

## **Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township**

### **September 25, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance:** Alycia Kinchloe, Julie Haywood, Jessika McLaughlin, Jeff Chirico, Jesse Gallagher, Myron Goldman, Tim Gaudreau, Mary Kay Moran (Executive Director), Nicole Lynch (Assistant Director), Maddie MacKenzie (Administrative and Communications Associate), Elizabeth McGoran (Head Librarian, Elkins Park Branch)

**Public Comment:** None.

#### **Consent Agenda:**

- a. President's Report
- b. Director's Report
- c. Statistical Report
- d. Friends Reports
- e. July Minutes
- f. Finance Reports
- g. Committee Reports

**Motion:** Myron Goldman moved to adopt the Consent Agenda, Tim Gaudreau seconded the motion, and the agenda was adopted.

**Sunshine Announcements:** The Board held an Executive Session on August 27.

**Librarian's Report (Elizabeth McGoran):** See attached report.

**Commissioner's Report (Jeff Chirico):** The Township will hold its first budget meeting on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The public will not have the opportunity to comment, but they can join and listen. An additional "special finance" meeting on Wednesday, October 15 at 7:00 PM, the Finance Director and the Township Manager will provide a more detailed explanation of the Township's difficult financial situation. Jeff Chirico will check if there will be an opportunity for public comment at this meeting.

Mary Kay Moran has seen the final plans for the renovation of the La Mott Community Center. The plans will be brought to the Board of Commissioners and Public Affairs for approval, and once approved, the Township will begin the permitting process. Jeff Chirico expects that the La Mott plans will be brought before the Commissioners at the Public Affairs meeting that same night. Julie Haywood asked whether the community has had the opportunity to provide feedback on the updated plans. Jeff Chirico explained that the plans are a more detailed version of the preliminary design and have not undergone substantive changes since last year's public meeting.

**Public Comment:** None.

**New Business:**

**Governance:**

**Strategic Plan Workshop (Mary Kay Moran):** The Board Strategic Plan Workshop will be held on Sunday, October 5, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Jessika McLaughlin told the Board to check their emails for the information Mary Kay Moran sent out.

**Board Self-Assessment:** Jessika McLaughlin reminded the Board to complete and submit the Board Self-Assessment.

**External Affairs:**

**Thank-a-Thon:** Jesse Gallagher reminded the Board that the Thank-a-Thon will take place this Monday. Jesse Gallagher also reported that the External Affairs Committee held the first of 3 monthly pan-Friends calls. It was a small group, but they held a productive discussion about the Township's budget and development ideas. Jesse Gallagher will pick another day of the week to schedule calls, and try to keep the discussion going.

**Internal Affairs:**

**Budget:** Mary Kay Moran updated the Board on her second meeting with the Township Manager and Finance Director. Mary Kay Moran's strategy was to negotiate a lesser cut, and proposed a \$50,000 cut instead of a \$100,000 cut, which would allow CTLS to avoid cutting staff hours and opening hours at the Elkins Park and Glenside Libraries. The Township Manager and Finance Director were not open to negotiation and will be presenting the Township Budget with a \$100,000 cut to library funding. In addition, they would like to shrink the Library System down into one of the existing buildings in the next three years, and requested a budget reflecting that. Mary Kay Moran expressed why that wouldn't work; none of the existing library buildings are large enough to provide services to the whole township, there would be no space to house the materials collections and CTLS would have to cut our staff by half.

The Township brought up whether the Library System would pay for the new furniture in the renovated La Mott Community Center, and Mary Kay Moran explained that with a \$100,000 CTLS would not even be able to staff or open either seasonal location.

The Board brought up the disconnect between the time and expense spent on an extensive facilities study and plan with a new central library, the discussions around acquiring the Pitcairn Buildings for Township use less than a month ago, and what is now being asked of the Library System.

The Board extensively discussed the Township's budget process and timeline. Jeff Chirico explained that the Township Finance Director and Township Manager will develop the budget, and present it to the Board of Commissioners who will then debate and vote to approve it or not. Myron Goldman questioned the Commissioners support for the Library System after the declaration that the libraries were not a central function of Cheltenham Township. Mr. Goldman expressed his disbelief that the Board of Commissioners are unaware of the direction that Township leadership is advocating for, when the Township Manager is planning to present this budget to the Commissioners for approval. The \$100,000 budget cut would stand for years.

Julie Haywood clarified that the centralized library plan that the Library Board was in favor of was building a new and improved facility, not squeezing into an existing library building and closing the other library branches. The CTLS Board is unequivocally opposed to the \$100,000 budget cut and shrinking down the Library System into one of the existing buildings. Julie Haywood emphasized that the

Commissioners heard pushback on this plan last week from the Library Board and the Cheltenham community. To ask for the libraries to condense their services and staff into one of the existing buildings on top of the \$100,000 cut to the budget is a phenomenal hit to the library. Jeff Chirico responded that while the Township may be in a situation where the satellite libraries might not be able to operate and CTLS may not be able to staff them, he does not believe that the Commissioners would vote to approve the plan to close all but one library branch. Jeff Chirico suggested that the Township Manager and Finance Director are looking at scenarios for cutting costs.

Tim Gaudreau raised the issue that, as a township resident, the community does not know where this financial crisis came from. Mary Kay Moran is being asked to do a huge amount of work to respond to the plans presented in these meetings that, if we believe the Commissioners will not vote for this plan, are completely out of context. Tim Gaudreau continued that the Township does not seem to understand the physical and logistical challenges when the demand for library services is higher than it has been in years.

Jeff Chirico explained that the initial facilities proposal was approved before Janice Salerno, the Finance Director started. Once the position was filled and the finance director was able to do the actual forecasting, she alerted the Township that they were in a crisis position. The Township had not conducted budget forecasting for years, and has been in a difficult long-term financial position. COVID-19 funding helped smooth that over, but as that ran out, it became clear that the financial problems that have long plagued this Township could no longer be patched up. The Township's facilities were not maintained because the Township did not have the money to fix them.

Tim Gaudreau encouraged the Commissioners and the Township to increase public awareness of the crisis, and be more open with the community in the planning discussions.

Julie Haywood reiterated that the CTLS Board is willing to work with the Township to address the financial crisis, but what we are being asked is to basically cut our entire library system by half. After the significant funding cut this year, funding cuts would continue to downsize over the next three years, ending with a facility that is far from an adequate centralized library.

Alycia Kinchloe said that Mary Kay Moran has not been given options for scenario planning. She has been given one scenario, and expected to work with that. There was no discussion of options or other options to explore, as there should have been in a true partnership between Township leadership and the Library System.

Board members discussed the desire to be proactive and clearly communicate that this plan is not acceptable to the Board. Nicole Lynch suggested that when residents have the whole picture of the Township's finances, the library may not be the priority.

Jessika McLaughlin shared that she was disappointed by Matthew Areman's comments and his unnecessarily adversarial language at the last Commissioners meeting, which felt like a slap on the wrist for advocating for the Library. Jeff Chirico responded that he told Commissioner Areman that he went too far and his comments were unproductive and inappropriate, and that some of the other Commissioners felt the same. Alycia Kinchloe added that after that comment, community members still got up and spoke in defense of the Library. Commissioner Areman did express later his regret for some of his comments.

The Commissioners will be receiving the department's budget proposals in the next couple of days. Mary Kay told the Board that once they have more information and come to consensus on next steps, they will need to reevaluate the wording on the advocacy flyer.

**Audit:** Mary Kay Moran passed out the Maillie Audit Report for 2024. Mary Kay Moran shared that CTLS received a clean audit with no findings of concern, and a discount for the costs of next year's audit. The Board had no further questions.

- **Motion:** Myron Goldman moved to approve the 2024 Audit. Tim Gaudreau seconded the motion, and the Audit was approved unanimously.

**Recommendation to Close the Truist Checking Account (Julie Haywood):** At the last Internal Affairs Committee meeting, there was a recommendation to close the Truist checking and merge it with the money market account. It will be under the \$250,000 FDIC limit and will provide additional interest.

- **Motion:** Myron Goldman moved to approve closing the Truist checking account and merging it with the money market account, Tim Gaudreau seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

**Community Advisory Committee (Tim Gaudreau):** One of the reasons that many community members joined the Community Advisory Committee was the prospect of a new centralized library and to provide input on the future of the library system. In coordination with the CTLS Board and the advocacy strategy, Community Advisory Committee members are willing to write statements and attend meetings in support of the Library, and will continue utilize their community networks for advocacy. In upcoming meetings, the Committee will be discussing fundraising and advocacy opportunities.

Julie Haywood thanked Jessika McLaughlin for putting the advocacy package together and thanked Alycia Kinchloe and CTLS staff for attending the Commissioners meeting.

**Board Talking Points:** Mary Kay Moran passed out the one-pager. The highest priority will continue to be advocacy for the Library System. The one-pager includes a blurb about the World Music Concert at the Elkins Park Library and important dates of upcoming outreach opportunities and events. Nicole Lynch shared an opportunity for members to participate in the Glenside Library's Trunk-or-Treat event. CTLS' Resource of the Month is ParentTV, a streaming service with educational videos for parents and caregivers of children of all ages, from pregnancy through teenage years. ParentTV is provided to CTLS as part of Family Place Grant, and is only available to Cheltenham Township library card holders.

Mary Kay Moran passed out a printout of the plans for the LaMott Community Center, and explained that yellow highlights indicate dedicated library spaces, and pink highlights represent flex space available to the library. In red, Mary Kay Moran recorded the dimensions of each room. There will be space for mobile shelves, a dedicated computer space, and the doors at the end of the pink space that can be closed off from the community center for special programming. Overall, patrons of the La Mott Library are looking for space to work and space set aside for toys and reading for parents with young children. Along the back of the 22' by 7' long library space there will be permanent shelving set aside to permanently house the African American collection at La Mott. The mobile shelving will be floating collections.

Julie Haywood brought up the lack of knowledge of how important the libraries actually are to the Cheltenham community. Mary Kay Moran responded that she does not think that CTLS was invited to any Township Public Affairs meetings this year. The Board discussed creating a media packet to send to the Township Commissioners.

**Public comment:** None.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- The next External Affairs Meeting will be held on Monday, October 6 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Internal Affairs Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, October 13 at 4:00 PM.
- The next Governance Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 14 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Community Advisory Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 14 at 7:00 PM.
- The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, October 22 at 7:00 PM at the Elkins Park Free Library.

**Myron Goldman moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**The meeting was adjourned and the Board moved to an Executive Session.**