



PALOS HEIGHTS  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting  
August 21, 2025

## Library News

### Chicago Tribune Online

As you already know, our online Chicago Tribune subscription is live and includes multiple ways for our patrons to access this resource at a very low cost to us. Early usage stats put our patrons in the top quartile of users in all participating libraries. Circulation staff also report that more than one person has come in to get a library card solely because they heard about this resource.

### HVAC Updates

We had some hiccups with the HVAC system during some of the hottest days of the summer in late June. One of the two chiller units kept shutting down, causing the system to not have enough cooling power to meet demand. One of the exterior filters in that chiller unit needed to be replaced. Doing that brought the pressure differential in the system down by a significant amount, and the system has been running smoothly since. That filter was original to the system, so it's actually pretty good that it lasted as long as it did. There is no regular maintenance schedule for replacing this part. GT is putting together a proposal to replace the internal filter as well, as that is also original to the system. GT believes that proactively replacing that will save us from a much bigger headache if we leave it to reach its end of life. They also pointed out that our exterior condenser unit is nearing the end of its life. They predict that it has about five more years of life in it. I asked them to put together a replacement proposal for that as well, so that we can know approximately what to budget for when the time comes to replace it. This will give us a much more accurate number than what is currently on our spreadsheet, as our current number is based on the 2003 installation cost.

### 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade

If you're an avid PHTV4 watcher (or presenter), you will have seen our crew marching in this year's parade. We had about ten staff members come to march along with various friends and family. We decorated a car and blew tons of bubbles along the packed parade route. It was hot but not unbearable, and we handed out lots of suckers and bubble wands. It seems like the crowd for this event gets bigger every year, and we had a great time celebrating the holiday with the community.

### Corporate Insurance renewal

I attended the annual group meeting for our LIRA insurance policy package at Arthur Gallagher in July. Membership in the pool is up to 66 public libraries at this point, almost double from when we joined in

2015, with \$1.66 billion in insured property and \$160 million in insured payroll. This year, we have been advised to budget for a premium increase of around 10%. The markets for cyber coverage and property damage are much softer than they have been in the past, but casualty coverage, excess liability, and even workers' comp packages appear to be much harder these days. Considering the effect that catastrophes like wildfires, flooding, and severe storms have had on the insurance industry, 10% actually feels pretty good. Higher increases, especially for "first dollar" policies, are certainly the norm for standalone entities in the marketplace right now. We won't have final numbers until November, as these policies run on a calendar-year cycle, but the 10% estimate gives us a number that will work for our budgeting purposes.

### Staff In-Service

We had our annual August in-service day on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Training topics included Artificial Intelligence and Narcan administration. We also did a fire drill and talked about Librarian-in-Charge responsibilities. And we played some games and spent a little bit of time decompressing together. In a very hotly contested series of minute-to-win-it contests, the Public Services Department took home the GOAT trophy for winning the most games, and we all had a very fun and productive day!

### Budget News

Cook County is once again late in getting out this round of tax bills. The issue is the same that they have been having for the past three years, although we thought it had been fixed as of last year. Typically, these bills would have gone out in late June with an August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. As of this writing, we don't know when those bills will go out. I'm hoping that will happen soon perhaps with an October 1<sup>st</sup> due date. If so, we would be in fine shape. The City reached out about the possibility of our needing another tax anticipation loan if this delay stretches out for months. I let them know that we might need one if this drags out too long, and that we should revisit the topic in early October if there is no resolution in sight at that point. I'll continue to monitor this situation closely.

Other news that might affect our budget include the ongoing effort at the federal level to shut down the Institute for Museum and Library Services and to significantly reduce the "universal service" funds disbursed by the Federal Communications Commission. The former seems to be a foregone conclusion at this point, with passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act providing funding for the purpose of immediately dissolving that agency. While we don't typically receive funds from IMLS directly, IMLS grants are a significant source of funding for the Illinois State Library, RAILS, and SWAN. The loss of those funds will require action by the State or those organizations to prevent disruptions to core library services like interlibrary loans, shared cataloging, and professional education. The Universal Service Administration Company, the entity that disburses e-rate funding for the FCC, survived its recent legal challenges and has funding approval for the next few years that pre-dates the current administration. Even in the worst-case scenario, neither of these changes are likely to lead to catastrophic budget shortfalls for us.

On the brighter side, we received our funding notification letter for this year's Illinois State Library Per Capita Grant, which is fully funded for this year. We expect to receive a check for those funds in the coming weeks. And we appear to have an engaged and vocal ally in our current Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian, Alexi Giannoulias. While it would be difficult for the State to fully replace all funding that is being

cut at the federal level, he appears to be fully engaged with these issues and working hard to ensure that all library services in the state remain fully functional.

## Legislative News

The Governor signed a few new bills into law that are pertinent to us. HB 42 allows us to charge our nonresident card fee on a quarterly or biannual basis, as opposed to requiring a single lump-sum payment each year. I'm not sure this is something that we would want or need to do. I have this on my list of items to talk with our Management Team about, particularly Beth.

HB 1910 does place some new requirements on us. This bill requires us to maintain a supply of opioid antagonists and to have at least one staff member who is trained on identifying signs of opioid overdose and administering the antagonist in the building at all times. Opioid antagonists are pretty easy to come by these days. They're available over-the-counter at just about any pharmacy. I procured a small supply for us for free from the Cook County Health Department. We did a brief training for all staff at our in-service that satisfies the requirements of the bill. We will do a somewhat more extensive training for supervisors in the near future, so that staff are as prepared as needed to realistically handle this situation should it ever arise here.

## Upcoming Events

- Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> – Budget & Finance Committee Meeting, 7:00pm
- Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm
- TBD – September Personnel Committee Meeting
- Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30pm
- Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30pm
- Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30pm

## Agenda Items

### Item 1: Approval of FY2024 Annual Financial Report

Riley Martin from Lauterbach & Amen will be with us to discuss our FY2024 audit. Documents are included in your packet. All told, this was a very clean audit. All of our financial policies are up to date. Our procedures are sound. Our pension system is well-funded and healthy. The only small issue that you will see is that they show an overage in General Fund expenditures. This happens every year in one form or another and is a product of Lauterbach taking our cash-basis accounting and auditing it on an accrual basis. We know from our monthly reports that, on a strictly cash-in-cash-out basis, we weren't over budget. It bugs me that I don't fully understand how this process works, so I'm working with Riley to finally fully grasp the nuances of this procedure for future audits. In the meantime, the rest of the audit is entirely free and clear of any concerns.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the FY2024 Annual Financial Report.

## Item 2: Approval of New Copier Contract

We are in the final few months of our 5-year copier lease agreement with Impact Networking. We need to figure out what we're going to do for copiers after the lease ends. Currently, we lease three machines, and our lease includes all maintenance and toner at a total cost of \$632 per month. Terry and I have been in talks with a few companies about entering into new lease agreements with new machines. Another option is to buy out our current machines at the end of the lease and manage them ourselves. We did this with one of the machines five years ago, and it has been working really well for us, albeit in a much lower usage scenario in Tech Services. Our other three machines, currently serving Youth and Teen Services, Public Services, and Administration respectively, have had very minimal issues over the past five years.

This is a really interesting topic, in my opinion. For \$3,705, we could purchase our existing machines and maintain them ourselves. Compared to an approximate cost of \$700 or more per month for a new 5-year lease, the ROI on buying out our current machines, even factoring in cost of toner and some maintenance, is in the neighborhood of six or seven months. On the other hand, a new lease would supply us with brand new machines and a company that will guarantee their smooth functioning for us for another five years. There's a lot to be said for paying a bit more and saving some headaches down the road, which has been our approach to copiers going back decades now.

Ultimately, after seeing the proposals from a few companies, I'm recommending that we enter into a new contract with Proven. They made us a very nice offer of \$675 per month for a 60-month lease. This includes three brand new Canon copiers, all maintenance on those copiers for the duration of the lease, all toner for unlimited black and white and color copies, and no escalations in fee for the duration of the contract. This is a 6.8% increase over the lease that we signed five years ago, which did not include unlimited copies. With the overage fees that we typically pay on our existing contract, this proposal would actually be about a 2% decrease over what we currently pay per month on average. Adjusted for inflation, this new agreement would be 14.8% less than the previous agreement, were we to sign it today.

The total cost to us for this contract over 5 years would be \$40,500.00. That's obviously a lot more than the \$3,705 buyout option. If we choose to go with our existing machines, we'll have to pay for our toner and maintenance, but we might get lucky and get a few more years of good use out of them before we really need to replace them. But these are heavily used machines. We currently do about 120,000 copies and a few thousand faxes per year. If one of these machines were to go down, we would need a plan to replace it immediately, and I highly doubt that we'll have a deal as nice as Proven's if we're trying to negotiate from an emergent position. In the end of the day, we might save some money by going with the buyout. But we also run the risk of finding ourselves in a bad spot a few years down the road having to sign onto a much more expensive contract at that point.

I believe that this is a good deal and worth the worry-free, no-added-cost, unlimited copies, with new top-of-the-line machines despite what appears to be a huge cost differential.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the new 60-month copier lease agreement with Proven IT at a cost of \$675 per month.

### Item 3: 2025-2026 Slate of Officers

Trustee Rhodes has been working diligently to put together a slate of officers for the coming year. Trustee Snow has been steadfast in her commitment to only serving as President for one year, so we will have a new President this year. Trustee Zubik has agreed to fill that role for one year as we continue to prepare some of our newer members to step into leadership roles in 2026. Trustee Keough is willing to step into the Vice President's role, and Trustees Rhodes and Peltz are interested in continuing their roles as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. So I think we have a very good slate prepared. Thanks to Trustee Rhodes for doing the work behind the scenes to get this slate organized!

**Recommendation:** No action is needed. Voting on the slate will take place at our September meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jesse Blazek  
Library Director