

3/27/2026

## Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

### **Beverly Vann**

**(Board of Trustees Chair):** Thank you all for being here. I thought maybe we could take a few minutes and introduce ourselves, tell them a little bit about ourselves on the board. I could start off. My name is Beverly Vann. I have been on the board since pre-COVID. I think Cami and I came about the same time. Currently, I work for Alliance Healthcare Service. I'm the Vice President of Housing and Peer Services. I've been there about 40 years.

**Stephanie Cage:** Hi, everybody. I am Stephanie Cage. I have been on the board maybe about two years now, post-COVID. All my years are running together, but I sort of got involved with the board through my friend's affiliation with the Hollywood Library. My day job is working in higher education. I work for the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Faculty Affairs in the College of Medicine. It's good to be here.

**Lonnie Robinson:** I'm Lonnie Robinson. I'm a local artist here, graphic designer. I did a lot of volunteer work with the libraries. I'm still actively involved with the libraries; I designed the entrance to the bookstore downstairs. I was a part of the installation at Cornelia Crenshaw branch.

**Cami Fields:** Hi, I'm Cami Fields. Like you said, I've been, I think, January 2020 was maybe when we were installed so it's been a little while. My job is actually Managing Director of Global Trade Services at FedEx. I kind of manage our trade strategy. I have the relationship with U.S. Customs and all of that at FedEx and our 10 major hubs in the United States. So, kind of strategy, operations, all of that to manage this wild tariff environment that our country is in and make sure FedEx can get our packages where they need to go. I expressed interest in joining the board back then in January 2020 as my grandmother was a librarian. So, libraries are very near and dear to my heart and I have come from a family of a lot of educators and so I just wanted to get involved in the community and there was a role here on the board and I got to know Keenon at that time and so I was able to join. So, it's been a pleasure to be involved.

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell (President of the Friends of the Library):** I'll go next. I'm Ann Bailey-Mitchell, I've met all of you previously. I am the President of our friends of the library, most of you know what we do. Stephanie's been helping out at Hollywood, even before she was a Trustee, she's always helping out. So, everyone with family, we all work to advocate for the libraries to help it be the award-winning library that it is.

**Tony Mays (HR Manager):** Tony Mays, HR VP Manager. I manage HR functions for the Library.

**Cecilia Showers (MPL Finance Manager):** I am Cecilia, I am the finance manager and have been for the past 10 years now.

**Chris Marszalek (Deputy Director):** Chris Marszalek, I am the deputy director of Libraries, and I do what he tells me to do.

**Eric Harris (Director):** I promise you it's the exact opposite.

**Christine Weinreich (Director of Memphis Library Foundation):** I am Christine Weinreich, I am the Executive Director of the Memphis Library Foundation. I met a couple of you because I did come to a Trustees meeting before the pandemic when those were happening. The library foundation is one of the two supporting entities for the library and we have been uping our game for almost 7 years now and we look forward to working with you to continue uping the game and funding whatever the priorities are.

**Meg Green (Communications):** My name is Meg Green. I do media and public relations for the library.

**Alexis Norman (Executive Assistant):** My name is Alexis Norman and I am the Executive Assistant and I also do what he tells me to do.

**Christine Weinreich:** Truth is, we all do.

**Beverly Vann:** Well, I guess we can move forward with the rest of the agenda for today. I think the last meeting, Alexis sent out the minutes and we just need to approve those minutes for the last meeting. If there were any corrections or anything please let us know other than that we will motion the approval of those minutes. And I guess, we will turn it over to you Dr. Harris.

**Eric Harris:** Thank you. I'm sorry, my ADD requires me to stand. Let me just say this, I am tickled to death to be here. It was exciting for the opportunity, going through the process of meeting with the council members and talking to the mayor and hearing all their views and running into people who you ask about the library is the first thing they talk about is the escalators, which we will talk about later. The thing that really floored me, in a good way, was I had some media appearances that I had to make that Meg had set up for me. I think it was my second week, maybe, here. I think this is my fifth week now. So, she set up some media appearances for me and I've got to prep, I got to know what I'm talking about, or I don't talk at all. So, I just started looking at things historically about the library that have gone on, how things have operated. I could not believe that me, Eric Harris, who grew up in this neighborhood right behind us, in Binghampton, who went to high school right next to us at East, just going through life trying to help as many people as I can, was only the eighth

person in the history of the library system to be named as director. There's only been eight since 1893. There were no gaps. It's not like they took time off for war. It has been a continual chain, but I am the eighth person. So that really floored me and just sort of elevated my sense of importance of what it is that I do from day to day. Who am I? Again, Eric. I go by Eric. You may see Dr. Harris on email or official stuff there, but I go by Eric. So please call me that. I have a Ph.D. from the University of Memphis in policy and urban affairs, which just completed their dissertation work in January and was awarded that, but I am going through the ceremony in May. So, if you hear a story about a guy running down popular in a graduation ceremony, that would be me. Yes, absolutely, because that actually is a big moment for me. Both of my parents are both deceased, grew up in Fayette County in the country, and neither completed high school. It was something that really, truly bothered them their entire life, especially my dad, who one of his, the greatest things he felt that he ever gave his children, he bought a set of World Book encyclopedias, and you could not tell him that that was not 20 bars of gold sitting on the shelf. He loved it. They were really serious about us and education, so that was for them, but I am done after that. I also have an executive MBA from the University of Memphis, which I also served as the principal of East High School. I was the first alumni principal of the school. I had a person talk to me about what it is that my job entailed, and I was talking to them about, hey, I know there are things that I could be doing better, and this person was a very successful businessman, and they said, hey, you need to go to school and get your MBA, because if you think about it, as a principal, you are running an organization, and educational training is fine, but being a leader in curriculum and understanding those types of things is not what helps your building to run efficiently, so I enrolled in the executive MBA program at the University of Memphis and got that degree, and I'm so glad I did, because that's what changed my perspective on everything, and I also have a master's in educational leadership from CBU, so I guess I'm hitting everything in the state here, and a BA in history from UT Knoxville, but I am one of those people. I went away to college, but I came back simply because of that. I've done over 26 years in education and sports. As I told you, I was in the school system. Most recently, I ran a non-profit that I named Jess Rand. It was after my parents. My mother was Jessie. My father was Randolph, so we named the organization Jess Rand, and that started from a crazy idea of how we could better support families and also better help educate small children, because part of my PhD studies, I learned about how a child's brain developed, and at the age of five, their brain is about 90% developed, so you take that five-year-old and enter them in school for the first time, and being exposed to a lot of those teachings for the first time, that's why a lot of it doesn't work, so I came on this program, worked with my wife, and came up with a curriculum. We brought kids in starting at the age of two. It was really based on how they developed. Some of the things, it's like, okay, trace the number eight. Well, they can't hold a pencil. How can they trace an eight? So we actually just backtracked on all of those single requirements and making sure that we built them up to that point. That group of kids, the first one that we had at the age of two, we tested them using a Brigance, which gives you an idea for where they are compared to other kids around the country. The class average, they were about 13 months behind other two-year-olds, which urban kids are always behind, but they were about 13 months behind. Went through the year, tested them at the end of the year. They were 12 months ahead of

any kid their age, so not only did we close the gap, we surpassed it because of the techniques and things that we were using. The parents loved it. They're all in kindergarten right now. I'm sure their teacher has no idea what to do with them. They know. They were reading. They could do math problems, literally. We put 11 minus 7 on the board, and they could solve it because of the way and techniques that we used. There's a lot of things that I did that I would consider innovative in my career. When I was a student at East, we had a huge engineering and health science program. People like me came out. I don't know if you're familiar with Code Crew. Code Crew Eguewe Ke. We were classmates. We graduated together. We both came through that engineering program at East. He was smart enough to keep it going. I was smart enough to go get a history major. That's how that worked. My thing was I wanted to bring that back, so I started a hybrid model at East. It was very hard, being honest. Being here at East, you got Central High School down the street. You got White Station right there, and then you got Ridgeway around the corner. How was it I was going to attract kids to come to East for an optional program when at that point there had been about 20, 25 years of bad press, bad news, and a lot of things that just weren't good? I came up with this concept. I believe in don't fight the system. Work within it. We came up with this hybrid model, and what this hybrid model did was I hired actual engineers from industry. In fact, Marian Anderson, who was here in the library, I hired her from college. I was her very first job working at East. She heads our robotics team. We started this hybrid where I had these four engineers from industry to teach these courses. They would design the coursework. Everything would be online, and it was asynchronous work. A child from any high school could enroll, take that coursework online. That coursework was background for whatever project that they were doing because everything was project-based learning. They could do it, work whenever, and they just had to make one commitment to come to the school once a week, after school or on a Saturday. It was up to them when they came by. We didn't mandate it. We had kids that played baseball, which in the spring they're playing every day. That's fine. If you don't have practice and can come by, great. If it's two weeks from now that you can come by because you have an off day, that's fine. The teachers worked with them on that, and they still were able to do it. The program was just beautiful. They actually had a senior project where they designed a solar array on top of the power building that was running. That program, I'm proud of because when I left East in 2015, we had over 400 students from 25 different high schools enrolled in that class. I still run into some to this day. In fact, I was in Cloud 901. Someone was here tutoring, and they were in that program. They're like, oh, Mr. Harris, I remember you, which was awesome. Those are just some of the innovative things that I did. I started the first trauma-informed model in Shelby County Schools. I was at a school, Jeter. A lot of environmental issues over there kids were dealing with that people don't understand. If a child's mind is locked on survival, it's very hard to get them to learn algebra or English or science. Trauma-informed care is just simply teaching how to cope with your circumstance and your environment so that you can level set and actually grow and learn. It was a big process. We went through a lot of training with our teachers. We involved a lot of parents. We started this trauma center to where not only could students and teachers take advantage of it, but also parents and community centers. We had social workers. We had other professionals who would come in and offer these social services for anyone in our

community. Our suspension rate when I got there was over 40% of the kids. I was like, what? How does that happen? We were literally able to take that down to zero by the third year because we had a very effective reset program. Sometimes you just need a timeout. We also instilled that for the teachers because sometimes you need a timeout. The teacher could just say, hey, I need a reset. Someone would come to the office, give them a few minutes. They could just go wherever it is they needed to go, come back whenever they felt like coming back, and then we level set. Having that entire culture around the school worked really, really well. I was upset about that because the district wouldn't give me any funds to start it. I'm very creative with budgeting, as Chris and Cecilia found out this week.

**Cecilia Showers:** yes, I need a reset.

**Eric Harris:** Exactly! But, we were able to get it started. What upset me was our data was so good. The suspension rate went way down. Our chronic absenteeism went down to the single digits from where it was all before. They wouldn't give me any money, but they're going around the country touring, saying this is what we're doing at MSES. Look at our data. It was my school's data. That's it. I told you about the nonprofit. I'm still very active in the community. I belong to the Westwood Community Development Board. We had a lot of conversations with a lot of things that are going out there with XAI coming in. Being able to have a conversation with the city about that 25% of the tax dollars from them being able to spend directly on 38109. We were a big part of that. I was very proud of that to occur. Also, them committing to doing about \$80-85 million worth of upgrades in all the schools in 38109. We're talking complete HVAC systems. They're putting in a stadium at J.P. Freeman Baseball and Football that are coming in. I think they're going to start on that maybe this summer. It's all that type of thing that XAI is doing. I'm very proud to sit on the board to negotiate that for that to happen. Also, being involved with Literacy Councils, the Strategic Partners of Literacy, which is headed up by Memphis-Shelby County Schools. The Shelby County Early Literacy Consortium, which is headed by Literacy Mid-South. That is a county-wide approach to increasing early literacy in children. I also consulted. There was a project called More from Memphis, the South Memphis Zone, where there was a group of non-profits. There were about 35 non-profits, maybe 40, some of them very small, some of them large that you've heard of. We decided that we're going to take \$3 million. We're going to focus this \$3 million on South Memphis and its zip code. We're going to look at every single aspect. We're going to look at this holistically on how we can help families. We targeted about 2,100 families and see if a strategic approach would work. I served as a project manager for that. It really got me in really good relationships with a lot of non-profits, a lot of organizations in South Memphis, also city government. It was some very, very encouraging work for that. I've done a lot of other things, talked about fiscal planning, grant writing, philanthropic issues, any of that. I also had to work with a lot of politicians on both

sides of the aisle, some of our state politicians, some of our local politicians. I had some very great connections there. Again, all of this happened before I came here. It's really, really cool to me for this library opportunity to come open and me to be able to step into it because I really feel like all of this was training me for this. I really do because of that. Next slide. I hope I didn't talk too long. All right. A few updates. If you have any questions of me as I go through, please feel free to ask.

**Lonnie Robinson:** Was it cool to be a principal at the school you were a student at?

**Eric Harris:** It was so cool. There were a couple of teachers who were still there.

**Lonnie Robinson:** Really?

**Eric Harris:** Yeah, it was great. One funny story. I had to get the staff, especially the office staff, used to the fact that I grew up here and my family was very well known here because all of us played sports. I was the worst athlete out of eight. We all played sports and everyone knew us. So, I had to get the staff used to people just coming in the building wanting to see me. Like, hey, he's the principal now. I want to see him. I told them, don't feel as though I'm being disrespected if they say I need to see E. Everyone called me E growing up. So, it's not disrespectful. You can call me E if you like. But there were some people who had some issues with me. No, no, no. They have to respect you. They are respecting me, most of them knew me since I was a baby. But that was a cool piece of that. Any other questions? All right. Getting to the official board of trustees stuff, there are a couple of things I wanted to go over. First, there's some operational updates. We already talked about the escalators. Now, all of these projects were in place before I got here. So don't think that I came in and I'm sweeping and making all these changes to this. These things were already in place, and I'm so glad that they work. The dreaded escalators are completely being replaced. That's going to start next week on April 6th. The crew is coming in. They're going to take it out, put in some new escalators. We're going to make a big deal out of it. I've already talked to Meg in communications. When they start to work, we're going to make a big deal. And I'm inviting you all right now. When they complete the work, we're going to have a ribbon cutting. So, I really want to make sure that the trustees are available for that, because, again, this is such a big deal. So that's the escalators. There's also replacing the elevators as well, which there have been some issues over the years with those being efficient. So all of that is getting replaced, again, which is great. Chris has been heading up a lot with that project before I got here and even when I'm here. And before I go anywhere, and I tell everybody the same thing, I really, really, really admire Chris Marszalek, because when Keenon went on leave, I don't know if you're familiar with these 300 employees in 18 different divisions that we have. And not only is the library a division, it's a self-sustaining division. There is a finance department. There is an HR department. You

have a maintenance department. You have a vehicle fleet. You've got distribution and delivery. I mean, you've got everything. It's like, you know, a business. It's like a FedEx-type business. So, when Keenon went on leave, Chris ran the whole thing, all right? He was not only doing his duties but also managing her duties, and we'll talk about how the organization ran in a bit, but I really admire how he was able to do that and still stay the same person, you know, because everyone talks about that, right? When I first started walking by his office, I did not hear any profanity. So that was good. All right, but anyway, so back on. South Branch, right now there was an issue with South Branch. We had windows that were leaking. That leak went down inside the walls, inside the carpet, caused a huge big mess. There's a person called an industrial hygienist who comes in and tests to see if there's a level of mold or if it's some really nasty stuff. Fortunately, everything was minimal, but it was things that needed to be repaired. South has been closed, what, for three weeks now? Yeah, it should be three weeks, but it should open on Monday of next week. Well, Monday is the 30th, right? Yeah, so it's targeted to reopen on Monday. The branch manager out there, Mark Riddle, has been absolutely awesome going out there every day, giving us updates, being that liaison with the construction crews. So hopefully they'll be back open on that. And a big shout out to General Services for heading that up as well. We talked about the Escalator, Southwest Twin, which is a picture here, which, again, I am very proud of being a member of the Westwood CDC board. The Levi branch is going to be replaced. In fact, if you haven't seen it, you can go to, I think it's called [southwestswtwin.com](http://southwestswtwin.com). There's these gorgeous pictures of what it will look like. The Southwest Twin, that movie theater, has been completely razed, and they're going to put in a police station, a library, and then there also will be a community pavilion there. There will be walking trails. There will be lots of green areas, so it's really increasing the walkability in the community aspect. There will also be additional space for future businesses to come in, things like a potential credit union or a grocery store or any other needs that the community have. And I'm excited about it because if you look at the newer libraries that have been built, and this is all credit to Keenon McCloy who had that vision of what the next iteration of libraries should look like. All of those libraries are gorgeous. They're unique. They are things just, I mean, complete works of art. But the thing is they are so functional for the areas that they are in, and the Southwest Twin will be one along with that. Coming online right after that will be a Parkway Village library. Right now we're in the process where we think we've identified a location for where it will go, but we're going through the negotiation of purchasing that land. So hopefully that will happen, and pretty soon we'll have a groundbreaking to replace that library. And the new location is not quite in as busy an area as where the current location of Parkway Village, if you've ever been there. But it is closer to the schools, Sheffield Elementary, Sheffield High School, which is always great when it comes to library patrons. So I can't wait for that to get up and running. Branch visits, one thing that I was adamant

about coming in the door, I wanted to visit every branch. And I didn't just want to go see where the branches were located. I wanted to interact with the staff, get to know them as much as I can. I'm terrible with names, and they've been so good with that, but I'm really good with faces. So getting to meet them at that level has been great. I wanted to sort of break that ice, because I am one, I like to go around and visit. And they understand that now when I come back, it's not really an official thing. It's just me just sort of visiting. I am the type, I'll grab my laptop, and I'll go to a branch and sit and work in one of their areas. And I think now that they're a little bit more comfortable with me, I'll be able to do that. And I was able to assure them that I'm not a gotcha guy, that's not my job role. So if I'm going to a branch and I have to do gotcha, then there's a lot of people up under me that are not doing their job. I mean, that's just kind of just being honest. So they really understood that and accepted that, and I feel like I've had some really good relationships. Also, as a part of that branch visit, which stemmed from my first week here, I write a letter to the staff every Friday. And it's not an operational memo. It's not something that's calendaring what's coming up and all those things. It's not an advertisement of me or the library. It's a general letter. It's, hey, this is what my week looked like. I mean, literally, if I was writing to someone who was a friend or someone who was kind of interested and wanted to know what I do, I write this every week because the thing is, having 300 employees over 18 different sites and the square miles, now I'm probably going to have to figure that out. There's no way to have the type of connection that I need to have with everyone here unless I did something. And I've heard really, really good feedback from the letter, so it is something that I've committed to doing every single week. Sometimes I get replies back with questions. Sometimes I just get kudos. Sometimes people will stop me. Hey, look, you wrote about this, and they'll have more to add. But now I'm starting to get people stopping me with ideas or just wanting to chat about this and that, and that's so awesome to me because that's the way it should be. There's no way I can come up with all the ideas for this system. I don't know. In fact, I'm the newest employee in the library system. Everybody knows more than me, right? So I need feedback. I need people having conversations with me, and I want to keep that open. Next slide, please. Summer programming. As you know, the library offers a lot, and I know you're all familiar with it. It's just a couple of new things, new directions, actually, that we're looking to go into, starting first with the children's programming. I was just, I mean, my mouth dropped that our children's coordinator, our teens coordinator, and our educational liaison came in my office one day. They said, Eric, we want to just kind of let you know what we're thinking about doing and see if it's okay with you. I'm like, well, what do you want to do? All three of them went out, got a grant, worked with Jordan and the foundation to get a grant so that they can be trained on the Orton-Gillingham curriculum. If you're not familiar with that, it's an awesome curriculum for dyslexic students. But the thing that I could never get the school district to understand, not only is it great for dyslexic students, any struggling

reader. If you are a reader who's behind where you should be, that curriculum is awesome. I mean, it's absolutely awesome, and I would love to see more in that context. But those three got that. They came in the office with that in mind, saying, hey, we're going to be trained. We want to train someone in every single library so that when we're doing our discovery read, when we're going out and interacting with outreach with schools or anything that we do, we'll have that training and we'll be able to help. They are collected. They're making kits based on this for parents. Hey, here's something that you can do to help your child if they are a struggling reader. They're incorporating it into the story times, and it's just an awesome, awesome concept. So that's something that's going on this summer. Also, looking at all the data for the library system, there's a lot of great interaction and participation, except for teenagers and tweens. So basically, 9 to 18, that's the gap. There's a little bit of participation. Everything else is absolutely great. So if we could raise the level of engagement with that group from 9 to 18, that is what I feel takes the library to the next level. So we're working on programming that would attract them. There's a lot of great programs that the library did, but we're trying to tailor it more. One thing that a lot of teenagers, and this is from the school system, also talking to some organizations around, is not necessarily about teaching how to play an instrument or put together some sort of TV show, which those things are great and those definitely are going to attract kids. Kids want jobs. They want skills so that I've got to be able to go to work, and I don't know how to do anything. So we're looking to incorporate a lot of that cradle to career job readiness aspect when it comes to teens and queens. When I started that program at the nonprofit, it was at a daycare called Kings and Queens. That's what that was. But anyway, so talking to groups like Code Crew to come in and do these certifications in these training zones, learning how to just simply be literate with AI will carry students over. My daughter to this day, she came out of college and got a job auditing at AutoZone. The only reason she got that job is because during the interview, she asked them, do you utilize AI? And nobody on the panel had any clue how to do that. They did not know. So she gave them a lesson on some of the things that she did or she felt would be great for the auditing department, and she got the job because of that. So being able to teach young people to become comfortable in that sense, and those are some of the summer programming we're trying to do. And also on the adult front, we're working through a group called HopeWorks that is going to offer adult, it's called HiSET, which is adult diplomas, and also adult ESL services. Five branches we're satelliting this time, but we want to roll it out eventually to where it's at all the branches. So those are the new things that are being offered this summer. Next slide. Last slide. One thing from, again, studying Chris Marszalek and watching him run around really gave me a good idea of the library system. The library system was previously organized to where every single department was a silo. Like everybody just sort of worked on their own, and they were absolutely great at it. The leaders of those departments were very strong and very

resourceful, but whenever an issue would come up, it would be a problem for the entire system. And not only would it be a problem for the entire system, that person who's probably the leader of that department, they'd be held totally accountable. And when I came in the door, there were a couple of issues that happened that, hey, this is something that could be really, really serious if we don't look at it from that lens. So we decided to reorganize how things are structured. I'm big on what's called redundancy. It's kind of like, I don't know, and I don't mean to offend if you're in the military, but it's kind of like leaving no man behind sort of thing, to where there's always a group or someone that you can collaborate with, work with, who does things similar with you so that if there's a problem, you can work it out. If there's an absence, someone can step in and help in that sense. So we reorganized how the library is structured based on three things. One, we have a huge operations cluster. There are support services, which is all the delivery and distribution downstairs, the circulation and all of those things, right? Then we have IT, which is huge. That's all our computing, all of our internet functions, and then also facilities, which speaks for itself. So this will be under a new position of what we call operations administrator. These positions were formerly assistant directors, but this is a higher level when it comes to pay and it's also a higher level of when it comes to responsibility. So the operations administrator will oversee those functions. All right, so this is operations. Coming over here is public services. These are all the people-facing positions because, again, they all operated in a silo. It made sense for them to become a cluster working together under this new position of public services administrator. Those are the regional managers, which oversee the branches. Central is its own branch because it's so established. You have program development, which is the children, the teens, the youth, the adult programs, being able to implement those, and also security because security is a people-facing department. So organizing all of that under this public service administrator. So you have the operations side of the library system. You have the people-facing side of the library. But then in the middle, you have what I call the glue or the backbone. These are the departments that have to work with both sides and be that backbone unit to make sure that they stay strong and resourced in what they need. And this will be under the leadership of our deputy director. And this is the strategy and administration. We have staff development, being able to train and make sure everyone is prepared for their job. You have HR, which, again, is making sure we have qualified people doing the jobs and also being able to evaluate how their jobs are going. We have broadcast, which really speaks out about everything that's going on within the library on both functions. You have Linc 211, which is absolutely awesome at being a resource for the entire community. My very first meeting on my very first day was down at the center. What is that center called Chris? Where we went for the disaster management? What is it called? OEM? Yeah. Yeah, OEM. Office of Emergency Management.

**Meg Green:** Office of Emergency Management.

**Eric Harris:** That's it, yeah. So, my very first meeting was at the Office of Emergency Management. It was the mayor meeting with all the department heads, everyone in the Office of Management to just sort of have a debriefing after that ice storm that we just recently had. Things had just opened. It was a matter of getting together and talking about did we do what we needed to do? How can we be better next time? Linc 211 got so many kudos because there were thousands of calls during that time that went into 211 because people didn't know what to do if their street was going to be covered, if their street was going to be salted. You had people who had to have dialysis treatments, but they were stuck in their house and they didn't know what to do. They called 211, and 211 would notify the police or ambulance, and you had all of those calls, thousands upon thousands, with them. So I have to give them this shout out every time I talk about it. And then finally, you have finance, which, again, it's always about the money, so that's it. So, you've got the operations, public facing, and finally the backbone cluster. I am the top, the executive assistant of Alexis, and that sort of, so instead of having all the direct reports, these are my direct reports. We will meet weekly to talk about whatever it is they need to talk about. They will meet with their clusters to make sure things run efficiently as we go, but that's the personnel of the organization. Any questions about that? We have posted these positions. The postings went down, I think, Wednesday was the last day, two days ago. So, we're right now looking through the resumes, identifying, going to have interviews, so hopefully we'll have someone in place early next week. Well, those two positions in place early next week. All right? Okay. I will turn it back over to you again. Thank you. No other questions?

**All:** That was great.

**Cecilia Showers:** First of all, when I first met Director Harris, you know me and Chris, we had been teaming up for the longest around here. How about the first thing Chris tells him is, "Oh, Cecilia always says what's on her mind", and I'm like, "Chris, why would you tell him that?" Director Harris comes to my office, and you know, Chris, that sometimes it gets pretty hectic back there. And she hears me, I've been fussing around. Director Harris will come in, he'll come in, he won't say nothing. Then he'll peek around the corner. I'm like "Ooh, I'm so glad I wasn't cussing!" But anyway, that's enough of that. Okay. For your financial forecast, your financial statement, you had 66% in here today. That revenue where it has that 106%, actually, that's not there because it was \$84,000 additionally was from East Shelby, and it just wasn't captured on the revenue part of the budget. So we're kind of like standing, we're not high, we're just neutral across there. So that \$84,000, that's not additional funding. Okay, the big picture, the whole total budget is \$26.8 million, and we got about \$8 million remaining. Our key driver is personally running at about 71%. And we're trying to do some savings, that's where E come in. He's kind of bringing it down to where we

might offset some of those savings. Our big key spenders there, of course, is the security, utilities, and of course the pension is kind of like a long-term pressure, so it all depends, especially with how things are going now. So it kind of depends on, you know, the outcome of the war is not what we're going to be landing. We're not overspending, we're right on target as of June 30<sup>th</sup> as long as nothing else breaks down. So right now, we are financially stable. All right.

**Eric Harris:** Alexis, can you go back to this slide with the ORG chart?

**Alexis Norman:** Yeah.

**Eric Harris:** When she talked about that, this is one thing I think is important for the board to understand, kind of, what our thinking is now. Those two positions, the operations administrator and the public service administrator, again, they're new. It's a higher level of pay than the assistant director. What we made the decision to do, and Tony was really involved with this as well, we posted it internally, which means someone already within the library is going to receive that position and be there, which financially is a great thing because instead of introducing a new salary to the district, we're just simply bumping up people with salary that was already there. So by doing that, we actually created a savings, a quite significant amount of savings, and with that savings, we were able to do things like, for example, there were 26 part-time positions throughout the library system. The part-time positions were cut back to 20 hours per week because of some budget cut that happened, was it two years ago maybe? So with that, we were able to bump all those part-time positions back up to 28 hours, which is what normal was, but then we also added four more positions to it. So we were able to now have 30 part-time positions all working 28 based on the savings that we created just by making that move. So those are the type of things that we're looking to do financially here within the system. We've got to be creative with what we've got because City Hall is strapped, so we have to do those type of things. I just thought that was an important point to note.

**Beverly Vann:** Well thank you & thank you Cecilia.

**Tony Mays:** The only update I have is you guys know Jackie Holland. Jackie used to do a lot, run around and help everybody, well she retired in December and so we're looking to replace her position. And with that being said, we are now, the HR department, we are now officially under the city's HR. We will still report and do all of our reporting to the library and still function within the library, doing all the stuff that we been doing. Nothing is changing. The only difference is our direct report now is HR. Our offices are not moving, contrary to popular belief. You're going to be down there. You're going to be working closely with Chris and Eric. But, you know, we're just reporting to HR. And Chris assured me that that wasn't going to mess with my funding.

**Beverly Vann:** How are you all doing in terms of filling positions? Do you have openings?

**Tony Mays:** Yeah, so I work closely with Chris on that. The openings are based on Chris's meetings with the regional managers. And they, right now, they're only hiring for the critical need positions. Chris and the regionals, they get a list of those together. And then we submit those to, based on Eric's approval, we submit those to Chief Fouche to submit to the board for approval for posting. But we still have a hiring freeze still on of course. And so we still have to go through those approvals. And as Eric noted that we're holding certain positions for funding and budget purposes. For the most part, we're getting what we need to get posted, which is good.

**Eric Harris:** And just to clarify, those critical needs positions, these were just recently posted. Like, probably within the last week. Those were positions that were not open to the city, showing that we had the financial means and we were able to post them. So it's not like they've been sitting there over an extended amount of time. It's literally a week before that, all positions were filled.

**Stephanie Cage:** Tony, what about staff recognition, I know you were working on that.

**Tony Mays:** That's still a top priority for me. Eric has had the opportunity to be with three of our employees over the months that he's been here. So that's still a high priority for me. We're currently in the process and board, I need y'all help when we do these BLHs. I need your votes back. I send out these nice little emails saying, hey, get your vote in. So, we have determined our next Benjamin L. Hooks Distinguished Service Award winner. So we're just waiting now. My goal was to try to have it with this board meeting, but of course we didn't have funding yet. We're going to try to get that done in April. And so the good thing is with the new calendar, the fiscal calendar turnaround now, we'll be able to do this now in January like we should. We weren't able to do it in January because of the way the funding was. They didn't get approval for funding and it was really like 2 or 3 months behind when we had to present that from the previous year. Now with the way the fiscal funding calendar, we'll be able to present in January like we should. And shout out to the Friends and the Foundation. You guys do a wonderful job. Not just HR, but all of the library and we really appreciate all the work that you guys do.

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** So that's a good segue into Friends. And I'm just so glad that we get to meet again because it's been a while. And I've always tried to reach out to find out what was coming up for the Trustees to make sure we're all aligned. But as most of you know, this library is one of the few that's an award-winning library twice. And that's because of the really great relationship that we have with the city, the library, the Foundation, and Friends. And what Friends would like to do is to continue amplifying what the library wants to do, continue outreach, programs that really meet the needs of each unique community. So

what we do, if you can go to the next slide, is we try to make sure that all of our funding is geared towards supporting the library. So, over the last three years, we've given over \$700,000 to the library. And we hope that those funds have helped spearhead and amplify programs that the library felt was critical or crucial to each library branch. And we do this through donated books. We do this through programs like our Senior Health Fair, our membership drives, Teen Arts Fest. We try to do something that hits every market for us. Bookstock is one of our big ones. We've been doing that one for years. We have a bookstore. A lot of people don't realize that, that the Friends run and manage the second-edition bookstore. The Amazon Room, where we take those donated books that are a lot of value and sell those online. And we turn those funds right back into the library to make sure that we're doing what we need to do to support every program. Our volunteer army is strong. They come in daily from the sorting room, the Amazon Room, bookstore, all the events. No one is paid, as far as our volunteers. If the library would have to hire these people, it would be over \$146,000, and it would equal out to be four employees. So, I just want to know what else we can do to help out. We have programs coming up. In front of you, we have a spring book sale coming. That's on April 23rd through the 26th, and I would love to see everybody there. This is a huge family reunion for people who love books. You see the same people coming back year after year, and new people. This is where we get most of our new memberships as well. If you have that book that you've been looking for and you haven't been able to find it anywhere, chances are you'll find it at our book sale. There are CDs, DVDs, vinyl, you name it, we've got it. And I'm most proud of all of the children who come. And they are sitting around reading and looking through the books and helping their parents pick the books that they want. And they get boxes full. The last day is Sunday. It's called our bag day. And anything you can get in the bag or box is at a flat price, and you can carry it out. And that helps us get rid of some of that inventory, so we can start back over again. For the first time, we're going to do a charity golf tournament at Pine Hill Golf Course. And we're hoping to get more participation from the community. Businesses, just people who may not come to the library for something, but they may be interested in T-ing off for a good cause. We would love to get help getting the word out. A lot of people don't know of Friends of the Library. We don't have a huge marketing staff or media or public relations staff, so we need help getting the word out. Our funding right now is geared specifically toward helping the library but because we have to do more marketing and advertising, hopefully, that will get the word out, and we'll get more donations and memberships. But we really would like to keep that cost down and keep that funding for Tony for his recognition for employees, because Friend's funds that, because the trustees wanted that years ago, so we're continuing to do that. I would like to see it get bigger and better each year, because our staff is amazing, and they deserve to be shown that. So if you can help us with any of this, or getting the word out about Fren'd's, we would love to have a

corporate drive at companies where they have a membership drive where people join Friend's. Because the money goes back into each branch, so you can pick, when you decide your membership, which branch you want. And at the end of the year, we pay that branch those memberships, so it can go directly to that branch. And then just finding out what you guys want to do, coming up. We now align with the fiscal year with the libraries, just to have a more streamlined process of the budgeting. So we just want to make sure we're doing what Harris wants, what the staff wants. We really listen and say, okay, yeah, we can find that. The good thing is, our funding is unrestricted, so we can find anything from Crayons and Crayola's to helping out with building or supporting the library. We love writing checks, we just need more money to do that.

**Tony Mays:** So quick question Ann, and I know you mentioned making the Employee Appreciation part bigger one of my goals that I've been wanting to do for our Benjamin L. Hooks distinguished service awards, because I feel like that's a huge honor. I want to make it a big to do, like a small gala. You know, do it at night, you know, it's all the bells and whistles. That's kind of how I want to get to. I know we're probably not there yet, but that's eventually where I want to go. And I think, you know, I like the fact that we have the friends and the foundation full support, and so, you know, if we can maybe work toward that maybe next year or the year after, just having maybe a small gala with all of the, and then maybe the person that was the, what I would like to see is the person that was a Benjamin L. Hooks winner the year before present the new award to the new people, along with, of course the Director.

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** Yeah, right. All of our programs started off small. The Senior Health Fair, it started off really small and it's grown, and now they're talking about doing it for two days. Same thing with Bookstock. It's really huge now, but it grew. So, yeah, I would love to do that.

**Stephanie Cage:** Ann you mentioned, you know, when people sign up for free memberships, they can determine which branch they want, if they have a branch that they want to select. Is the same true with the golf tournament? If people sign up for the golf tournament, can they request or specify if they want their donation?

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** That's a good question. We don't have it already in the system to do that, but we can easily add that in there.

**Stephanie Cage:** Just curious.

**Beverly Vann:** Do you have a date for the golf tournament?

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** It's on that other flyer there.

**Beverly Vann:** Oh, okay.

**Tony Mays:** Can you send this to me in digital?

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** Yeah. I'll send it to you. So I can do that. Yeah. Is there anything that you guys we talking or thinking about doing for this year that the friends can help out with? Just let us know. Okay.

**Christine Weinreich:** So the Memphis Library Foundation, for those of you who might not know, it was originally founded in the mid-90s to raise \$20 million to be pooled with city and county funds to build this building. And because of the very distinguished group of philanthropists who founded this organization, they raised more than \$20 million somehow in the mid-90s. Like, that's 90s dollars. I don't even know how much that is now. So they decided to invest it and create an endowment. So we're very fortunate to serve kind of two roles for the library. We manage our endowment and give internal grants in response to staff requests, applications. And then we also fundraise like a development department for the library, manage foundation, corporate, and individual giving for the library. So I like to say that we're problem solvers for the library. As Ann said, we really like to write checks. And money usually solves problems. But not always. So our primary role is certainly raising, managing, and spending money for the library. But we also help to empower staff to raise awareness of what's going on at the library. Sometimes it's cutting through city's red tape because sometimes the city process takes longer than the library needs. And so Cecilia and I work together. And she'll be like, can you pay for this and then invoice us because it's not going to get approved in time. So we're able to do some of that as well. And then we also make connections to new partners in the community, sometimes funding partners and sometimes program partners. A snapshot of our organization, we have six and a half full-time equivalencies with a half-time contracted finance manager as well. When I started, it'll be seven years ago in July, we had one and a half, including the executive director. So we've grown a lot. Our net assets are \$12 million right now. So that's about \$5 million, over \$5 million more than when I started. Our operating budget for this fiscal year that ends June 30th is about \$1.5 million. That's about doubled since I started. And then our expected investment into the library from all sources, this is our internal and external funding sources, will be over \$1 million. It was \$1.4 million in fiscal year 25. So we are growing that every year, and our goal is to sustain that over-a-million-dollar investment every year into the future and to continue growing. A few of our key programs that we fund, the Cloud 901 Teen Learning Lab, I'm sure all of you know all about that, the capital campaign for that happened before my time. But we have a sustainability fund for them, so we give them about \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year to revamp their equipment and to run their programs. A newer program that's happening and expanding as we speak, and I wanted to point it out because you might know people, because we just posted new positions, is the

Innovator in Residence Program. That started with Ina Esco as a podcast space at Cossitt, and now we have five innovators at Cossitt, two at Raleigh. And we just, this week, two days ago, posted for a gardening and horticulture innovator at Frayser and a hip-hop music production innovator at Orange Mound. Other libraries are asking for innovators. We've been working with a longtime funder, the Society for Information Management, on a STEM and AI innovator along with Code Crew. And then I went and had a meeting with Eric and found out that he had been talking with Code Crew, and so we're kind of building a feeder system from teen summer camps, intensives through Code Crew, to an innovator in STEM and AI. So we're really excited about that. We also helped make sure, actually the Friends collaborated with us to make sure the Cossett AV was installed. The budget for that from the city was \$220,000, but because of the delay from pandemic, the price went up to \$300,000, so the city was going to scrap it. So we were able to collaborate with a private investor and the Friends and Foundation to make it happen. We also started the Marilyn and Jack Bell Scholarship Award. Jack Bell is one of our founding members and we now have an endowment to give up to two \$1,000 scholarships to staff pursuing higher education every year, so that's exciting. We fund the Withers Photo Collection at the Orange Mound Library. It's \$26,000 a year for that rotating exhibit. That's not the five permanent installations, the city funded that, but each year we're doing the release. And then Explore Memphis, the summer programming, we were able to secure ongoing funding from International Paper of \$100,000 a year that funds that, and this year we got a new grant from TVA of another \$25,000, which is great because the IP funding can only fund children's programs, but TVA doesn't care. So that helps us support the adult programming as well. So that's all super exciting and tip of the iceberg, honestly. I will tell you that some of you may have heard about a capital campaign project that I haven't even, I've told them it exists, but I haven't even met with them on yet, and Ann has heard a lot about it, to build new meeting and event space here at the Central Library. We did a two or three year, we did a feasibility study two or three year planning process with Archimania and public meetings and all of this. We have this amazing design plan and we had to put a pin in it last year because everything changed, the funding landscape in the world changed, the priorities changed, but we are still planning to do that. And instead of launching that, we are working on a major gifts campaign. We actually are hoping to get a half a million-dollar grant from the Assisi Foundation to feed that, so everybody say your prayers and if you know somebody on the board of the Assisi Foundation, tell them we're worth it. Because we want to take our individual giving, like individual donations, right now it's around \$150,000 a year that we get from individuals to half a million a year in between three and four years. And we need the credibility of an Assisi grant to seed that, to really be able to get there that quickly. And it's urgent right now because the funding landscape has changed and we serve a role of filling gaps when gaps exist. So, the Institute for Museum and Library Service, we don't

know what's going to happen one way or another. If funding gets cut for collections, we want to be able to say no problem, we got you. If something happens where a building needs, we actually have a private donor who started a building maintenance fund because she recognized that the city didn't have the resources for so many little things that the buildings needed. So, we can step in and do so many things and that's our goal is to collaborate around big programs, little programs, whatever it is that we respond to library needs. We also are just, I'm throwing this out there too because I'm saying it to everybody right now. We just found out that our development director who has been spearheading the launch of this entire capital, I'm sorry, major gifts campaign has, you don't know this, Rachel has received a job offer in Minneapolis. And so she is, which is where her family is, all of her family is gone from Memphis now. So, she's leaving us in May. So, if anyone knows a really great fundraiser. I know, she just announced it to the rest of the staff on Monday. So yeah. Our team is very close knit and we are really, really happy for her. You know, when I got called for that reference, I told them they should not hire her, but they did anyway.

**Tony Mays:** Don't hire her, but hire her.

**Christine Weinreich:** I know. So, if any of you know any really great fundraisers, we want somebody with fundraising experience because like I said, we are working, we're paying \$16,000 a month right now to consultants to help us launch this. We want it to be somebody who's ready to launch it. So, if you know anyone, watch for that job posting. We're crafting it with consultants. So, we'll post it at some point, but even before then, we don't have to go through the same kind of HR processes. We can just pick someone. So, if you know somebody who's great and I meet with them and I'm like, you are the person, I can hire that person. So, if you know anyone, let me know. The bags that you have in front of you have my card in it, so if you do find anyone. But, also, they have, we've started publishing about a little over a year ago, the MPL Unbound Magazine.

**Ann Bailey-Mitchel:** Last month's was really good!

**Christine Weinreich:** Oh my gosh. I put all three issues in there. I'm not embarrassed of issue one, but I'm not that proud of it. But you can see progress.

**Ann Bailey-Mitchell:** I called Mark after that.

**Christine Weinreich:** Oh, it's so good, the last one, which is the one on top right there. So, flip it over, just that one. Flip it over. No, just flip the whole thing over. So, the flip side is Unbound Youth, produced by young people. First time for that. So, we're really excited to highlight the library in that way as well. Anybody who has a \$25 a month or more donor or a \$500 or more a year donor, we put it in the mail, but they're also available. Enjoy. Any questions?

**Beverly Vann:** I just wanted to say, you know, on behalf of the board, to guarantee you, please let us as Trustees if there's anything we can do to support you. Please reach out to us and let us know. We support you all 100%. So, just let us know what you need from us.

**Eric Harris:** Oh I will.

**Beverly Vann:** So we are here. And I want to also thank our board trustees. We appreciate your support. I know that you all have jobs, too. And I appreciate you all making yourself available for these meetings. Because this is such an important part of the library, and I support the library. So I just want to, again, thank you all for your support. And thank you all for all the goody bags that you all brought. Thank you.

**Tony Mays:** I have a question, did you adopt the previous meeting minutes? I didn't hear if they were adopted.

**Alexis Norman:** Yes, we approved them.

**Beverly Vann:** We approved them.

**Christine Weinreich:** A quick question for the trustees. We have a board meeting coming up on April 21st of my board of directors. I'm happy to send you that information if you'd like the option of attending.

**Beverly Vann:** Can you send us? Is it possible?

**Christine Weinreich:** Yeah, I'll send it to you, Alexis, and you can share it. Again, no obligation, I'm not trying to give you more meetings for you to have to go to.

**Alexis Norman:** Did everybody get the future meeting dates? ...

**Cami Fields:** Yeah, will you go to that last one with all the dates? I'm going to write those down and put them on my calendar.

**Beverly Vann:** Is there any further business? Do we have any further new business? Any further business? So, we're going to therefore adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

**Eric Harris:** We're committed to making sure that we meet regularly and at your interval.