

## Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township

### October 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes

**Attendance:** Alycia Kinchloe, Julie Haywood, Jessika McLaughlin, Jesse Gallagher, Myron Goldman, Mary Kay Moran (Executive Director), Nicole Lynch (Assistant Director), Maddie MacKenzie (Administrative and Communications Associate)

**Public Comment:** None.

**Consent Agenda:**

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

**Board Comment:**

The Board discussed details of this year's finance reports:

- **HVAC:** Mary Kay Moran explained that the building maintenance line is low this year, as the HVAC bills have not come in yet. Last year, the Library System spent approximately \$10,000 on HVAC expenses, and Mary Kay Moran expects this year's costs will be the same. Although the Township owns the library buildings, they have never paid for the HVAC expenses. HVAC maintenance is a major expense for CTLS; all of the buildings' units are old, the parts need to be replaced frequently, and the parts are more expensive and difficult to get. Mary Kay Moran estimates that CTLS has paid at least \$10,000 each year in HVAC costs over the last four years. One year, replacing the AC parts throughout the system and recharging East Cheltenham's AC unit cost CTLS almost \$20,000. Julie Haywood emphasized that CTLS has saved the Township about \$40,000 in HVAC expenses over the last four years. In the absence of an MOU, the Library System would continue to pay those costs.
  - Mary Kay Moran explained that In the event of an HVAC issue, the libraries generally call Allen Brown first and he can usually come over to take a look. The Township's current ticketing system is through OpenGov software and because CTLS is not part of the township, and our computers are owned by MCLINC, we do not have that software installed on our computers, and instead have to text or call.
- **Collections:** Mary Kay Moran pointed out that the collections line is also low. The Library System's main materials vendor, Baker & Taylor, has gone out of business suddenly and unexpectedly, and many of the orders CTLS placed throughout the year were cancelled and did not come in. The CTLS team is currently working with other vendors to set up accounts and place our orders by the end of the year.
- **Other Expenses:** The Library System's utility fees have increased more than expected this year, but are still within budget. The legal fees are higher this year due to the policy work that

required review, particularly the ICE staff policy. Mary Kay Moran informed the Board that CTLS has not yet received the first oil bill of the year, but expects it in the next month.

Mary Kay Moran also informed the Board about two points that came up since she sent the Director's Report. This week, someone backed into and knocked over the retaining wall at the Glenside Library, then drove away without leaving a note. The incident was caught on the library's security cameras, but the license plate and the driver were not visible. CTLS did file a police report, and Mary Kay will keep the Board up to date with any developments. Additionally, the Strategic Plan 1.0 SPLIT Team met and discussed the online annual report of achievements. The team plans to do a 3-year report for the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan to be posted online. The team also discussed sending a postcard to Cheltenham Township residents with a QR Code linking to the Strategic Plan.

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

**Sunshine Announcements:** An Executive Session was held following the 9/25/25 BOLDOCT meeting to discuss advocacy regarding the proposed Township appropriation reduction.

#### **Commissioner's Report (Jeff Chirico):**

- Budget, Budget, Budget. As the board knows, the Board of Commissioners is involved in the intense budget process for 2026. Unfortunately, it appears that significant cuts and tax increases will be forthcoming in virtually every department in order to help the township escape a structural deficit years in the making. The library is by no means the only department facing reduced funding for 2026. Last week, Mary Kay, Julie Haywood, Tim Gaudreau, Jeff Chirico, Ann Rappoport and Irv Brockington met to discuss the issues surrounding the library funding. The Commissioners are open to meeting with the board again soon.
- As you may know, the design plans for the La Mott Community Center were unveiled on September 20 at Camp William Penn Day. We now move forward with permitting, bidding, and construction. The newly renovated center is expected to open during the first half of 2027.
- The commissioners will vote this evening on moving forward with design efforts for the Robinson Park stream restoration project. It's a project that will better manage and filter storm water runoff, by daylighting the current channeled stream. It is a project paid for by grant money and collected storm water fees and provides the township with important MS4 credits.

There are many other issues on the table. Your cooperation and understanding during this difficult time are appreciated.

**Public Comment General:** None.

#### **New Business:**

**Governance (Alycia Kinchloe):** The Governance Committee had a short meeting about the Elkins Park Friends' Board seat, and making sure that the Board is communicating in writing regarding expectations on how seats are filled. There will be another meeting with Jessika, Julie, and Myron to discuss the open seat, and the person who has expressed interest in serving on the Board. After a 4-hour long Commissioners' Meeting, Julie Haywood had the opportunity to read aloud the Library Board's open

letter to the Cheltenham Township Board of Commissioners. At this meeting, the Library Board, and the public, got a glimpse of the Township's financial situation and their vision for the Library system, which was the only department named specifically by the Township. The Board will continue to advocate for CTLS in the face of the presented budget cuts. Jessika McLaughlin re-sent the link to the Board Self-Assessment, and reminded the members to complete it if they have not done so already.

#### **External Affairs:**

**Annual Appeal:** Jesse Gallagher announced that the Glenside Friends have sent out their Annual Appeal. Nicole Lynch informed the Board that there are three slightly different versions of the CTLS appeal letter in the New Business Packet. One letter alludes generally to the cuts, one alludes to the \$100,000 potential cut, and one discusses cuts up to \$250,000 per the Township meeting last week. The challenge is that the appeal letter that the Board selects needs to be at the printer by the first week of November, and will be mailed just before the Township publishes the budget the week of Thanksgiving.

Nicole Lynch requested the Board's input on which version of the letter to commit to. The most strongly worded version of the letter reads, that "*under the Township's proposed budget scenarios, funding for CTLS would be reduced by \$100,000 to \$250,000. This cut would mean significant changes to the resources our community depends on.*" The letter also includes a footnote specifying that the numbers are "based on the meeting on October 15, 2025." The Board discussed the difference between "proposed" and "presented" Township budget scenarios, and decided to use "presented," as the budget has not yet been officially proposed to the Board on Commissioners. The Board will take a second look at the most strongly-worded version of the Annual Appeal letter, and submit comments to Nicole Lynch by next Wednesday.

The appeal letter will be formatted to include photos and a reply card with a QR code. Nicole Lynch will add a signature line for Julie Haywood, the Board President, in addition to Mary Kay Moran, the Executive Director.

Every version of the letter has the \$30,000 matching gift language, and Mary Kay Moran did get an answer about whether the donor wanted to be named in the letter. The donor is a long-time supporter of the library, whose mother, also a long-time supporter of the library, recently passed away. Mary Kay Moran informed the Board that after the benefit concert, the donor approached her about making a significant contribution to the library, having heard about proposed cuts. In a meeting with Mary Kay Moran at the Glenside Library, she discussed what was important to her about the Library and what she'd like to be done with any donated funds, including continuing education for staff and children's programming. She will be offering matching gift funds of up to \$35,000 to encourage others to donate. Other than the matching funds, the gift funds are unrestricted. A couple of days later, CTLS received a check for \$50,000 in the mail.

#### **Internal Affairs:**

**Budget:** The Board did not have any new information to report on the Township budget. Mary Kay Moran shared that while CTLS does not know the amount that will be cut from the budget, it will be a significant amount. Mary Kay Moran hopes that CTLS is not looking at the \$250,000 cut, but reports that she has planned for the \$100,000 cut scenario, and will discuss additional, more delicate, budget matters in the Executive Session.

Mary Kay Moran continued that as an organization, CTLS will need to start thinking about how to plan for the future, as this will not be the end of budget reductions in the Township. In a recent conversation with a development expert from Indian Valley Public Library, the development person had good ideas that will work for CTLS, but establishing a foundation is a long-term process. In their recent meeting, Commissioner Rappaport mentioned the dedicated library funding referendum. Mary Kay Moran printed out the sections of the PFM study covering a dedicated library referendum from the Township's website. It is too late to propose a dedicated library funding referendum this year, but CTLS could have a good case for it next year. Mary Kay Moran would present it as not an increased tax, but a reallocation of existing tax dollars, moving them into the Library Board's control. Instead of being a line item out of the Township's operations budget, it would be dedicated funding that the Library System could count on and use to plan for the future. The Board can consider looking into the viability of a dedicated library funding referendum as an action item on the new Strategic Plan. There are nonprofits that help libraries explore this, for little or no charge.

**Advocacy:** The Library Board has been advocating publicly and privately to the Commissioners. Last week after the Township budget meeting, Julie Haywood read aloud the Board's letter to the Commissioners and sent them the letter to have on file. The letter includes the link to the petition supporting no cuts to the library budget, signed by almost 400 community members. The Community Advisory Committee has been extremely helpful in getting the word out about advocacy opportunities and the petition.

Julie Haywood, Tim Gaudreau and Mary Kay Moran met with three of the Township Commissioners last week. Julie Haywood shared that they did not look at advocacy favorably, which is surprising since they are elected officials. Julie Haywood expects that the cuts will not be reversed and the library system can expect additional cuts over multiple years. The Library Board was surprised by Township's financial position, and the extent of the budget cut scenarios presented in the special budget meeting. The library was the only entity that was called out in the meeting. Julie Haywood thanked the community for their support, and reiterated that it is critically important that the library system is maintained.

Jessika McLaughlin highlighted the misinformation prevalent among the Commissioners and the public on what the Library System does and how the library budget works. The Board intends to continue advocacy efforts about misinformation, especially concerning funding and the library's relationship to the Township and the School District. The Board discussed showing up to and commenting at Commissioners Meetings, and addressing library funding and expenses in writing.

The Board read the open letter to the Township Commissioners into the record:

**OPEN LETTER TO THE TOWNSHIP COMMISSIONERS  
READ DURING THE CITIZENS FORUM OF THE OCTOBER 15TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING**

October 15, 2025

Re: Proposed 2026 CTLS Budget Reduction Dear Cheltenham Township Commissioners:

The Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township respectfully requests that the Township Commissioners reconsider the proposed \$100,000 reduction in CTLS' 2026 budget presented this evening under Scenario #1. While we understand that the Township is facing significant financial challenges, the proposed reduction in CTLS' budget would have devastating impacts

for the community that relies on our services. If adopted, this cut will have negative impacts to our community, including:

- Reduced library hours
- Fewer services and programs
- A 10% reduction in part-time staff
- Inability to provide even cost of living increases to staff

In Cheltenham, as January 1, 2025, there are 13,756 active library card holders with an increased number of patrons accessing our programs and services every year. However, the cost of utilities, electronic materials and services continue to rise. Last year, CTLS was flat funded by the Township. With costs for electronic books and materials increasing each year, this means that CTLS is expected to do more, for more people, with far less. This is nothing new for CTLS.

CTLS has continually taken steps to reduce costs and raise necessary funds for operating expenses. The Board adopted an investment policy directing CTLS to utilize its interest income for operating costs, which it did in 2024, 2025 and expect to do in 2026. Every year, CTLS successfully undertakes an annual appeal and in 2024 raised over \$60,000. In addition to fundraising to offset operating costs, CTLS has also pursued large grants. Through a competitive process CTLS received a \$50,000 technology and learning grant from the State last year to bring Family Place learning tools to the Elkins Park Children's room. These are just a few ways CTLS continues to work to offset any budget reductions from the Township.

During a recent Thank-a-Thon, donors shared that CTLS is “a warm and welcoming place . . . where staff is delightful and helpful . . . and CTLS fits her family's core values.” We invite you to use this link <https://chnng.it/9pR9YzJvPd> to read comments from over 400 community members who signed a petition supporting CTLS and opposing the proposed cuts. .

As part of the Township's budget project, CTLS was also asked to identify either Glenside or Elkins Park as the community's central library. Neither is a viable option. When you contemplate a 21st century library that offers even minimally, what our neighboring townships like Springfield and Upper Dublin offer, neither Glenside nor Elkins Park is a viable option.

When CTLS proposed the concept of a central library a few years ago, we never contemplated that Glenside or Elkins Park would suffice. Neither location has parking to accommodate an increased number of patrons from 2 branches and satellite locations. Neither location has space to add meeting or study rooms or dedicated space for such things as maker spaces, reading rooms or technology hubs.

The Board and CTLS are willing partners in identifying alternative funding options that do not compromise the quality and accessibility of our library services. However, the proposed

\$100,000 cut to CTLS' budget is a nonstarter. The suggestion that CTLD should use its fund balance year over year to fill gaps in our operating budget puts us in danger of being in the same place the Township finds itself in.

Also, there was a comment that our costs decreased when the East Cheltenham and LaMott libraries were open seasonally. This is not the case. In fact, we incurred MCLINC costs for both libraries for the last 2 years because they were not considered satellites. The librarians who

staffed these libraries returned to Elkins Park and Glenside to help service these locations. We are available to meet with the Township Commissioners to discuss creative ways to fund the library.

Sincerely,

The Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township\* Julie Haywood, President

Jessika McLaughlin, Vice President Jesse Gallagher

Timothy Gaudreau Myron Goldman Alycia Kinchloe

\*Jeff Chirico is the Township representative on the Library Board but out of respect for his official role as Township Commissioner tasked with making a decision about the library budget, we did not include him as a signator on this letter.

**MOU:** Mary Kay Moran had no updates for the Board on the MOU. The progress halted in June when the Township Manager decided to put the MOU on hold due to the financial difficulties the Township is facing. The original document was sent over to Megan Hart and Alyson Elliott in the second quarter of 2024, which was the first time anyone in the Township saw it. Towards the end of 2024, Megan Hart, the Assistant Township Manager, took it on and worked on it with Mary Kay Moran. In early 2025, CTLS sent it back to the Township with our revisions. Megan Hart left in March or April of this year, and then in June, when Mary Kay Moran and Alyson Elliott were setting up the appointment for the first budget talk, Manager Elliot requested to put the MOU on hold.

**Community Advisory Committee:** The Community Advisory Committee held its most recent meeting this week to discuss the budget cuts from an advocacy perspective. The Board provided upcoming Township meeting dates. The community members are interested in continuing advocacy efforts, and the committee will circle back in the future.

**Board Comment:**

Mary Kay Moran passed out the one-pager with some positive library news to the Board. The Glenside Library is holding their first Trunk-or-Treat next Thursday, October 30, and is looking for event volunteers. If Board members are interested, please email Nicole Lynch. Wednesday, November 5 is the Commissioner President's budget message. On Wednesday, November 19, the Township Commissioners will move to adopt the preliminary 2026 budget at 7:30 PM, final budget to be adopted on December 17. The budget should be available for public review sometime during the week of November 23.

**Public comment:** None.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- The next External Affairs Meeting will be held on Monday, November 3 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Internal Affairs Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, November 10 at 4:00 PM.
- The next Governance Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 18 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Community Advisory Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 18 at 7:00 PM.

- The next Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 3 at 7:00 PM at the Glenside Free Library.

**Motion:** Myron Goldman moved to adjourn the meeting, Jesse Gallagher seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

**The Board moved to an Executive Session.**