

ST. HELENS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

Monday, October 13, 2025, at 7:15 PM
Virtually over Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present

Chair Fatima Salas
Vice Chair Aaron Martin
Member Rob Dunn
Member Jay Echternach
Member Ellen Jacobson
Member Kelsey Knutson
Member Jana Mann
Member Erin Wheeldon

Members Absent

Member Lynne Pettit

Council Liaison in Attendance

Mayor Massey

Visitors

None

Staff Present

Library Director Suzanne Bishop

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:20 p.m. by Chair Salas.

VISITOR COMMENTS *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.*

No visitor comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes from the regular board meeting, September 8, 2025, were reviewed.

Motion: Upon Member Dunn's motion and Vice Chair Martin's second, the Library Board unanimously approved the regular board meeting minutes dated September 8, 2025. [Yeas: Chair Salas, Vice Chair Martin, Member Dunn, Member Echternach, Member Jacobson, Member Knutson, Member Mann, Member Wheeldon; Nays: none]

OLD BUSINESS

2. STRATEGIC PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT: Vice Chair Martin stated that there are no updates from that subcommittee.

NEW BUSINESS

3. WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER KNUTSON: New board member Kelsey Knutson was introduced and welcomed to the board.

4. WRITER'S GROUP AND LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP: Member Jacobson stated that there was a press release about the creation of an anthology of Columbia County writers. The effort is being led by local writer and library board member Jana Mann and Scappoose Library Writer's Guild member Mike Exinger. There will be a launch party in March 2026. Some of the writing is being organized through Febwordary, a local writing activity that has replaced the local National Novel Writers Month (NaNoWriMo) which is no longer active in our area. It is an opportunity to celebrate local talent and increase community engagement. Library Director Bishop stated that this will also help introduce an effort to add local authors to a special collection here in the library.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Bishop stated that Library Assistant Karina Vargas-DeLara last day will be October 31. She will be missed. The open position has been posted, and we have already received 30 applications. Federal funding is being held up at present because of the government shutdown. As a result, future funding through the State Library is up in the air. While the 2026 Summer Library Challenge and Teen Intern programs are funded, the competitive grant funding is uncertain. The Genealogy Conference was a success, despite there being a smaller group than expected. Mayor Massey gave the introduction and there was a lot of great interaction between the speakers, presenters and the participants. All of this was funded by the Friends of the St. Helens Public Library (Friends), and we are grateful to them for stepping up. Adult Services Librarian Herren-Kenaga is trying to find someone with Grand Ronde that she can connect with to learn about using the name Loowit for the Local History Room. The materials for that collection are slowly being cataloged. Adult Services Librarian Herren-Kenaga and I have just submitted a grant proposal to the State Historic Preservation Office to pay for digitizing the Columbia County Chronicle. Some paper editions of the local paper are held here, and some are with the Museum Association. We had about 60 people apply for or get new library cards during library card sign-up month, an increase of 40 percent over last year. The publisher Baker and Taylor which was founded in 1828 is closing. We currently only order our Vox read-a-long books from them, but their closing will leave a huge hole in the publishing world. We will be participating in the Trunk-or-Treat event, which will be held on Saturday October 25. We'll also be participating in the Kiwanis Children Fair, also on Saturday October 25. We are hosting the Elks with their Warm Welcome program, where they are giving coats, hats and mittens to Head Start students. Tom Myers, a local birding expert, will be here on Saturday November 8 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm for a "Birding for Kids" program. Mr. Myers is a local elementary school teacher and his first book "Birds of the Pacific Northwest for Kids" comes out on October 14. The first Annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month March will kick off from the courtyard on Saturday October 18 well. They will march through McCormick Park. The Friends now have a Square device so they can take electronic payments. We will be closed November 11, 2025, for Columbus Day [Veteran's Day]. I will be off November 20 and 21.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Council Liaison Mayor Massey stated that she was honored to be involved in the Genealogy Conference. She stated that departing Library Assistant Vargas-DeLara will be missed and that she was impressed with the number of applications that have been received for that position. Finally, she stated that she liked to see how many grants are being applied for.

OTHER BUSINESS

Member Echternach stated that the Fundraising Subcommittee has received some funding from the Elks group, and more proposals are being considered. There are also grant websites that list opportunities for technology, teens, social justice, and community improvement funding. Member Echternach stated that he is updating his membership with these website groups to find out more.

SUMMARIZE ACTION ITEMS

Chair Salas described the action items. The subcommittees will continue to meet and report back to the board.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Salas adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Dan Dieter
Library Board Secretary