

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
June 18, 2026

Library News

As it typically the case this time of year, it has been a crazy few weeks at the library! Summer Reading is in full swing, and the library is bustling with families on a daily basis. We'll have detailed stats on reading program participation in August, but initial signups and participation have matched last year's record pace.



day and a great way to kick off summer reading!

We also weathered the big storms that came through in early June. Along with many residents, we lost power during the storm on Wednesday the 10th. That wasn't restored until the evening of Thursday, the 11th, so we were closed for a day and a half. We also had a plumbing backup on the 10th (probably related to the storm), which meant that we weren't able to get it serviced until that Friday. The parking lot and roof were riddled with debris and took some significant effort to clean up. Although nothing was damaged, there were a few large branches that came down from the trees along the south property line. We called Homer to remove a few of the largest ones. So we came through the whole ordeal relatively unscathed.



We held our annual Summer Reading Kickoff Party on Saturday, May 30th. It was another very well-attended event! Approximately 860 attendees enjoyed yard games (especially the giant Kerplunk!), an inflatable obstacle course, a balloon artist, food trucks, crafts, water cannons, the fire truck, and more. The weather was basically perfect, and the event ran smoothly. It was a great

Prior to the storm hitting, I spent all of that Wednesday sitting in on the Cook County Board meetings. They held a hearing specifically on the property tax bill issues and what we can expect going forward. While the news isn't great, it could be worse. The second installments are expected to be about two months late this year. So instead of being issues on August 1st with a mid-September due date, they are expected to be issued around October 1st with a November 1st due date. That's not nearly as bad as last year, but with our current underpayment from the first installment bills this year, we might find ourselves in another difficult spot. I've had correspondence with the Treasurer's Office in which they assured me that more funds will be coming soon from the first half installments, so perhaps we'll be okay. But with our current balance and burn rate, we wouldn't make it until November 1st. However, the County has also announced that they plan to expand their no-interest bridge loan program to include all public bodies and not just those from distressed communities. So we might have an option other than going hat-in-hand to the City again.

Finally, we received our annual State Per Capita Grant award letter. This year's grant is up to \$20,515.60, an increase of almost \$3,000 higher than in recent years. That is welcome news! I plan to put these extra funds toward our technology expenses, which is how we typically spend these funds each year.

Budget Update

As of now, our budget remains healthy. Our bank balance is a bit under \$900,000, which is plenty to get us through the summer. May was an expensive month with a triple payroll and the first major construction installments. The next few months will also see higher spending than usual as we finish up those construction payments.

Building Envelope Project

The envelope repair project is wrapping up. At this point, all construction work has been completed. We are waiting for the engineer to come out and do his final testing. Assuming that goes according to plan, the project will reach substantial completion in the next week or so. We can expect final billing as of our next meeting.

Other News

Veterans Energy completed our building-wide relamping project. This is the large lighting project that we talked about a few months back, which is being paid for mostly by a grant from ComEd. All of our existing linear fixtures were rewired to use all-in-one LED bulbs and ballasts. They also replaced most of the panels in staff areas of the building with motion-activated led panels, which provide much more consistent lighting. Of the \$35,000 cost of this project, we will pay a little over \$4,000.

Finally, Matt's last day on the job was Thursday, June 11th. He did a lot of great work before he left to make sure things stay in motion and to ensure that his successor can hit the ground running. The interview process to fill that vacancy is well underway at this point.

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, June 18th – Personnel Committee Meeting, 6:00 pm

- Thursday, June 18th – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30 pm
- Saturday, July 4th – 4th of July Parade, 12:00 pm
- Friday, July 31st thru Tuesday, August 4th – Friends of the Library Book Sale
- Thursday, August 20th – Budget & Finance Committee Meeting, 5:30 pm
- Thursday, August 20th – Regular Board Meeting, 6:30 pm

Agenda Items

Item 1: Kersey Construction Pay Application 2

The second pay application for Kersey includes work completed through May 27th. This brings us through the completion of all carpentry and flashing work and includes the first half of the metal fabrication and installation. Obviously, much more work has happened in the weeks since May 27th. We can expect to make one more payment to Kersey to close out the project at our August meeting.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve payment to D. Kersey Construction in the amount of \$60,368.40.

Item 2: VHS Conversion Policy

For a number of years now, the library has offered a free service of converting people's old VHS tapes to DVD or other digital media, and we get a steady flow of these requests throughout the year. It's been a while since we last looked at this policy, and Lorena has brought a few desired edits to my attention. The changes are minor and reflect that most of those requests now come in the form of copying VHS over to portable digital media (flash drives) rather than burning them to DVDs. DVD technology is getting more difficult to procure, and we would like that to be reflected in the policy. We also want to remove language about specific pricing of blank media as well as their capacities as those things change over time. Our intention is to always sell those items at cost and not to generate profit but simply to make the library whole.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve revisions to the VHS Conversion Policy.

Item 3: Use of Personal Vehicles Policy

Some libraries have delivery vans for doing home deliveries or a library vehicle for staff to use in getting around to professional functions. We rely on staff to use their personal vehicles to do these things, thus the need for this policy.

In reviewing this policy, I'm proposing changes to section 4.2 such that it reflects the necessity of having a valid driver's license and insurance in order to drive while conducting library business. The previous wording of the policy made it seem like an employee could use their personal vehicle for work without

providing this information, they just wouldn't be compensated for that use. In reality, the issue isn't about being eligible for reimbursement but about the library knowing that they are properly licensed and insured if they are going to be on the road in the performance of their duties to the library. It is required by our corporate insurance carriers, and it has indeed been our practice. I just think it's a good idea that the policy more clearly match up with that practice.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve revisions to the Use of Personal Vehicles for Library Business Policy.

Item 4: Non-Resident Card Fee Resolution

As you know, people who don't reside within the Palos Heights city limits aren't entitled to a library card as they don't pay into the tax base that funds the library. We are a bit unusual in that we have two sizeable areas of unincorporated Palos Heights who don't pay taxes to any library. Statute allows us to offer library cards to people who live in unincorporated areas if they pay a non-resident card fee each year. There are two allowable methods for calculating what this fee will be.

The first is the "general mathematical formula." This entails calculating that average cost that each household in Palos Heights pays to the library and charging that amount to any non-resident household that wants to have a card. The advantages of this method are that it's simple and non-intrusive. We do a simple calculation to establish the average cost per household of library services, and we apply that cost identically to every non-resident.

The second method that we can use is the "tax bill formula." This method entails looking at the tax bill of each non-resident who is interested in getting a card and doing a quick calculation to determine how much they would pay to the library if their home were in the city limits. The advantage of this system is that it's fairer to non-residents, charging them exactly what they would actually pay rather than what the average household pays. The disadvantages are that it requires patrons to bring in a current property tax bill each year, which can feel intrusive, and that it's a little bit more work for library staff to do this calculation on a case-by-case basis.

In the past, we used the general mathematical formula. It was simple and straightforward. Everyone paid the same fee. In 2024, we switched to the tax bill method. Feedback that we receive from patrons has been largely positive. It's a bit more invasive but also allows some households to pay a lower amount, reflecting the lower amount that they would pay if they lived within our existing taxing boundary. It's a bit more work for staff, but it also only comes up a few times per year. Beth has mastered the process, and I believe Circulation staff are no longer intimidated by the process. We have had roughly the same number of cards purchased and have lost a few hundred dollars in revenue. But it is also a more equitable process for those patrons willing to pay the fee. My recommendation is that we stay the course.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve the "tax bill method" in calculating non-resident card fees for the year beginning July 1, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse Blazek
Library Director