

Minutes of WFPL Board of Governance Regular Board Meeting
Monday, September 22, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.
Bellview Library, 6425 Mobile Highway
Pensacola, Fl., 32526

Board Members:

- Kenneth “Blaine” Wall, Chair
- John Bullock, Vice Chair
- Lori NeSmith, Member
- Liza Campbell, Member
- Joyce Hopson, Member

Administration:

- Wesley Hall, Community and Administrative Assistant County Administrator
- Christal Bell-Rivera, Interim Director of Library Services
- Chris Hare, Division Manager
- Tricia Sheridan, Director’s Aide
- Eric Grote, Branch Manager

Absent:

- None

I. Call to Order

- Dr. Wall called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.
- Proof of Publication was received.
- Quorum was met.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

- Dr. Wall led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

III. Public Forum

- No members of the public signed up to speak.

IV. Approval of the Agenda

V. Approval of Minutes

- Mr. Bullock made a motion to approve August 25, 2025, minutes. Dr. Hopson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

VI. Chair's Report

- Dr. Wall stated he was sorry to have missed two meetings and thanked Mr. Bullock for chairing the meetings.
- He said he heard wonderful things about the ribbon cutting at the Brownsville Library. He thanked the library staff for all that they do.

VII. Branch Manager's Report

- Eric Grote, Bellview Library Branch Manager, shared he has been with the library system for one year and came from the Studer Family Companies after nine years with them. Bellview Library sees about 1300 patrons a week, its a voting location and has a large youth following. The most recent movie matinee brought in 73 people including a homeschool group. There is a new Steam Lab which has computers and 3-D printers. In the first month they served about 40 people. He is collaborating with the Garden Society which keeps up new pollinator planters on the library property. He also collaborates with Pyramid Inc., which serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Mr. Grote's current goals are to increase the computer lab numbers, create more "feel good" moments for the patrons and build upon the new librarian's ideas for programing. Mr. Grote answered additional questions from the Board.

VIII. Library Interim Director's Report

- Interim Director Christal Bell-Rivera summarized her written report included in the packet. She highlighted the phenomenal numbers from Feeding the Gulf Coast and pointed out the numbers for Youth are climbing and that it is a hard-to-reach group.
- She stated that the Friends of the West Florida Public Library will be donating \$30,000.00 to the library. Ms. NeSmith questioned the donation amount of \$30,000.00 concerned that is was short of the initial \$50,000.00 amount. Interim Director thought all of the money had been used to purchase shelving, but it did not so \$30,000.00 is still coming. According to the information the Interim Director received at the last Friend's meeting, the Friend's would be donating money to the library at the end of each fiscal year.
- This donation is timely because Interim director Bell-Rivera has established a partnership with the City of Pensacola to serve about 400 children during the summer months at several community centers. The library will also be in attendance at the City of Pensacola's movie nights as an outreach event.

- Dr. Wall asked for an update on the software migration. The Interim Director gave credit to Chris Hare, Division Manager, and he provided an update.
- Mr. Bullock pointed out that the numbers for the Brownsville Library this past week was only 75 and wanted to know how we would get the numbers higher. Interim Director Bell-Rivera stated over 1000 postcards have been mailed to the Brownsville Community to let them know we are open. The new Program and Marketing Coordinator is now in place and beginning to push the vending machines and other site-specific things. Additionally, no programming could be scheduled because the opening date keep changing. Programming will start next month so numbers will increase.
- Dr. Hopson asked about the seniors at Brownsville and the Interim Director said they are using the building on Tuesdays and Thursdays for programming.
- Financial report was provided. Discussion regarding the under-budget areas. Ms. NeSmith requested the budget that was approved in March be brought back to the Board for review at the October meeting.

IX. New Business

- Member absences were voted on and approved. Ms. Campbell made a motion to approve. Dr. Hopson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- A change in location for the November meeting was voted on. The meeting will be moved from the Westside Library to the Pensacola Library. Mr. Bullock made a motion to approve. Dr. Hopson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- Discussion regarding the Interlibrary Loan Policy. This policy was brought before the board off schedule due to new financial changes brought on by a cut in federal funding. Ms. Campbell made a motion to approve. Dr. Hopson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- Discussion regarding the Mission, Vision and Values Statements. Ms. NeSmith made a motion to approve. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

X. Old Business

- Discussion regarding the Library Services Director position. Dr. Wall is seeking clarification on what the Board's role is for filling the Director position. Mr. Hall

stated that after speaking with the Department of Human Resources (HR), the Board is in an advisory role as we move forward. Right now, the County is at the end of the fiscal year. It closes out at the end of September and that once that is inline we will look at the Director's position. The first thing the County will do is to get with HR to review the position description. One that is nailed down, we will move forward. The County needs to take time and make sure this is done right to come up with someone to keep us moving forward. Ms. Campbell asked if the position would be sent out to a recruiter. Mr. Hall stated that it would not be, and the HR department can handle it with its resources and to avoid added expense.

- Ms. NeSmith passed out information and recommendations from David Bryant and Lynn Toban, former board members, regarding the hiring process. She also stated that her contacts from the Board of Governance 10 years ago summarized that the Board of Governance is in charge of hiring and the job description. The county plays a support and administrative role. HR serves as a liaison to the board and handles the administrative processes like advertising. It is the Board that brings the candidates in for interviews and makes a recommendation to HR. She shared Mr. Bryant's suggested timeline for hiring the new director.

Mr. Hall asks the Board to have HR present for the next meeting.

Dr. Wall says Article 7 section 6 of the Bylaws states the board shall recommend a library director to county administrator.

Dr. Wall calls for a special meeting. Discussion regarding Sunshine Law requirements for advertising the meeting. Ms. Sheridan, Directors Aide, will research the process for PNJ advertisement and report to Interim Director.

Dr. Wall notes there is a discrepancy between what the current position description states and what is in the Bylaws.

Mr. Bullock requests Dr. Wall wait for the information about the advertising notice, set a date, and then have the library set up the meeting and notify all board members.

XI. Open Board Discussion

- Ms. NeSmith opened a discussion on the current relationship between the Interim Director and the Board.
- Ms. Christal, Interim Director, stated her interest is in complying with the Bylaws.

- Mr. Hall shared there is no hidden agenda, and the Board is supported 100%. The County appreciates the guidance and wants to move on and grow with the board's help and support. He stated he would most likely miss the next meeting due to personal circumstances.
- Ms. NeSmith requested the phone number for the HR Director in case Ms. NeSmith had any questions. Mr. Hall provided the HR main line number and the Director's name.

XII. Next Meeting

- Monday, October 27, 2025, 4:00 p.m. at the Tryon Library, 1200 Langley Ave., Pensacola, Fl., 32504.

XIII. Adjournment – Dr. Hopson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bullock seconded the motion. Dr. Wall adjourned the meeting at 5:44 p.m.