

MID-HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM
MINUTES of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Tuesday, December 9, 2025

President Ramage called the meeting to order at 10:01am at the MHLS Auditorium.

1. ROLL CALL AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustees Present: Stuart Auchincloss, Peter Carey. Kevin Finnegan, Leslie Gerber, Charles Kutcher, Jill Leinung, Jenny Post, Barry Ramage, Janet Schnitzer, Thomas Silvius, Barbara Swanson, Carla Taylor

Trustees Absent: Kenneth Goldberg, Rajene Hardeman, Mark Williams

Directors Association Liaison: Thea Schoep

Staff Present: Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, James Coyle, Laura Crisci, Nicole McGurn, Laurie Sheldrick

Guest: David Lavallee

2. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President’s report

President Ramage:

- Welcomed Nicole McGurn, the new MHLS Finance Assistant.
- President Ramage moved, and Peter Carey seconded, a motion to regretfully accept the resignation of Dutchess County trustee, Rajene Hardeman, effective December 31, 2025. The motion carried unanimously, with regrets expressed.

*Hardeman
resignation accepted*

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Peter Carey moved, and Stuart Auchincloss seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of the September, Annual Membership Meeting, and October 2025 meetings (Docs. 3.A, 3.B, and 3.C.).
The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes approved

4. TREASURER’S REPORT

Treasurer Stuart Auchincloss provided an overview of the financial position of the organization, noting that expenditures were higher than normal in September due to the payout of the Central Library Service Program funds to the Poughkeepsie Public Library District. Auchincloss also noted the unexpected receipt of the federal solar credit, with interest. Leslie Gerber moved, and Charles Kutcher seconded a motion to receive the September (Doc. 4.A) and October (Doc. 4.B) financial reports. **The motion carried unanimously.**

*Financial Report
received*

5. REPORT ON PAYMENT OF BILLS

Kevin Finnegan reported that he reviewed the warrant for September and found them acceptable. Leslie Gerber reported that he reviewed the warrant for October and found them acceptable. Leslie Gerber moved, and Kevin Finnegan seconded a motion to receive the September and October warrants. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Warrants received

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6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- In addition to her written report, Executive Director Aldrich reported on the progress of the NYS Freedom to Read Act; the impact of the impending closure of the company Baker & Taylor on MHLS and member library operations; the progress made by a significant number of member libraries to get onto the ballot during the General Election; the results of a survey of participants and library workers for the MHLS Road Trip; and an update on the Town of Union Vale Library.
- Barbara Swanson moved, and Thomas Silvius seconded the approval of personnel actions for the meeting (Doc. 6.A). **The motion passed unanimously.** *Personnel action approved*
- Stuart Auchincloss moved, and Carla Taylor seconded a motion to commend the MHLS Cataloging Team for their performance considering a 262% increase in the number of cataloging records they have managed this year, to date. **The motion passed unanimously.** *Cataloging Team Commended*

7. DIRECTOR'S ASSOCIATION LIAISON REPORT

- The Schoep, Director of the Claverack Library reported on the September and November Directors Association (DA) Meetings, noting: the DA has completed a 7 year project, with MHLS Staff assistance, to update their Resource Sharing Standards; the authorization of funds from the Members Capital Fund to help underwrite the ILS and Catalog expenses as well as the allowance for MHLS to use interested from the fund for MHLS operations, as needed; the proposed action to hold libraries accountable for equitable financial contributions to the shared OverDrive collection; and a new project to create ptypes that will help libraries better track usage of member library services by residents of areas that are deemed "unserved" by the Division of Library Development, meaning they are not directly served by a chartered library for their town/geography. *Report from the Directors Association Liaison*

8. NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

- Chair Janet Schniter moved, and Thomas Silvius seconded, a motion to approve the 2026 slate of officers as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.** *2026 Slate of Officers approved*
 - President: Stuart Auchincloss
 - Vice President: Barbara Swanson
 - Treasurer: Kevin Finnegan
 - Secretary: Jill Leinung
 - Member-at-Large: Carla Taylor

9. FACILITIES COMMITTEE

- Chair Carla Taylor updated the board on the report provided by the engineering firm researching the including of MHLS properties in their Community Geothermal project (Doc. 6.B).
- Taylor introduced the committee's recommendation to approve the 2026 Capital Plan as presented (Doc. 9.B). **The motion passed unanimously.** *2026 Capital Plan approved*

10. FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Treasurer Stuart Auchincloss presented:
 - the committee's recommendation that the board authorize the staff to move forward with the Business Office Modernization Project, outlined in the minutes from the Finance Committee meeting (Doc. 10.B). **The motion passed unanimously.** *Business Office Modernization Project approved*
 - the committee's recommendation to approve the 2026 Salary Schedule as presented (Doc. 10.C). **The motion passed unanimously.** *Salary Schedule approved*

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- the committee's recommendation to approve the proposed FY2026 Budget as presented (Doc.10.D). **The motion passed unanimously.**

2026 Budget approved

11. BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Chair Barbara Swanson confirmed that the Annual Membership Meeting will be booked at The Wallace Center of the FDR Presidential Library & Museum for 2026; thanked trustees for 100% participation in the board self-evaluation; presented the 2026 orientation board orientation topics and noted the committee is seeking input for the September and December orientation topics; and noted the continuation of the Board-to-Board Visit program in 2026.

Board Development Committee Report

12. PERSONNEL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Executive Director Aldrich, in lieu of Committee Chair Rajene Hardeman, provided an introduction to the Plan of Service development process and presented the recommendations of the committee to the board:
 - The board considered the committee's recommendation to approve the 2026 Action Plan as presented (Doc. 12.B). **The motion passed unanimously.**
 - The board considered the committee's recommendation to approve the 2027-2031 Plan of Service Development Timeline (Doc. 12.C). **The motion passed unanimously.**
- Stuart Auchincloss moved, and Kevin Finnegan seconded, a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing the Executive Director's annual evaluation and a new 5-year contract. **The motion passed unanimously** and the board entered into Executive Session at 11:29am. Board President Ramage invited David Lavalley, incoming Dutchess County representative to the board to join them in Executive Session. At 11:40am Executive Director Rebekkah Smith Aldrich was invited to join the board in Executive Session. Stuart Auchincloss moved, and Peter Carey seconded, a motion to leave Executive Session at 11:45am. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- Leslie Gerber moved, and Janet Schnitzer seconded, a motion to authorize the Board President to sign a new 5-year contract with Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2026 Action Plan approved

2027-2031 Plan of Service Development Timeline approved

New Contract for the Executive Director approved

13. WORKING & ADVISORY GROUP REPORTS

- Chair of the Government & Community Relations Working Group, Jill Leinung, reported a focused effort on message development and research of the fiscal structure of the planned endowment fund. Jill Leining moved, and Stuart Auchincloss seconded, a motion to appoint Barry Ramage as an alumni member of the working group in 2026, given that he is leaving the board at the end of 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- Stuart Auchincloss, in lieu of Core Values Advisory Group chair Rajene Hardeman, presented the advisory group's report on how MHLS is bringing the stated core values to life (Doc. 13.B). Auchincloss noted the need to review the core values as part of the Plan of Service process in 2026, an activity that will engage the full board and staff of MHLS. Therefore, Auchincloss moved, and Carla Taylor seconded, a motion to sunset the Core Values Advisory Group at the close of 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Barry Ramage appointed to the Government & Community Relations Working Group as an alumni member for 2026

Core Values Advisory Group to Sunset

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

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15. NEW BUSINESS

Stuart Auchincloss moved, and Leslie Gerber seconded a resolution to express the Board's appreciation for President Barry Ramage's service to MHLS during his tenure:

Resolution passed to recognize the service of Barry Ramage

WHEREAS Barry Ramage has served the Mid- Hudson Library System for a full 10 years, during which time he has served as Treasurer (2017-2019), Vice President (2020-2022) and President (2023-2025); and

WHEREAS Barry Ramage has strengthened the identity of the MHLS in many ways including:

- Developing and holding the committees accountable for our Annual Priorities; and
- The creation of The Debra Wilcox Klein Book Haven Collection Fund; and
- Holding a Board vote to re-affirm our membership in the American Library Association; and
- Supporting the creation of the MHLS Pollinator Garden; and

WHEREAS Barry Ramage led three important efforts strengthening the bonds of collaboration among the members of the Mid-Hudson Library System:

- We negotiated a new Memo of Understanding between MHLS and our member libraries for the first time in over two decades; and
- We developed the new Path to System Membership Procedures; and
- We have sought deeper member investment in MHLS through the Members Assessment; and

WHEREAS Barry Ramage has supported creative responses to opportunities that have confronted the System including:

- Providing expert financial advice on global and national markets and their potential impact on state aid for the Mid-Hudson Library System; and
- Expanding the capacity of the board by inviting alumni to serve on working groups; and
- Supporting our work to increase awareness of the system by pursuing new partnerships with some unexpected organizations such as the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, Central Hudson, Climate Partners of the Hudson Valley, and The Tempestry Project; and
- Supporting business office improvements including the migration of MHLS funds to the New York Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System (NYCLASS) and the purchase of a more modern accounting system.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Mid-Hudson Library System express our deep appreciation for President Ramage's leadership during his term as president and throughout his tenure on the Board and recognize that he has caused lasting improvements to the System.

The motion passed unanimously.

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16. ORIENTATION

The orientation topic of Artificial Intelligence will be provided at a later date.

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Carey noted the recent passing of Otto Romanino, a long-time trustee of the Kent Public Library and valued member of the MHLS community.

18. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jill Leinung, Secretary

Approved on [DATE] by the MHLS Board of Trustees