prepares to welcome a new library director, what do you believe should be the top three priorities for the organization and why?

- 1) Shared Vision & Adoption — Facilitate visioning with board, staff, and community. Ensure staff internalizes and can articulate the vision.
- 2) Strategic Budgeting — Prioritize based on strategy (not across-the-board increases), forecast 5–20 years; align resources to outcomes.
- 3) Team Building & Equity — Break down silos; cross-functional collaboration through “Branch Buddies” and project improvement teams.
- Trustee Jacks asked a follow up question asking for clarification of what McClure meant when she noted turmoil within the library. McClure replied that there has been a disconnect between the board and staff, and the priority going forward is rebuilding and creating a sustainable and collaborative future for the library.
- DDA Kaplan reminded the trustees to read their question exactly as written by CPS, so all candidate experiences are equal.
- Question 4: Describe how you approach conflict with subordinates, board members, and members of the public. Please provide an example that demonstrates your ability to navigate sensitive or high-profile situations while maintaining professionalism and trust.
  - Shared she favors clear expectations, performance-based reviews, and outcome-aligned goals. Cited reforms made at Broward that included balancing talent across branches (moved 90 librarians), creating a Quality Program Initiative tied to strategic goals, and peer mentorship to reduce friction while improving system equity.
- Question 5: Can you share a time when you received constructive feedback from a supervisor, board, or community stakeholder? How did you respond and how did it improve your performance or leadership approach?
  - Shared she is known for being creative and energetic and has won top innovator awards. Shared feedback to prioritize strategically and avoid

burnout; focus resources on greatest community impact, such as summer learning outcomes, and align initiatives to the strategic plan.

- Question 6: This role requires strong financial oversight and accountability to the public. How do you approach difficult budget decisions while maintaining transparency, trust, and alignment with the library's mission and board expectations?
  - Utilize zero-based budgeting with full justifications; ongoing encumbrance tracking; partner with county CFO; conduct gap analyses to bridge current state to desired outcomes; ensure transparent spending that enables the strategic plan.
- Question 7: The director must set a bold vision ensuring operational excellence across 12 branches and diverse service areas. How would you balance long term strategic planning with day-to-day operational demands?
  - She will treat the strategic plan as a living, flexible framework and require branch environmental scans and localized needs assessment. She'll work to translate long term goals into daily practices and operational excellence.
- McClure ran out of time but noted her excitement for the job opportunity.
- Candidate 2 Caprice Roberson – Introduction
  - Began in public libraries in Henderson and advanced to academic libraries and multi-branch leadership. Held senior operations roles in higher education and served as the Director of Inclusion & Engagement at the Toledo Lucas County Public Library where she led a systemwide cultural assessment for the 20-branch system (~400 employees).
  - Leadership philosophy: people-centered, empathetic, equity-integrated, stewardship for long-term organizational strength.
- Question 1: The library director reports directly to and is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. How would you build an effective working relationship with a board

that is responsible for your performance, achievement of stated objectives, and approval of the strategic plan?

- Build trust via clear role expectations and open communication; align director–board responsibilities early.
- Question 2: Given recent personnel changes and budget challenges that have impacted the Washoe County Library system, what specific steps would you take in your first 6 to 12 months to restore confidence amongst staff, the board, and library users?
  - Conduct listening tours with board, staff, and community to rebuild trust. Shared she would leverage new strategic planning cycle for a reset, and demonstrate trust through consistent actions, not just words.
- Question 3: As Washoe County prepares to welcome a new library director, what do you believe should be the top three priorities for the organization and why?
  - 1) Rebuild trust among staff, board, and community.
  - 2) Refocus on the library’s core mission and services.
  - 3) Develop new Strategic Plan as a shared roadmap for the library’s future.
- Question 4: Describe how you approach conflict with subordinates, board members, and members of the public. Please provide an example that demonstrates your ability to navigate sensitive or high-profile situations while maintaining professionalism and trust.
  - Emphasized listening and transparency. Shared an example of her portfolio review at Bowling Green State University where she balanced the board’s fiscal stewardship with faculty and students’ interests while under public scrutiny. She maintained open communication and was honest about impacts.
- Question 5: Can you share a time when you received constructive feedback from a supervisor, board, or community stakeholder? How did you respond and how did it improve your performance or leadership approach?

- Shared her early leadership coaching stressed “focus on the person” behind performance issues. Reinforced human centric approach with staff and stakeholders. Expressed her openness to feedback for her own education and improvement.
- Question 6: This role requires strong financial oversight and accountability to the public. How do you approach difficult budget decisions while maintaining transparency, trust, and alignment with the library’s mission and board expectations?
  - Steward public funds responsibly. Allocate resources to core services and jointly agreed strategic goals, while maintaining board alignment.
- Question 7: The director must set a bold vision ensuring operational excellence across 12 branches and diverse service areas. How would you balance long term strategic planning with day-to-day operational demands?
  - Shared she would have an assessment plan for strategic goals and treat the plan as a living document with assigned owners. She’ll rely on a strong leadership team to manage day-to-day while advancing long-term objectives.
- Robinson asked how the board expected their relationship with the new director to be after the events of the last couple of years. Chair Silver replied that the relationship would be better and Robinson requested more details. Trustee Ruf stated there would be more collaboration and support for a director with a clear vision. Robinson expressed her appreciation for this answer.
- Candidate 3 Tammy Westergard – Introduction:
  - Shared she is a Nevada librarian and was raised in northern Nevada. Career includes serving as the Nevada State Librarian and her current role with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development as the Senior Workforce Development Librarian in Residence.

- Her leadership approach is to have a systems perspective (branches, staff, policy, facilities, technology, partnerships), and to restore and sustain alignment so services remain predictable, fiscally responsible, and trusted.
- Cited current fiscal context for the library including materials budget constraints, service hour cuts, as well as the broader Nevada economic pressures (affordability, workforce transitions). Her strategy is to turn financial data into decision-support, meet professional standards, lead steadily and transparently, and deliver a realistic compliant strategic plan.
- Question 1: The library director reports directly to and is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. How would you build an effective working relationship with a board that is responsible for your performance, achievement of stated objectives, and approval of the strategic plan?
  - Start with governance boundaries and policies on delegation, budget modification, service reductions, and build clarity through communication.
- Question 2: Given recent personnel changes and budget challenges that have impacted the Washoe County Library system, what specific steps would you take in your first 6 to 12 months to restore confidence amongst staff, the board, and library users?
  - Verify fiscal baseline and staffing capacity, stabilize service reliability, and prepare groundwork for a compliant, realistic strategic plan. She noted: "Clarify before change."
- Question 3: As Washoe County prepares to welcome a new library director, what do you believe should be the top three priorities for the organization and why?
  - 1. Restore operational predictability to rebuild public trust.
  - 2. Align services to recurring revenue before planning expansion.
  - 3. Work with board to deliver a realistic, broadly scoped strategic plan.

- Question 4: Describe how you approach conflict with subordinates, board members, and members of the public. Please provide an example that demonstrates your ability to navigate sensitive or high profile situations while maintaining professionalism and trust.
  - Prioritize shared outcomes over friction. As State Librarian, Westergard navigated high-profile issues and deflected outside interventions that might inflame matters, while maintaining professionalism and trust.
- Question 5: Can you share a time when you received constructive feedback from a supervisor, board, or community stakeholder? How did you respond and how did it improve your performance or leadership approach?
  - When projects drift, reset with data and shared goals. Cited Carson City advisory question failure and her response which was to convene school board, library board, and board of supervisors in regular aligned meetings to advance education and lifelong learning goals.
- Question 6: This role requires strong financial oversight and accountability to the public. How do you approach difficult budget decisions while maintaining transparency, trust, and alignment with the library's mission and board expectations?
  - Use existing data points such as assistant county manager report as toolkit to clarify tradeoffs and guide decisions transparently.
- Question 7: The director must set a bold vision ensuring operational excellence across 12 branches and diverse service areas. How would you balance long term strategic planning with day-to-day operational demands?
  - Embrace responsible innovation in an AI-shaped, complex economy, and keep relevance without sacrificing core services. Rely on strong staff, engaged trustees, and community support to manage operations and plan strategically.
- Westergard did not have any questions but restated her qualifications and commitment to enhancing the library system.

- Chair Silver asked if they could move public comment ahead of the vote. DDA Kaplan confirmed.

#### 7) Public Comment – Three Minute Time Limit Per Person [Non-Action Item]

- Valerie Wade: Urged the trustees to not delay their hiring decision. Encouraged trustees to rely on the expertise of County HR and the consulting firm. Noted the finalists passed through many filtering steps to reach the final interview.
- Cate Salim: Thanked Kaplan for his earlier clarification and reiterated her understanding of standard county hiring practices. Agreed that ambiguities or assumptions should have been resolved by HR in pre-meeting discussions. Noted the impressive credentials of the finalists and urged the importance of hiring a new director immediately.
- Cliff Nellis: Noted his private hiring experience of checking references before final interviews. Questioned whether the trustees should vote immediately or wait for more public input. Urged the board to choose a fair and impartial director. Criticized the inclusion of land acknowledgements in past meetings.
- George E. Lee: Criticized HR hiring procedures and the inability for trustees to ask non-HR approved interview questions. Expressed concern regarding the process for vetting candidates and questioned the selector's goals in recruitment.
- Sandee Tibbett: Called again for the board to bring back the screened candidates for public interviews. Criticized the three finalist interviews but noted Westergard was the "best" among them for perceived ideological alignment. Expressed concerns over missing reference checks.
- Nancy Cummings-Schmidt: Reflected on her own selection process for director which involved multi-day exercises and community input. Disclosed that she is a reference for Tammy Westergard and expressed surprise that references were not contacted prior to the final interview. Appreciated candidates chosen and expressed confidence in the vetting process and supported making a timely decision.

- Chair Silver called for a 30 minutes lunch break.

Item 6) C – Continued:

- Trustee Jacks called for additional steps to be taken and discussion before a final verdict was made. Stated a slight preference for hiring a local candidate.
- Trustee Rodriguez cautioned against discounting non-local candidates. Stressed the director's role in defending intellectual freedom and access to information for the entire community.
- Trustee Ruf expressed belief that one candidate provided the greatest breadth in experience, as well as a sense of humor. Expressed support for Lisa McClure.
- Vice Chair Moser stated her vote for Lisa McClure and cited detailed, strategic, and person-centered answers that addressed timeline and necessary execution.
- Chair Silver emphasized the board's equal consideration of local and relocating candidates and reiterated concerns about reference checks.
- Trustee Jacks read a couple of questions she'd written that would have focused on the candidate's experience with Washoe County libraries and the local area.
- The trustees took a moment to complete their ballots.
- Ballots were read by Patricia Hurley of HR:
  - Chair Silver: Lisa McClure
  - Vice Chair Moser: Lisa McClure
  - Trustee Ruf: Lisa McClure
  - Trustee Jacks: Tammy Westergard
  - Trustee Rodriguez: Caprice Roberson
- On motion by Trustee Ruf, seconded by Vice Chair Moser, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, Lisa McClure's name was advanced to HR for contract negotiation for the position of Washoe County Library Director.

8) Staff Announcements [Non-Action Item]

- None

9) Adjournment

- Chair Silver adjourned the meeting at 12:43 pm.