



King County Library System

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

KCLS Service Center/Hybrid | October 29, 2025, 5pm

Present

KCLS Board

Jeffery Guddat
Harish Kulkarni*
Verna Seal
Laura Valenziano

KCLS Staff

Maria Bassett
Angie Benedetti
BJ Colvin*
Heidi Daniel
Lisa Fraser
Chase Gallagher
Angie Miraflor
Dominica Myers
Danielle Perry*
Cecie Streitman
Lisa Yamasaki
Donna Zirkle

**attended remotely*

Motions Approved

1. Board Meeting agenda
2. September 17, 2025 Board meeting minutes
3. Payroll expenditures
4. General Fund expenditures

Call to Order

President Laura Valenziano called the meeting to order at 5:13pm. Verna Seal and Jeff Guddat attended in person; Harish Kulkarni attended online. There was a quorum.

Approval of Agenda

Jeff Guddat moved approval of the Board Meeting agenda. Verna Seal seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Board Minutes

Jeff Guddat moved approval of the September 17, 2025 Board Meeting minutes. Verna Seal seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Finance and Facilities Report

Finance and Facilities Director Donna Zirkle presented the monthly Finance report as of the end of September 2025. Year-to-date (YTD) revenues were \$87.6M, against the yearly revenue budget of \$150.6M, which was approximately 58%. YTD expenses were \$110.3M, which is 67% of the total expense budget of \$164.6M. CIP expenses YTD at the end of September were \$4.3M, accounting for 34% of the total budget of \$12.5M.

Donna reported on a change in the employer contribution rate for the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and its impact on KCLS' budget going forward. The previous employer contribution rate was 9.53 percent; the new rate is 5.58 percent. The change, made at the state level, will not affect the amount of



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retirement funds employees receive. Implemented midyear, it will result in an estimated \$1.3 million savings in 2025.

Following the regular year-to-date review of revenues and expenses, Donna provided an update comparing the year-end forecast to the original budget. Revenue gains were realized through higher-than-expected investment interest and other financing sources, totaling \$3.9 million. Expense savings, totaling \$7.3 million, resulted from personnel costs, the previously mentioned pension rate changes and unused reserve funds. As a result, KCLS - originally projecting a \$13.9 million deficit - is now expected to close the year with a \$2.7 million deficit.

Approval of Monthly Expenditures

Jeff Guddat moved approval of Payroll expenditures for August in the amount of \$5,437,850.35:

(8/01) Ck#00202477-00202490; 988805337-988806492; (8/15) Ck#00202491-00202504; 995789443-995790588; (8/29) Ck#00202505-00202524; 114544383-114545524. **Verna Seal seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Jeff Guddat moved approval of General Fund #0010 expenditures for August in the amount of

\$6,272,374.36: Travel Advances – 1553-1560; (8/14) Ck#5015674-5015722; 1161415-1161570 (8/21)

Ck#1161571-1161684; 5015723-5015724; (8/25) Ck#1161685-1161789; 5015725-5015729; (9/04)

Ck#1161790- 1161862; 5015730-5015731. Voids - 0. **Harish Kulkarni seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Jeff Guddat moved approval of Payroll expenditures for September in the amount of

\$3,629,716.06: (9/12) Ck#00202525-00202535; 121712885-121714040; (9/26) Ck#00202536-00202550;

128891942-128893081. **Harish Kulkarni seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Verna Seal moved approval of General Fund #0010 expenditures for September in the amount of

\$6,944,784.52: Travel Advances – 0; (9/11) Ck#5015732-5015789; 1161863-1162008 (9/15) Ck#1162009-

1162011; (9/18) Ck#1162012-1162119; 5015790; (9/25) Ck#1162120-1162245; 5015791-5015820 (9/30)

1162246-1162339; (10/06) Ck#5015821; 1162340-1162467. Voids – Ck#1162139. **Harish Kulkarni**

seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff and Director's Reports

2026 Preliminary Budget

Executive Director Heidi Daniel and Donna Zirkle presented the 2026 preliminary budget. Donna began by providing a high-level overview of the proposed budget, which is available in full at [KCLS.org/budget](https://www.kcls.org/budget).



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The presentation outlined the strategy behind budget development, major revenue and expense categories, anticipated use of reserves, and the potential need for a levy lid lift in 2026.

The proposed 2026 budget includes revenues of \$166.2 million, reflecting a 1 percent increase over 2025. In developing the proposal, KCLS sought to align expenses closely with prior-year levels despite rising costs from inflation, insurance premiums, and increased demand for digital materials. The majority of KCLS funding, approximately 96 percent, comes from local property taxes.

On the expense side, public services accounts for about 61 percent (\$101.8 million) of projected costs. Administrative and materials-related expenses make up roughly 31 percent (\$52.1 million), while capital investments in facilities and technology represent the remaining 8 percent. Inflation, higher insurance costs, and expanding digital collections are key cost drivers.

Because projected expenses exceed revenues, KCLS plans to use reserve savings to balance the 2026 budget. These reserves were largely generated from savings during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, staff emphasized that relying on reserves is not sustainable long-term and that the system could deplete its reserve funds as early as 2027 without additional revenue.

To address this, KCLS is exploring a levy lid lift in 2026. The current levy rate has dropped from 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2010 to about 24 cents today. A restored rate—up to the allowable 50 cents—would help maintain service levels, hours, staffing, and make capital improvements. A Board decision on whether to pursue a levy lid lift in the August 2026 election is expected at the February 2026 meeting.

The 2026 budget process includes three public hearings between November 3 and November 12, with final Board review and approval scheduled for December 2025. If approved, the budget will take effect in January 2026.

Summer Reading Recap

Director of Library Outreach Programs and Services, Angie Benedetti presented an overview of *Curious Creatures*, KCLS's 2025 Summer Reading program, which is designed to promote literacy, equity, and access by creating reading incentives and opportunities for children from birth through their teen years. As KCLS' largest annual program, Summer Reading encourages early literacy, supports growth outside the school year, and strengthens community connections.

Angie discussed current challenges affecting the program, including declining participation and reading scores among King County students, as noted in the Washington Education Recovery Scorecard.



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Additional issues include inconsistent data collection, a gap between in-library programming and outreach, low adult engagement, and the inability of some community partners to provide summer meals.

To strengthen participation, staff implemented several new strategies, including front-loading incentives and books to create a welcoming start and ensuring all participants register through a single platform, including at outreach events. Adult engagement also increased through the Book Bingo reading incentive program, offered in partnership with the Seattle Public Library and Seattle Arts and Lectures. New community partnerships and expanded staff participation in the Summer Meals program further enhanced outreach.

The program is funded by the KCLS Foundation and aligns with the system's "Curiosity Isn't Quiet" campaign. The visual design incorporates artwork from KCLS's new library card, and the advertising plan emphasizes social media engagement. Partners and sponsors include Libby, Rakuten Kobo, Red Robin, and the Seattle Storm.

A total of 35,578 participants registered for the program, with 15,194 finishers, representing a 30 percent increase in completions from the prior year. The largest participant group was children ages 6–11, followed by ages 0–5 and 12 and older. KCLS hosted 638 Summer Reading programs with a combined attendance of 24,850. Between May 1 and August 31, librarians introduced the program to approximately 32,400 children and teens through classroom and community presentations. More than 6,000 attendees participated in kickoff events across the system.

Survey feedback reflected growing enthusiasm for the program. Of 1,000 survey responses, 90 percent of school-age participants said they would encourage friends to join the Summer Reading program, an increase from 74 percent the previous year. Among families with children ages 0 to 5, 65 percent reported new early literacy skills, 86 percent saw increased joy in reading, and 97 percent of caregivers said they would recommend the program to others.

Looking ahead to 2026 Summer Reading, staff plan to review participant and staff feedback, simplify the registration process, and order materials earlier to improve the customer experience. Planning also includes development of a new teen-focused program to broaden participation.

Director's Report

Executive Director Heidi Daniel referred the Board to her written Director's Report, which detailed several recent programs and activities. She noted that the performance dashboard, also included in the report, shows all key markers progressing as expected.



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Heidi shared photos of the recent refresh of the Valley View Library children's area, which features new carpet, artwork by local artists and an interactive wooden boat structure. She described the redesigned space as a warm, welcoming environment for families, noting that the relatively small updates have made a significant impact. Similar refresh projects are planned for the Sammamish and Auburn libraries, aligned with findings from KCLS' recent accessibility audit.

Board Committee Reports

Trustee Jeff Guddat reported on behalf of the Finance Committee. He recently attended a risk assessment meeting with state auditors in preparation for the upcoming accountability audit, and is scheduled to attend the formal audit entrance meeting that officially began the process in early November. He noted that he will also attend two of the three public budget hearings scheduled for early November.

Trustees Reports

There were no trustee reports.

Adjournment

Laura Valenziano adjourned the meeting at 6:32pm.

Laura Valenziano, President

Jeff Guddat, Secretary
