

ST. HELENS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

Monday, March 9, 2026, at 7:15 PM
Virtually over Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Vice Chair Aaron Martin
Member Lynne Pettit

Council Liaison in Attendance

N/A

Visitors

None

Staff Present

Library Director Suzanne Bishop
Library Board Secretary Dan Dieter
Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:17 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, February 9, 2026, were reviewed.

Motion: Upon Member Knutson's motion and Member Dunn's second, the Library Board unanimously approved the regular board meeting minutes dated February 9, 2026. [Yeas: Chair Salas, Member Dunn, Member Echternach, Member Jacobson, Member Knutson, Member Mann, Member Wheeldon; Nays: none]

OLD BUSINESS

3. STRATEGIC PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT: Chair Salas stated that she will try to schedule a meeting with a consultant from the State Library Association. There is a possibility that they can assist the board with the strategic plan.

4. MAKERSPACE FUNDRAISING SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT: Member Echternach stated that he has a subscription to a service that tracks grants in the state of Oregon, and that this has led to responses from two grantors. These grantors will then allow a formal grant proposal to be submitted. Any grant that might get approved will require assistance from the Friends of the St. Helens Public Library, as they are a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business to discuss.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Bishop stated that the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) is having their fourth meeting tomorrow, so we can look for more programming from them. Member Knutson asked if this group was being run by Youth/Makerspace Librarian Wiersma or if it was self-running. Director Bishop stated that the group is being guided in part with a volunteer that has experience with teen groups. The Makerspace has seen an increase in participation. In February we had 77 adults, six teens and 15 kids. Some participants come in for a tour and then come back to use the space. The ongoing Oregon Heritage Grant will allow Adult Services Librarian Herren-Kenaga to head to University of Oregon in April with the newspapers for archiving. The new Wee Wigglers will hold their second program tomorrow. The first one was very popular. The Oregon Humanities Beyond 250 conversation program is scheduled for April 28th and the theme is called "To What Do We Pledge?", a reference to the closing clause of the Declaration of Independence. The program allows people to have a safe space for difficult conversations. Board Chair Salas made a connection with someone from the Grande Ronde to ask about the naming of the local history room. We are working with the Museum Association and some other organizations for Summer Library Challenge programming. The goal is to add two programs around the 250th anniversary. We are waiting on word about the accessibility proposal that will add ADA paddles to the doors on the southern end of the building. For the Summer Library Challenge this year we are likely to pull back a bit and create some passive programs, like take-and-makes. Memorial Day is our next holiday closure [Monday, May 25]. I will be gone the rest of the week and be back on Monday next week. There is good news from the State Library. The State Joint Ways and Means Committee passed their omnibus budget bill last week. The State Library budget was fully funded, so we expect to have the Ready to Read program funding which supports the Summer Library Challenge, especially books and prizes. Some program funding also comes from the Friends of the St. Helens Public Library. We will be closed this Thursday afternoon because of an unexpected staff shortage. Given the number of staff we have we will start to see more of that going forward. Because of this budget deficit, City administration has decided to furlough all full-time employees eight hours per week, which will require closing the library one day a week. Based on the number of people coming into the library, it will be Thursday. To offset the city-wide deficit, the city has a ballot measure on the May 19, 2026, ballot to ask the community to pay a \$24 general service fee on their utility bill. If that measure doesn't pass, they'll have to start talking about layoffs and more service reductions across the board. These reductions will happen in all departments funded by the general fund which are police, library, recreation, planning, administration, building services and the finance departments. The public works department is not funded by the general services fund. The Budget Committee will begin meeting in May and they will look at one budget that includes the fee and one that does not. Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan stated that

she appreciates all the work that everyone is doing and would like the rec department to support the library with summer programming. Member Knutson asked if the closures will start in April. Director Bishop confirmed that they will start the first week of April. The City has produced a mailer that will be sent to all St. Helens addresses explaining the general fund and the services provided by those departments. Anyone interested in getting more information can attend the budget meetings. Member Jacobson asked if the furlough days will be restored if the fee measure passes? Director Bishop stated that the furloughs at this time will be indefinite, as they are an attempt to help balance not only this year's budget, but also years to come. Member Dunn asked if the \$24 fee is per month. Director Bishop stated that, yes, the monthly fee would be assessed per month on the utility bill for ten years with the expectation that City Council will review it during that time and rescind it if possible. Member Echternach recommended that anyone interested should read the budget document. It includes a graph that illustrates how the City compares with other cities in the state, and that the mill rate for St. Helens is the lowest in the state, so there is an argument for approving this measure.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

No council report available.

OTHER BUSINESS

Director Bishop stated that the Stories by the River event on Saturday was very inspiring. There were a lot of amazing conversations. There are other upcoming events: there is a writing event at Cathedral Coffee in Scappoose next Thursday, and then next Saturday, there will be a local author book sale and a celebration of the release of the Hidden World Anthology. The Columbia County Authors Alliance is also creating an America 250 Anthology, and they will be looking for submissions from any writer, any age. This will be an anthology that will be free for anyone to download. Kind of nice marker of where we are 250 birthdays later.

SUMMARIZE ACTION ITEMS

No action items summarized.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Salas adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Dan Dieter
Library Board Secretary