
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD MEETING

Friday, February 27, 2026 | 1:00 PM
RAILS Burr Ridge, 125 Tower Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order
Gwen Gregory, RAILS President, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm on Friday, February 27, 2026, at the RAILS Burr Ridge Service Center.
2. Roll Call of Members
Palmisano called the roll of the Board members.
RAILS Burr Ridge: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski.
RAILS East Peoria: Roberta Parks
Absent: Jennifer Cutshall, Emily Porter
3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements
Guests at Burr Ridge: Monica Harris, Joe Filapek, Dan Bostrom, Leila Heath, Galin Iliev, Kate Niehoff, Laura Nemeth, Stacy Palmisano (designated note taker), Sharon Swanson, Anne Slaughter
Guests on Zoom: Amelia Aldred, Mark Hatch, Ryan Hebel, Mark Schaffer
4. Public comments
There were no public comments.
5. Consent agenda
 - 5.1. Adoption of the Agenda
 - 5.2. RAILS Board Minutes of January 23, 2026, Regular Meeting
 - 5.3. RAILS Board Minutes of January 23, 2026, Closed Session Meeting
 - 5.4. Approval of Disbursements: January - Sharon Swanson
Voitik moved to approve the consent agenda. Caldicott seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.
6. RAILS Financial Report
Swanson gave the January 2026 financial report. Through January, General fund revenues and expenditures were above budget. The January 31, 2026, unassigned General fund

(\$27.0 million) cash and investment balances would fund an estimated 23.0 months of budgeted FY2026 operations. Fund reimbursements for RAILS's work on the Cook County content Digital Navigator Network Grant were received in January. In addition, RAILS awarded over two-thirds of the total budgeted for grants for libraries to join Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAP). As of January 31, RAILS received the full award amounts for both the L2 development grant and the world language catalog services grant.

7. Reports

7.1. Report from the RAILS President

Gregory had no report

7.2. RAILS Board Committee Reports - Committee Chairs

7.2.1. Advocacy Committee – Jean Carroll

7.2.2. Consortia Committee – Alex Vancina

7.2.3. Executive Committee - Gwen Gregory

7.2.4. Policy Committee – Catherine Yanikoski

7.2.5. Resource Sharing Committee – Jennifer Hovanec

7.2.6. Universal Service Committee – Catherine Yanikoski

Nothing additional was added to the committee report document found in the packet.

7.3. RAILS Reports

RAILS Monthly Report

Harris began the monthly report with an update on her visit to Washington, D.C., for the National Library Legislative Day events. Along with Harris, Board member Emily Porter joined the Illinois delegation to meet with numerous Illinois legislators to discuss library priorities. The event was organized by the American Library Association (ALA). The U.S. House of Representatives recently announced the "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act, (H.F.7661), which was introduced by Illinois Republican Representative Mary Miller. Harris highlighted that on February 3, President Trump signed a budget that funds most government services through FY2026, which includes almost level funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Also, Congress passed a \$1.4 million increase for IMLS library programs under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). Harris discussed the delay in Cook County tax disbursements reaching libraries. New Illinois bills have begun to appear from the Illinois Library Association's (ILA) list of legislative priorities: HB4261, HB3411, HB5236, and HB5279. The process for the RAILS 2027 Strategic Plan is moving forward. Both Gwen Gregory and Catherine Yanikoski will represent the RAILS Board on the Steering Committee.

7.3.1. RAILS Service of the Month: RAILS Find More Illinois

Miller gave an introduction of the interlibrary loan platform, Find More Illinois (FMI), which launched in 2018. All library types can join. The program provides access to all participating libraries' holdings through a single interface. Currently, FMI has over 9 million holdings, 99 libraries, and both staff and patrons from participating libraries can locate and request materials. Miller reported that in 2025, the program launched the Academic Library Lender Only pilot, which, to date, has increased academic library participation from 1 to 9, with 2 more currently in the onboarding process. Find More Illinois is exploring a partnership with libraries across Wisconsin to further expand the resources available to FMI libraries. Next, Heath shared that Cooperative Computer Services (CCS), an online shared catalog, recently announced that it had renewed its FMI contract for another 3 years for all its library members. Caldicott's school library is one of the 9 participating school libraries in the program and shared examples on how FMI has helped her students. Hovanec praised the FMI implementation team.

7.3.2. Illinois State Library Report

Shaffer gave the Illinois State Library report. An email announcement was sent to libraries to apply for the Library Security Grant. The grant was part of the amended Illinois Library System Act (PA104-108), which awards up to \$100,000 per agency to support technology-based security enhancements, with \$1.1 million dollars allocated to this effort. The first round of Library Security grants will be provided to public libraries, and the deadline is April 15. The FY2027 budget hearings for Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias will begin next week. Shaffer reported that the state library has begun sending surveys to all Illinois libraries regarding its grants and services. In celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Illinois will participate in "Passport to Illinois", a limited-edition travel passport. All public libraries in Illinois will be sent printed passports. Shaffer announced joining the literacy team at the state library is Robert Edwards, Library Program Specialist. In additional news, Illinois will participate in the "American Stories: A Reading Road Trip", a series created in partnership with the Library of Congress and PBS Books. Filming will begin in the next six months. Lastly, the Adult Literacy Grants application deadline is March 15. In FY2026, the state awarded 101 Adult Literacy Grants totaling \$6.6 million.

8. New business

8.1. RAILS Investment Portfolio Review

Swanson reported that the RAILS fiscal accountability policy requires the RAILS Board to review the investment portfolio twice a year. Most RAILS funds are held in two accounts with Hinsdale Bank & Trust and in mortgage-backed securities. The remainder

of RAILS's liquid funds are held in money market accounts with Illinois Funds and PTMA, which are both local government investment pools. The Illinois Funds and PTMA accounts are currently earning 3.78% and 3.584%, respectively. RAILS' investments consist of seventeen CD's as well as a small number of US Treasury Bonds

8.2. New Member Application

Bostrom presented two new member applications for review and approval. The first library is LaHarpe Community School District #347, in LaHarpe, IL. The district serves 200 students in grades K-8. The second application is from North Park Elementary, a private, independent school in Chicago serving 240 students from preschool to 8th grade.

Caldicott motioned to approve the membership of La Harpe Community School District #347 and North Park Elementary School and to submit it to the State Library for final approval. Parks seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.3. Spring Offsite Board Meeting

Thanks to the support of RAILS Board President Gwen Gregory, Harris announced plans to hold the Friday, April 24 Board meeting offsite at the Northern Illinois University library in DeKalb. A tour of the library will be included in the day's events. Hotel reservations will be extended to Board members travelling farther distances.

8.4. Fiscal Accountability Policy

On January 28, 2026, the RAILS Policy Committee voted to recommend that the updated Fiscal Accountability Policy be presented to the RAILS Board to approve changes. The changes were made to the Treasurer's Bond percentage, along with several changes related to travel reimbursement. The RAILS Board of Directors will review travel reimbursement rates annually, rather than periodically. Harris thanked the committee for their ongoing hard work.

Kowalcze moved to approve the revised Fiscal Accountability Policy. Voitik seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Jean Carroll, Megan Gove, Gwen Gregory, Ron Holohan, Jennifer Hovanec, Amanda Kowalcze, Carolyn Sennett, Alex Vancina, Karen Voitik, Catherine Yanikoski. Nays: none.

8.5. Appointment of At-Large Member on Executive Committee

Harris announced that, due to the resignation of Yolande Wilburn, and as written in the RAILS bylaws, the RAILS Board must vote to appoint a new At-Large member of the RAILS Board Executive Committee. This appointment is separate from the At-Large seat on the board. Gregory nominated Jennifer Hovanec.

Vancina moved to elect Jennifer Hovanec to the at-large seat of the RAILS Board Executive Committee. Sennett seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

8.6. RAILS Digital Accessibility Statement

Filapek shared the newly developed Digital Accessibility Statement, written collaboratively by the internal Digital Accessibility Committee, with additional review and suggestions provided by RAILS' attorney. The statement represents one of several important steps in our ongoing work toward full adherence to the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) v2.1 at Level AA. Filapek continued that the statement also reflects the complexity of RAILS' digital environment, including specific references to content and services provided by third-party vendors through our Deals and Discounts program, as well as content posted by RAILS member libraries on our website. The goal is to strike a balance between setting clear expectations and maintaining legal clarity. Filapek thanked Brian Smith, RAILS' Application and Web Developer, for his proactive approach in prioritizing web accessibility, and thanked the committee for their assistance in drafting the statement.

9. Board Development

9.1. Library Advocacy at the State/National Level

Guest Amelia Aldred, American Library Association (ALA) Deputy Director, State and Local Advocacy, joined the meeting to present on library advocacy at the state and national levels. ALA reports seeing fewer adverse library-related bills, including those related to content censorship. Currently, there are several bills with a focus specifically on "gender ideology", parents' rights, and an attempt to redefine obscenity. There is also an attempt to eliminate the affirmative defense for educators and library staff. There is a continuation of bills that restrict public funds for professional association membership dues for libraries and librarians, such as the American Library Association. Aldred reported that there has been less focus on drag queen story hours, with legislative arguments gaining traction on artificial intelligence. In positive news, the Freedom to Read legislation continues to be pushed at the state level. A new campaign, "Faith for Libraries: Diverse Faith Communities Supporting Libraries and Librarians," launched in November 2025, and connects faith communities that support libraries to library leaders, aiming to combat book censorship. Aldred encouraged people to build proactive relationships, publish positive stories, and train librarians in effective state-level advocacy. Harris thanked Aldred for the advocacy training she provided for the Illinois delegation at the Library Legislative Day events held in Washington, D.C.

10. RAILS Board Member Reports

Caldicott shared that her school, Community High School District 128, in Vernon Hills, is one of two finalists for the National School Library of the Year award, given by the American

Association of School Librarians. Hovanec mentioned that LACONI is holding a professional book club. All LACONI members are welcome to participate. Hovanec will also participate in an upcoming panel on career growth.

11. Meeting recap and agenda building: RAILS board meeting Friday, March 27, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
On the agenda for the March meeting is eRead Illinois as the service of the month, and the board development topic will be an overview of rural libraries.
12. Adjourn
Gregory adjourned the meeting at 2:29 pm.