

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

## MINUTES LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING MARCH 19, 2026

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair David Breece called the regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees to order at 9:05 a.m. on Thursday, March 19, 2026 in the Boardroom at the Headquarters library.

**Trustees Present:** Chair David Breece, Vice Chair Daniel Montoya, and Trustees Dennis Cedzo, Gloria Nelson, Sabrina Steigelman and Brian Tyler

**Trustee Absent:** Pamela Story

**Present from the Library:** Library Director Heather Hall, Deputy Director Gracey Brandt, Division Manager for Programs Carla Brooks, Community Engagement Division Manager, Kohnee Harmon, Community Resource Navigator Ray Santini, Bordeaux Branch Manager Kelly Lindsay and the Director's Senior Administrative Professional Marili Melchionne

**Others Present:** Friends of the Library Board Secretary Casie Dowd

**II. FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY REPORT:** Casie Dowd shared that she serves as the secretary for the Friends of the Library board. She reported that currently there are 308 Friends members. Our book sales in February brought in \$13,813. The next book sales are Monday 5/11 and then the public sales are Friday – Sunday, 5/15-17.

### III. APPROVAL OF TODAY'S MEETING AGENDA

**MOTION:** Trustee Tyler moved to approve today's meeting agenda.

**SECOND:** Trustee Cedzo seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

### IV. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 16, 2025 REGULAR TRUSTEE MEETING MINUTES

**MOTION:** Trustee Tyler moved to approve the October 16, 2025 meeting minutes.

**SECOND:** Trustee Story seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE:** Approved unanimously.

### IV. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Library Director Heather Hall

**A. Director's Update:** Hall provided a comprehensive update on personnel changes, strategic initiatives, community programming, and budget planning.

#### 1. Staffing Updates

Announced recent Branch Manager appointments:

- North Regional Library Emily Lacey was promoted to NRL's Branch Manager
- West Regional Library: Sierra Moore moved to be the Branch Manager at WRL
- Recruitment is currently underway for the Spring Lake Branch Manager position.

#### 2. Strategic Planning

- The current State Library Strategic Plan has been extended through December 2027.
- Development of the next strategic plan will begin in the upcoming fiscal year, with implementation anticipated in January 2028.
- Trustees will be actively engaged in the planning process.

### **3. Organizational Development**

- Plans to collaborate with County HR to implement *NeoGov Perform*, a digital performance management system.
- The Administrative Team (Heather Hall, Gracey Brandt, and Wendy Olsen) has completed visits to all library branches to meet with staff.
- Next steps include visiting all divisions, followed by more structured check-ins to gather input for strategic planning.

### **4. Staff Development**

Planning is underway for Staff Development Days in May and December 2026, focusing on continued staff training and system alignment.

### **5. Dogwood Festival – Headquarters Library Operations**

Hall will formally request closure of Headquarters Library during the 2026 Dogwood Festival in April.

- Festival changes:
  - Activities are moving to Maiden Lane (formerly Hay Street).
  - The library’s side parking lot will serve as a family-friendly “Kid Zone.”
  - Alcohol-related and paid events will remain at Festival Park.
- The festival has received County Manager approval.
- While the building will be closed to the public (historically used primarily for restrooms and cooling), the Headquarters library will maintain an outreach presence.
- Specific closure dates will be shared once finalized.

### **6. New & Upcoming Initiatives**

- Bookmobile Service:
  - Scheduled to launch in 2027
  - Expected delivery by the end of the current calendar year
- Community Resource Hub (Headquarters):
  - Located on the first floor
  - Will include:
    - Flexible programming space
    - Consultation areas for community services
  - Coordination underway with internal and external partners
- Outdoor Percussion Installation:
  - Continued planning for a music-based installation at Headquarters

### **7. Special Events**

- Bridgerton Ball – May 30
  - Headquarters Library will remain open until 9:00 p.m.
  - Features include:
    - Local high school orchestra
    - Professional photographer and 360° photo booth
    - Custom printed, co-branded photos (Library and Friends)
  - Hall expressed appreciation for Friends of the Library support

### **8. Budget Update**

- The FY budget has been presented to the County Manager and staff.
- Request includes a 1.4% budget increase.
- Outcome pending the County Manager’s proposed budget in May.
- The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has added a July meeting, which may allow for earlier budget adoption and purchasing timelines.

### **9. FY2026 Notable Accomplishments (In Progress)**

Hall noted that departments were asked to submit accomplishments despite the fiscal year still being underway. Key focus areas include community use, access and impact, programming, partnerships, and innovation.

### **Community Use & Access**

- ~10% projected increase in information inquiries
- 7.5% increase in public computer usage
- Nearly 4% increase in door count
- Circulation projected at 1.2 million items, consistent with last year despite vendor disruptions (Baker & Taylor closure)
- Genealogy usage increased by 160%, tied to America's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary initiatives

### **Access & Impact:**

- Over 500 residents served through one-on-one resource navigation (Ray Santini)
- Outreach increased by 63%

### **Workforce Development & Volunteers**

- Served 39 interns across 7 programs
- Provided nearly 4,000 workforce training hours
- Volunteer hours increased by approximately 8%

### **Innovative Programs & Services**

- Library of Things:
  - Over 300 circulations in its first year
  - Offers nontraditional items (i.e., blood pressure kits, ukuleles)
  - Expansion planned pending budget approval
- Cumberland Cooks Program:
  - Implemented at all 8 branches
  - Focus on culinary literacy and budget-friendly nutrition
  - Supported by grant funding and mobile kitchen units

### **Creative Collaborations – Artist in Residence**

- First-year Artist in Residence: Kia Love
  - 320 open studio hours and 14 programs conducted, including at Title I schools
- Applied for a second-year grant
  - If awarded, will support three artists in different mediums

### **Miller's Brew @ Café West**

- Celebrated one-year anniversary
- Serves ~15 young adults weekly
- Provides ~50 hours of training per week
- Functions as a transitional training site for employment at the Morganton location
- Featured on a recent podcast highlighting program impact

### **Technology, STEAM & Learning Spaces**

- Makerspace ("The Engine") supported 2,537 program/event objects
- 45 STEAM-related mobile kits circulated systemwide
- 52 staff trained in innovative programming
- Hosted first STEAM Innovation Summit for staff development

### **Facilities & Special Projects**

- West Regional: William F. Bethune Sensory Play Space
- America 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Initiative:
  - Local & State History staff authored *Liberty Point Resolves*
  - Ongoing research and travel efforts
  - Culminating in a Headquarters mural installation (expected June 1)

**Looking Ahead – FY2027 Priorities**

- Launch and expand bookmobile services
- Increase circulation, programming, and cardholder engagement
- Implement Community Resource Hub programming
- Begin development of the next Strategic Plan

**V. OLD BUSINESS: None**

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Appointment of Nominating Committee:**

The Board discussed the need to appoint a Nominating Committee to identify and interview candidates to fill an upcoming Board vacancy anticipated later in the year.

- The committee will consist of a **Chair and three members**.
- The target timeline is to complete the process and present a candidate **by May–June**.

Following discussion and member input, the Board established the committee as follows:

- **Chair:** Dennis
- **Members:** Brian, Gloria, and Daniel

Board members expressed willingness to participate, and the above individuals were confirmed to serve on the committee.

**B. Proposed By-Laws Revisions:**

The Board discussed proposed revisions to the bylaws and agreed that, rather than addressing individual changes piecemeal, it would be more effective to conduct a full review for clarity, organization, and internal consistency.

During discussion, it was noted that multiple amendments have been made over the past several years, and the document would benefit from a more comprehensive review and reorganization. Board members agreed that a clean, consolidated update would be preferable to continuing to make isolated revisions.

The Board therefore agreed to table the current bylaws revision discussion and form an ad hoc Bylaws Committee to review the document in its entirety and prepare a more streamlined draft for future consideration.

- The committee will review the bylaws over the next two months.
- A revised draft will be prepared and shared with the Board in advance of a future meeting for formal review and vote.

Committee membership was discussed, and volunteers agreed to serve. Final draft revisions will be routed through staff for distribution to the full Board once ready.

**C. Community Engagement & Outreach Services Report – CE Division Manager Kohnee Harmon**

Ray Santini, our Community Resource Navigator moved over to the Community Engagement Division this year. Santini continues to assist patrons with finding resources for their immediate needs. Home Delivery Service continues to serve the senior community. The interactive pets and seed library has been well received. Resource Sharing continues to add libraries to the system and now has a total of 235 library branches. The Digital Navigators programs have had a large number of participants and we have had an increase in outreach events attended and number of people reached.

**D. Bordeaux Library Branch Report – Branch Manager Kelly Lindsay**

Lindsay presented an update on branch improvements, programs, and service priorities. Bordeaux has made several enhancements to its space, including the addition of a new dollhouse, an upgraded play kitchen, updated Children’s Department signage, a new book display, and two whiteboard tables for adult seating. Outdoor seating is also planned for installation in the near future.

Upcoming improvements include an A/V equipment upgrade for Activity Room A and a potential glass wall replacement in Youth Services. Programming continues to expand, with the introduction of an evening story time designed for working parents and a new Pokémon Club. Adult gardening programs have been especially successful, prompting collaboration with Ag Extension to offer additional programming this spring, along with a pop-up seed library. Teen “Cumberland Cooks” programs have also seen strong participation. Staff engagement remains a priority, with team-building initiatives such as a book cart decorating contest.

Efforts to increase circulation and program attendance are ongoing, including experimenting with new program times and creating dynamic book displays. Additionally, Bordeaux continues to handle a high volume of faxing, copying, and printing services, surpassing Headquarters in this area (not that it’s a competition).

#### **E. Community Resource Navigator Report – Community Resource Navigator Ray Santini**

Santini explained that patrons often come to the library seeking assistance with non-library-related needs, and his role is to provide a direct, human connection to resources and services. He emphasized that while online information is available, many patrons require personalized support to navigate systems and access help.

He described his work as helping patrons take incremental steps toward stability, noting that many situations involve multiple barriers – common needs include:

- food insecurity, housing instability and eviction support
- job applications and interview preparation and clothing for employment
- utility assistance and access to identification documents such as birth certificates and IDs

He emphasized that many of his successes are “base hits rather than home runs,” meaning progress often occurs gradually as individuals address one barrier at a time. He also shared that:

- he works closely with staff across all branches, who help identify and refer patrons
- he maintains scheduled office hours at each branch, which are publicly posted
- his availability is also listed on the library’s calendar of events as a program
- he remains flexible and accessible, often working beyond traditional hours when needed
- he noted that while most individuals he serves are library patrons, some are identified through outreach efforts or referrals from staff and partner organizations.

He reported that he served 392 individuals in 2024 and 477 individuals in 2025. There has been an increase in requests related to utility assistance and evictions and housing instability.

He explained that his work relies heavily on collaboration with community partners, particularly:

- churches
- nonprofit organizations
- shelters
- local assistance programs
- He shared that these partnerships allow him to respond quickly in urgent situations, including helping individuals secure temporary shelter such as short-term hotel stays.

#### **Friends of the Library Grant Support**

Santini highlighted the impact of recent Friends of the Library grant funding, which will allow him to assist with critical access barriers, including:

- birth certificates (especially for individuals born outside the county)
- postage and document processing costs
- identification documents needed for employment or housing applications
- he explained that removing these barriers is often essential for individuals to move forward with job opportunities or housing programs.

He also outlined plans to provide:

- One-day bus passes distributed through branches and community partners
- 30-day bus passes for individuals who have secured employment, to support reliable transportation during the initial work period

He shared examples illustrating the scope of his work, including:

- assisting a family experiencing homelessness in securing shelter and ultimately stable housing
- helping an elderly patron organize and address dozens of holiday cards despite vision challenges
- responding to urgent and varied requests, ranging from funeral assistance needs to everyday logistical support

Board members asked questions regarding:

- referral resources for interview clothing (including local ministries and organizations)
- how patrons access Ray's services
- how his schedule is communicated to the public
- whether services are limited to library cardholders
- Santini clarified that most individuals are connected through the library, though services are not strictly limited to cardholders when needs are identified through staff or outreach.

During the discussion, Board members expressed strong appreciation for the position and its impact; and library leadership emphasized that:

- the role helps meet information and resource needs at the point of service
- it reflects the library's ability to adapt to evolving community needs
- it allows library staff to connect patrons with help they otherwise might not be able to access

It was also noted that:

- the position functions similarly to a case management role, which traditional library staff do not have the capacity to provide
- the service is highly valued internally and externally
- the program has been recognized as an example of innovation at the county level
- Director Hall and staff also noted that Ray is highly effective at maintaining appropriate boundaries while still providing meaningful support, ensuring that services remain focused and sustainable.

In short: *The Community Resource Navigator role allows the library to meet people at their point of need—bridging the gap between information and access to real-world services.*

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business to discuss, Chair Breece adjourned the meeting at 10:21 a.m.