



PALOS HEIGHTS
PUBLIC LIBRARY

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
February 19, 2026

Library News

Budget Update

There is a short version to this saga, and there is a book-length version. I'm going to try to stick to the short version.

First, we have money! The week of January 19th, we received a series of deposits totaling just over \$1.2 million. I breathed a huge sigh of relief and began paying all bills. Eventually, I realized this was significantly more money than we were expecting to receive. Discussion among directors quickly demonstrated that we were the ONLY municipal library in the county to receive such a substantial deposit. Other libraries received between 10% and 20% of their expected distributions while we received 131%. A mistake has been made. I strongly suspect that one of the deposits that we received was not intended for us (and was likely intended for the City). We received 7 deposits averaging \$26,000 and an 8th deposit of over \$1 million. Unfortunately, there is no way to confirm whether or not this was a mistake because none of these deposits are supported by any documentation that anyone can locate. The money just started appearing in bank accounts.

Then on January 30th, we received another deposit of \$560,766.05. This brings our total tax distributions for January to \$1,764,811.97, almost double what we expected to receive in the second half of 2025. The County Treasurer is still in the process of updating their system, so there are no reports to accompany these deposits confirming what tax year and entity they come from. They have promised that they will have those reports for us in the next couple of weeks. Then we can begin the process of unravelling what money was supposed to come to us and what might have been a mistake. The traditional process for correcting such a mistake is for the County to withhold funds from future distributions until we are even again. So if we were overpaid \$700,000, the first \$700,000 of our 2025 distribution will be held back by the County. Given their track record as of late, I'm nervous about this process being handled as smoothly as it should. I'll be keeping a close watch as the final 2024 reports are published, as the next round of tax bills go out, and as the next round of distributions starts to go out. Hopefully, we will have significantly more clarity in April.

Audit

Audit fieldwork is complete. Riley and Jessica from Lauterbach & Amen were here on February 11th for their annual visit and to compile most of the documents they need to complete our FY2025 audit. They

were scheduled to be on site for three days, but all of their fieldwork was completed in one day, as is usual for us. Many thank to Terry for her organizational skills and ability to produce various documents for them at a moment's notice. The remainder of the audit will continue in the coming months with a final product expected to be ready for your review in May or June.

Staff In-Service

The library was closed for our first in-service day of the year on Friday, February 13th. As part of a year-long training process, I have signed our library up for the Homeless Library training program. This is a series of online training modules created by Ryan Dowd, who has run a homeless shelter in Aurora, IL for the past few decades. Over the years, he put together a highly sophisticated set of training materials for dealing with his trickiest clients. In subsequent years, people in other service industries noticed that his strategies for dealing with difficult situations at a homeless shelter are highly relevant to dealing with difficult situations in just about any service-based industry. He covers a variety of topics including everything from extensive de-escalation training to handling someone who is intoxicated to staff burnout and human trafficking. We spent time at in-service going through the first of his 5-hour core training module as well as a few other modules of staffs' choosing. We will continue using these modules to brush up on our service skills throughout the year. In addition to the Homeless Training sessions, we spent time working on social media presence and our mandated annual sexual harassment training.

Building Envelope Project

Work continues in the background to prepare for our building envelope repair this spring. BTC (our engineering firm) and Kersey (our contractor) have been working on submittals for the sheet metal work. They have provided us with samples, which I intend to bring to our Building & Grounds Committee next month. Otherwise, things are quiet as we wait for warmer weather.

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, February 19th – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30pm
- Thursday, March 19th – Building & Grounds Committee Meeting, 5:30pm
- Thursday, March 19th – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30pm

Agenda Items

Item 1: Strategic Plan Updates

In January, the Long Range Planning Committee met to review staff's recommended updates to our existing Strategic Plan. A red-lined version of those proposed updates is included in your packet. Page 2 of that document shows the actual Strategic Plan. There were a few minor updates to this portion of the plan, but most of the plan remains unchanged. This is to be expected, as we view this plan as an "ever green" document. We will continue to evaluate the wording of the plan and make any changes as needed over the years. But we anticipate most of this plan remaining relevant for the foreseeable

future. Our Management Team spent a lot of time over the past year reviewing this plan and proposing potential updates for your consideration.

Two notable proposed changes pertain to Objectives E and F. Objective E used to state, "Incorporate technology in maker programs for library users of all ages." Staff felt that the focus on technology in maker programs was more restrictive than we want to be, so they propose expanding that to say, "through outreach." We believe this broader wording will push us to focus on a bigger audience for technology access and training. The added wording to Objective F is intended to do the same, to push us to be on the lookout for new technologies that enhance how we do our work and that can enhance the lives of our patrons. All of this comes from recognizing that an enduring part of the library's brand needs to be a place where people can get access to technology. These are the changes to the Strategic Plan that you are being asked to vote on.

Pages 3 and beyond of this document shows specific initiatives that are not part of the Strategic Plan proper. These are the things that staff have identified as the concrete actions we can take in the coming months to put the Strategic Plan into action. I include these so that everyone who looks at the Plan can see how we are translating it specific ideas for moving the library forward. The first four of these initiatives are focused on more effective marketing for the library, which is the first overarching goal of the Strategic Plan. Other initiatives include enhancing our outreach to various groups and maintaining the kinds of physical spaces that we our community wants and needs from us. While these initiatives aren't what is being voted on in the Strategic Plan per se, your feedback on them is valuable.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve the updates to the Strategic Plan as recommended by the Long Range Planning Committee.

Item 2: Summer Reading Kickoff Party Closure

As has been our practice the last couple of years, staff recommends that we plan to close the library for the day when we're hosting our block party. The party itself is scheduled from 10am-2pm. During that window, we will need all hands on deck to run the various activities at the party. We will have no staff to actually open and run the library itself during this time. Similarly, before and after the party, setup and teardown will require all the help we can muster.

If you think it is vital for the library to be open for regular business that day, I'm sure we will find a way to make it work. But I believe that focusing on providing a memorable experience to kick off the summer should be our focus for that day.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve the library closure on May 31, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse Blazek
Library Director