

ST. HELENS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

Monday, December 8, 2025, at 7:15 PM
Virtually over Zoom

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present

Chair Fatima Salas
Vice Chair Aaron Martin
Member Jay Echternach
Member Ellen Jacobson
Member Kelsey Knutson
Member Jana Mann
Member Lynne Pettit

Members Absent

Member Rob Dunn
Member Erin Wheeldon

Council Liaison in Attendance

N/A

Visitors

None

Staff Present

Library Director Suzanne Bishop
Library Board Secretary Dan Dieter

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:15 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, November 10, 2025, were reviewed.

Motion: Upon Member Jacobson's motion and Member Knutson's second, the Library Board unanimously approved the regular board meeting minutes dated November 10, 2025. [Yeas: Chair Salas, Vice Chair Martin, Member Echternach, Member Jacobson, Member Knutson, Member Mann, Member Pettit; Nays: none]

OLD BUSINESS

2. STRATEGIC PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT: Library Director Bishop stated that there are plans to connect the subcommittee with a staff member from the State Library who is familiar with strategic planning. You will be hearing more from this subcommittee soon.

3. MAKERSPACE FUNDRAISING SUBCOMMITTEE REEPORT: Member Echternach stated that connecting donations through the Friends of the St Helens Public Library (Friends) would work well because they are a 501(c)(3). The window of opportunity for the granting organizations has some opportunities in the next three weeks. And there are 6 or 7 different categories at year-end, some of which are focused on areas that do not really match our focus, but there are some that do. One is for books for schools and public libraries. We could apply for a grant that might help augment our budget for books. Other areas are constitutional focused education grants, grants for kids with special needs or disabilities, grants for senior services and grants for youth programming. There were quite a few categories that I put in inquiries for.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Bishop stated that we are up 25% in visits to the library from last year, and really, our numbers of up every month since July, which was up 40% from last year. Public computers are very busy. We just started a conversation about adding back at least 2 more. I have an update on the Oregon Heritage Grant, which is the grant that will allow us to microfilm the older issues of the St. Helens Chronicle, those issues between 2015 and 2024. Adult Services Librarian Herren-Kenaga will take the paper copies down to the University of Oregon for processing. We are continuing to catalog the materials for the Special Collection Local History Room. We will be collaborating with the Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES D) for a Wee Wiggles program. Youth Librarian Wiersma will set up the program like a regular story time but will add elements to allow the participants to 'wiggle'. The NWRES D are hoping to get grant funding to obtain larger fidget toys and other things, some of which may be housed here. We are tracking changes to federal funding through State Librarian Wendy Cornelisen. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funding is being granted after a lawsuit filed by 24 states Attorney's Generals. It is likely that the funding for the fiscal year starting 2026 will be reduced by 2.5% and the funding for fiscal year starting 2027 will be reduced by 5%. We will be collaborating with many other organizations in the community for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The quarterly report to the City Council was included in the packet for this meeting. This report shows statistics for library usage from June 11 through November 29, 2025. The statistics break down library usage by age and activity. We have two grant proposals going in next week. One is through the American Library Association for accessibility improvements in the library and the other is through the Oregon Humanities organization for Community Conversations, a program that invites local citizens to join in conversations about current topics. There is a list of 12 options for topics, for example, Democracy in Motion or Are We Created Equal. We are still waiting for the background check on the new Library Assistant, but we're very close. We will be closed on the 24th and the 25th of December for Christmas and we will close early on New Year's Eve and be closed on New Year's Day. I will be out of town from January 3 to January 13. We are having two of the building furnaces replaced. If the temperature drops below 60 we may have to close the library. The replacement is covered by contract with the contractor.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

No council report available.

OTHER BUSINESS

Member Jacobson and Member Mann described the writer's festival, "Stories by the River", that will commence on Valentine's Day and finish on March 14th. During this time we will hold our FebWordary event that is a replacement of the National Novel Writer's Month, we will be launching our special collection, the Columbia County Author's Special Collection, and also, on March 7th we will celebrate our anthology publication. We've applied for a grant from the Columbia County Cultural Coalition to help support the festival.

SUMMARIZE ACTION ITEMS

No action items were summarized.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Salas adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Dan Dieter
Library Board Secretary