

March 17, 2026

The Marion Public Library Board of Trustees met Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the second floor Library Program Room of the Marion Public Library. Present were Mrs. Pogue, Mrs. Nicholson, Mr. Gilmore, Ms. Sumpter, Mr. Owen, and Mrs. Mathias. Jonie Riddle, Business Manager and Jaime Pitt, Director were also in attendance.

Library Board President Melissa Pogue called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

The minutes from the February 17, 2026 meeting were approved following a motion by Ms. Sumpter, seconded by Mr. Owen. The motion carried unanimously.

On the motion of Ms. Sumpter, seconded by Mrs. Mathias, the Treasurer's report and payment of the docket were unanimously accepted and payment authorized. The register of claims is made as a part of these minutes.

The Treasurer's report showed a balance of \$3,866,441.30 in the Library Operating Fund as of February 28, 2026.

Business:

Lark's Song: The Board discussed a proposal from Megan Gilmore of Lark Song to lease the Jay House three days per week at a rate of \$200 per week, revised from the original request of five days per week. Concerns were expressed regarding the library acting as a landlord and the associated legal and operational implications, particularly in light of existing maintenance issues. Jaime reported that the Mrs. Gilmore has been flexible in regards to scheduling and that the building remains unoccupied approximately 90% of the time while continuing to incur monthly expenses. Board members discussed the need for a formal lease agreement versus the continuation of short-term, individual rental agreements, as well as the legal protections required. It was noted that the property generates approximately \$600 annually but requires significant ongoing maintenance. The Board also discussed the long-term viability of the Jay House, including the possibility of demolition due to ongoing costs and staff resource demands.

A motion was made by Mrs. Mathias and seconded by Mrs. Nicholson to approve a six-month trial lease at \$200 per week for three days. Mrs. Mathias and Mrs. Nicholson voted in favor; Mrs. Pogue and Mr. Owen opposed; and Mrs. Sumpter abstained. The motion resulted in a tie vote and failed. The matter was tabled until the next meeting to allow for Linda's participation. In the interim, Megan Gilmore may continue renting the space on a case-by-case basis using the individual rental agreement.

Computer Use/Internet Policy: The Computer Use/Internet Policy was presented to the Board with minor punctuation corrections. Mr. Gilmore moved to approve the policy, and Mrs. Sumpter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Update: Jaime provided an update on new state legislation that significantly impacts library budget growth. She explained that recent last-minute legislative changes removed prior guardrails that would have limited fiscal body budget reductions to 10% and delayed implementation until 2029. Under the new law, libraries must seek fiscal body approval for budget increases exceeding 2% (or half the maximum growth levy), effective with the 2027 budget cycle. Jaime noted that the library currently maintains an approximate \$600,000 gap between its appropriated budget and actual expenditures, which provides a temporary financial cushion. Board members discussed the library's relationships with city and county councils, acknowledging varying levels of support. The board inquired about the possibility of a historical Carnegie Foundation agreement requiring ongoing city support; Jaime stated she will research any documentation related to potential city obligations.

The Board acknowledged that the library will likely need to limit future budget increases to 2% or less to avoid fiscal body approval. Jaime reported that she is actively attending county meetings and working to strengthen relationships with elected officials. The current financial situation is considered manageable in the near term due to the existing budget cushion.

Bad Debt Policy: The Board reviewed a proposal to eliminate uncollectible patron fines and fees dating back over 18 years.

Director, Jaime Pitt reported that total outstanding bad debt is approximately \$260,000, including \$60,000 from 2008–2019 and \$200,000 from 2019 to present, largely due to records not being cleared for over 20 years. An initial recommendation to retain five years of records was discussed and later adjusted to seven years in response to concerns about potential misuse; however, The Director noted that three years is the standard practice among libraries and questioned the value of maintaining older balances. Discussion also highlighted that much of the debt consists of small amounts associated with patrons who are deceased, have relocated, or are unable to pay. The Board further expressed concern that carrying significant uncollectible balances could negatively impact annual financial reporting.

By consensus, the Board supported eliminating bad debt older than three years, consistent with standard practice. Mrs. Pitt will present a formal resolution for approval at the next meeting. The Library will continue to utilize a collection agency for accounts exceeding \$25.

Circulation Policy/Fine Free: The Board reviewed proposed updates to the Circulation Policy to formally reflect the elimination of overdue fines.

Director Jaime Pitt explained that the Library discontinued overdue fines during the COVID-19 pandemic but had not formally updated the policy to reflect this change. The revised policy maintains charges for lost or damaged materials at replacement cost, and patron accounts are blocked when balances exceed \$25.

Board members discussed potential concerns regarding misuse in the absence of fines. It was noted that account suspension serves as a stronger deterrent than nominal fines, and that accounts exceeding \$25 are referred to a collection agency. The Board also inquired about safeguards to prevent individuals from creating multiple accounts under different names. Ms. Pitt explained that verification procedures are in place and that returned materials are quarantined for three days, which complicates traditional fine implementation.

A motion was made by Mr. Gilmore to adopt the Circulation Policy with the elimination of overdue fines. The motion was seconded by Mr. Owen and passed unanimously.

Following approval, the policy remains in effect with charges for lost or damaged items at replacement cost. Accounts with balances exceeding \$25 will continue to be blocked and referred to a collections agency after three months.

Lakeview Students: Director, Jaime Pitt requested Board approval to offer early library card registration for families attending Lakeview School.

Mrs. Pitt explained that Lakeview is relocating to the Tucker building and has requested early access to library cards for approximately 40 families. This initiative is intended to support participation in summer reading programs and help reduce summer learning loss. The Board inquired whether the 40 families represented total enrollment or only non-resident families. Mrs. Pitt clarified that this figure reflects total families, noting that fewer would require an exception.

A motion was made by Mr. Owen and seconded by Mrs. Mathias to approve early library card registration for Lakeview families. The motion passed unanimously.

I. Director's Report

1. **Materials and Services:** Monthly Statistics will be presented at the meeting.
2. **Staff:** n/a
3. **Conferences/Travel** – OCLC Workshop at Carmel (Kristen)
4. **Community Engagement:** MPL Happenings in the Chronicle Tribune; Lark's Song Meeting; Honor Flight Mailbox Partnership; Delta Ahead Meeting; PBS Event; Training Center-Literacy Night; Marion Scholar House; Parent Night at Justice Thurgood Marshall Intermediate School.

5. **Special Library Programs (Upcoming):**

- Spring Break
- National Library Week (April)

6. **Children's/Youth (Tylanna)**

At the Library

- The February Grab-and-Go craft featured a **Heart Bookmark** activity for children and families.

Programs

- During February, the library hosted **23 programs**, serving over **485 patrons**.

Spring Break Programming

- The library will host the **Big Blue Blocks** from Wonderspace during Spring Break.
- Additional Spring Break activities include:
 - **Monday:** Cardboard Play Day
 - **Tuesday:** Spring Break Movie
 - **Friday:** Drum Circle
 - **Saturday:** Playdough Playtime

Community Outreach

- Staff visited **Marion Scholar House**, where they read books with the children and led a watercolor activity.

Winter Reading Bingo

- The program concluded on **February 14** with **164 patrons registered** and **244 completed bingo cards**.
- Grand prize winners received a blanket, an **Ashley's Ice Cream** gift card, and a box of hot cocoa.

Read Across America Reading Challenge

- During March, the library is hosting a **Read Across America** reading challenge.
- Participants receive a paper map and read books about or set in different U.S. states.
- Children may select a prize for every **chapter book** or **five picture books** they complete.

Facilities & Play Spaces

- The **Kids Courtyard** is expected to open next week (3/19).
- The children's play area has been updated to a **Veterinary Clinic theme**. This imaginative play space supports **social, emotional, and language development**, which are important foundations for early literacy and pre-reading skills.

7. Circulation (Michelle)

Garfield Visitors: The library welcomed Garfield enthusiasts from several locations, including Wachee, FL, Wisconsin, and various towns across Indiana.

America 250 Quilt Project: Joanne is currently working on an America 250 Celebration Quilt. Additional information will be shared soon about ways the community can participate and contribute to the project.

New Library Cards:

Adults: 43

Children: 8

Care Kits - 36

Community Outreach (Recca): Staff attended Parent Night at Justice Thurgood Marshall Intermediate School to share information about services and programs offered by the Marion Public Library. Library materials and applications for library cards were distributed, and staff spoke with families about resources available through the library. Approximately 30 parents and family members visited the library table. Many expressed interest in library programs and services, with several taking applications or planning to apply online. The school also hosted a Book Fair and provided math games, literacy activities, and refreshments for attendees.

Library staff also participated in a Black History Month celebration at the Learning Center. At the library table, children and families created colorful bookmarks, participated in a coloring café, selected grab-bag crafts, and completed Black History trivia and word search activities. Additional activities at the event included a scavenger hunt featuring notable Black historical figures, a story time corner with guest readers, and a dental health information table. Food was provided for attendees, and approximately 40 families visited the library table during the event.

8. Indiana History (Rhonda)

- The Social Media Committee continues to maintain an active presence on the library's Facebook and Instagram accounts. Staff are encouraged to share any programs, services, or announcements that should be promoted through these channels.
- The NewspaperArchives database is currently unavailable due to a cybersecurity breach that occurred in February. The vendor estimates that access will be restored by the end of March.
- Krystal has scanned 5,587 Chronicle-Tribune photographs to date. She has completed scanning the fourth box, and work on the fifth box has begun. Rhonda is approximately halfway through the file naming process for the scanned images.
- Jaime, Kelsey, and the Director reviewed a platform called ArchiveInABox as a potential tool for cataloging and providing public access to the Chronicle-Tribune photo collection. The platform offers free storage for the first 100,000 files, with economical

pricing beyond that threshold. An account has been created, and customization of fields and headings is underway in preparation for uploading materials.

- Rhonda contacted **Newspapers.com** to explore digitizing Chronicle-Tribune issues from 2021–2024. Current issues are already being submitted by the Chronicle-Tribune and are accessible through the library’s in-house link. Digitizing these additional years would help complete the digital run of the newspaper from 1867 to the present. The library is currently awaiting a shipping box and label to send the microfilm for digitization.

- Sheri has added links to the Indiana History Database page for Indiana Digital Memory and a collection of digitized veterans’ oral history interviews housed in the archives at Ball State University. A link to the ArchiveInABox collection will be added once additional materials are uploaded.

9. Museum & Special Projects (Kelsey)

Museum Displays & Exhibits

- Several displays were installed or updated during the reporting period, including:
 - “**Snapshot of Marion**” display created for the PBS screening, located outside Meeting Room B.
 - **Indiana Truck Display** in the museum lobby.
 - **Civil War Surgical Kit** display outside the Carnegie Room.
 - Additional items added to the **Garfield display** in the museum lobby.

Programming & Outreach

- Two programs were hosted in recognition of **Black History Month**, including the *Freedom Stories* presentation with Bill Munn and a screening of *The League*. Total attendance for these programs was **54**.
- Gabe presented to the **Grant County Historical Society**, highlighting notable donations received by the museum in 2025. A Civil War surgical kit from the museum’s collection was also displayed, and attendees assisted in identifying the names and uses of several tools.
- **Museum Tours:** None reported during this period.

Collections Management

- **Items Deaccessioned:** 35 items, primarily food storage containers such as paprika and salt tins.
- **Donations Accepted:** 3 items:
 - *Journal of Vera Duffy Leslie of Swayzee (1931)*
 - *Chair from Van Buren Masonic Lodge #711*, estimated to be approximately 100 years old.
 - *Marion electric three-burner stovetop*, circa 1940s

Special Projects

Jay House

- Volunteers from **Lead, Inc.** assisted with cleaning and organizing the Jay House, including clearing and cleaning three upstairs rooms.
- In February, the Jay House hosted **one library program and five meetings**, with a total attendance of **26**.

PBS Documentary

Kelsey coordinated filming schedules and event logistics for the **PBS documentary *Now Entering Marion***.

10. Reference (Barb Enslin)

Although February was a shorter month, the library continued to offer its regular programming, including three sewing classes, Book Club, and various craft sessions. A total of 36 patrons attended these programs. Participants from Carey Services were especially enthusiastic about the February craft, proudly sharing their completed projects with others as they left the class. It is always rewarding to see their excitement and pride in what they create.

Several themed displays were featured throughout the month, including Black History Month, Aliens, National Language Day, Homemade Bread, and Love Your Pet Day. Patrons continue to enjoy the puzzle table and coloring pages, which remain popular passive activities.

The library's study rooms have been refreshed with new paint, creating a more inviting and professional environment for patrons to meet, study, or conduct small meetings. Despite holiday closures and temporary room closures for painting, over 400 patrons used the study rooms in February. We have also received many positive comments about the updated colors and the fresh feel of the space.

11. Technical Services (Kristen)

EDIFACT Ordering: EDIFACT ordering has been implemented, allowing for electronic invoices rather than manual processing. The system is currently set up with Baker & Taylor, and plans are underway to implement it with Ingram as well.

Weeding Project: Weeding efforts in Technical Services are progressing well. Roger has brought up the remaining empty boxes from the basement, and most have already been filled as the project continues.

Professional Development: I plan to attend OCLC Day in Carmel on April 9. This full-day event brings together librarians from various library types to share updates on resource sharing, digital collections, electronic resources, cataloging, and related services. It will also provide an opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues, connect with OCLC staff, and expand professional networks.

12. Teens (Katie)

Teen programming and engagement continued throughout February with a mix of clubs, open hours, and school partnerships. A total of **13 teen programs** were offered during the month, with **116 participants** attending. The Teen Lounge was also used 62 times, reflecting consistent use of the space by teens visiting the library.

Programs included Dungeons & Dragons, Teen Book Club, Anime Club, Teen Art Group, Lego Club, and scheduled Open Hours for teens to gather and use the space. Teen Book Club had the highest attendance with 14 participants, while Dungeons & Dragons continued to be a steady draw with 11 teens participating across two sessions.

The library also welcomed students from Marion High School for two field trips, with 19 students attending. These visits help strengthen relationships between the library and local schools while introducing teens to library resources and spaces.





A new program, Window Between Worlds, was introduced as an art therapy workshop for teens. While the first session did not have attendance, it represents an effort to expand wellness-focused programming for youth.

Highlights for the month included a new teen joining Anime Club and the return of the Marion High School group for another successful field trip. The Teen Lounge continued to see strong use throughout February, reinforcing its role as a welcoming space for teens in the community.

Teen Book Displays

- *Manga Love All Around*
- *Black History Month Books*
- *Sweet Reads*

Adjournment/Next meeting: The meeting adjourned upon a motion by Mrs. Nicholson, seconded by Mr. Owen. The motion carried unanimously. The next regular board meeting will be Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 5:30 pm.

 _____ President  _____ Secretary
 _____ Member  _____ Member
