

## Board of Library Directors of Cheltenham Township

### January 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes

**Attendance:** Alycia Kinchloe, Julie Haywood, Jessika McLaughlin, Jesse Gallagher, Tim Gaudreau, Emily Cheramie-Walz, Mary Kay Moran (Executive Director), Nicole Lynch (Assistant Director), Elizabeth McGoran (Head Librarian, Elkins Park Branch), 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. December Minutes
- f. Finance Reports
- g. Committee Reports

**Board Comment:** Julie Haywood asked Mary Kay Moran to identify which categories of expenses that CTLS will expect to incur this year that have increased significantly since last year. Mary Kay responded that all of the expenses have increased. There has been a significant increase in the electric costs for the Elkins Park and Glenside Libraries, and not due to increased usage. The supply fees that CTLS pays to PECO have dramatically increased. At Glenside, due to supply fee increases, the electric bill is up \$600, and up \$400 at the Elkins Park Library for December. Mary Kay Moran brought up the possibility of reducing the service fees in collaboration with the township. Because the township owns the library buildings, the electric is routed through their ownership. The plowing expense will be higher due to the high snowfall. The 2026 budget is based on last year's expenses in the building maintenance category. Mary Kay Moran increased those expenses by 5% over the 2025 numbers. These unexpected increases may be offset by other categories that will be lower. Mary Kay Moran negotiated a lower rate for the accounting bill and legal fees will be lower, as there will be less policy work done this year. Mary Kay Moran recommended increasing fundraising expense so the library system has a pool to pull from to start fundraising events.

Mary Kay Moran is still working with the school district on a payment rate for the professional development services that CTLS is providing, which should be finalized soon. Alycia Kinchloe noted that Dr. Savage has stepped down as assistant superintendent, and will now focus on educational development. The Board discussed whether Dr. Savage will continue to work on this project in her new role, and the possibility of codifying the library system's work with the school district in an official document.

The community meeting about the La Mott Community Center was cancelled, and Mary Kay Moran has not had a reply from the township manager about aligning our messaging regarding the renovations. Emily Cheramie-Walz informed the Board that she will speak with the township manager in-person tomorrow to address this, and expressed that not responding is not acceptable. Mary Kay is not sure

what staffing will look like at the La Mott Library, and emphasized that if the library system is not in communication with the township beforehand, they will be going into a public meeting without being on the same page.

Julie Haywood welcomed Emily Cheramie-Walz as the newly elected township commissioner in Ward 6 and as the township's newly appointed representative on the Library Board. Julie Haywood shared that Sherry Justus has pulled back as the nominated Elkins Park Friends board representative due to personal reasons. The Board will be reaching out to determine another Elkins Park Friends representative to the library board.

Julie Haywood announced that earlier this month, the Board underwent a reorganization. Given the small size of the Board, this year, every committee has co-chairs, and there will be two vice-presidents. The president and the vice-presidents will rotate in leading bi-monthly board meetings.

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

**Sunshine Announcements:**

- a. An Executive Session was held following the 12/3/25 BOLDOCT meeting to discuss Advocacy regarding the proposed reduction of the township appropriation.
- b. An Executive Session was held on 1/12/26 to discuss Board reorganization and the Executive Director Annual review.

**Public Comment General:** None.

**Librarian's Report (Elizabeth McGoran):** See attached report. Julie Haywood suggested that CTLS begin sharing the written librarian's report with the commissioners.

Emily Cheramie-Walz suggested that she send a personal post-meeting email to the other commissioners. Julie Haywood clarified that the meeting minutes are publicly available, and in the past the Board has shared a monthly bulletin of library events with the commissioners.

**Commissioner's Report (Emily Cheramie-Walz):** Commissioner Cheramie-Walz has a background in fundraising and communication, and has been working for nonprofits for 25 years, and will serve as the Vice-Chair of the Township Finance Committee and the Library Board Liaison.

Emily Cheramie-Walz expressed her excitement to be serving as the commissioner representative to the Library Board, and shared township updates. The township also had a reorganization meeting, where it was announced that Alyson Elliot will be assuming the role of interim township manager while the Township searches for her replacement as township manager. The new commissioners shared their goals for this year at the annual commissioners' retreat. Emily Cheramie-Walz added that one of her key priorities is relationship repair between the library board and the township after the most recent budget process, and an overall focus on improving communication. The Board and Commissioner Cheramie-Walz discussed the level of continuity of the commissioner appointment to the Library Board. Emily Cheramie-Walz expressed that she hopes to be able to stay on as Board member.

Jessika McLaughlin thanked Commissioner Cheramie-Walz for helping bridge the gap with the library system, and added that the Board has been intensively discussing how to establish a functional working relationship with the township. The Board did not see the library advocacy as negative and adversarial; rather, they saw it as a positive way to share information with the public. The Board discussed the possibility of holding some sort of meeting to discuss feelings and come together.

Julie Haywood emphasized that advocacy is a key component of the work of the Library Board, and that board members must be able to advocate for the library's mission with the entity that is providing us with financial support. Julie Haywood reiterated that the Board wants to work with the commissioners so that the relationship does not feel adversarial. Tim Gaudreau shared that this process demonstrated the ability of the Board to mobilize township residents in support of the library system, through the Community Advisory Committee, working with local officials, and attending events. By the time there was an opportunity for a partnership with the township on the budget process, it was already too late for the library system to weigh in. By the time the decisions were public and library system was part of the discussion, the situation was already adversarial. The library system and library board were invited to participate too late in the game.

Alycia Kinchloe added that the advocacy the library board did ensured our neighbors were civically engaged in other areas. Library supporters attended other commissioners meetings beyond the budget presentations. Emily Cheramie-Walz stated that the Cheltenham community needs the kind of advocacy and engagement the Board organized for every issue in the township.

#### **New Business:**

##### **Approve 2026 Committees and meeting schedules:**

- **Motion:** Alycia Kinchloe moved to approve the 2026 committees and meeting schedules as posted, Jesse Gallagher seconded, and the motion passed.

#### **Governance:**

**i. Conflict of Interest and Commitment Letter:** Jessika McLaughlin asked the board members to sign and scan their Conflict of Interest Forms and Commitment Letters to Mary Kay Moran or drop off a signed copy to their local library branch. Mary Kay Moran will make the forms into fillable PDF documents.

**ii. Board Goals 2026:** The Board will need to refresh the board goals dashboard with new board goals for 2026. Jessika McLaughlin reminded the board members to review their goals, evaluate the progress made in 2025, and draft new 2026 goals at their next committee meeting. Jessika McLaughlin will add a new tab to the dashboard for 2026 goals.

**iii. Update of EP Friends' seat on BOLDOCT:** The Board has asked the Elkins Park Friends to put forth another recommendation. The Elkins Park Friends would like to give Sherry Justus some little time to consider the nomination, and if she decides to withdraw, then they would be ready to move forward with a recommendation at their February meeting. Julie Haywood expects that between their February meeting and the Board's March meeting they will have a nomination to put forward for Board evaluation. Once that person is recommended to the Board, and the Board consents to that recommendation, the nomination then goes forward to the township commissioners for ultimate approval.

**External Affairs:** The External Affairs Committee is brainstorming fundraising events and working on smaller fundraising ideas.

**i. Annual Appeal Report:** Nicole Lynch updated the Board on the results of the annual appeal. So far, the annual appeal has raised just under \$41,000, which is about \$6,000 more than last year in totality. At this point, small amounts will continue to trickle in, and CTLS will do a closeout analysis at the end of February. This year, the appeal had more individual donors than in previous years. External Affairs will discuss additional stewardship efforts throughout the year. Julie Haywood suggested that board members write thank you letters to donors that they know personally. The annual appeal did reach the goal for the entirety of the matching gift. Emily Cheramie-Walz recommended that CTLS announce the success of matching gift. Nicole Lynch replied that CTLS does generally send out an email to donors thanking them for helping us meet our goal in January. The Board discussed the overall national difficulty in fundraising this year, and acknowledged that the library system's advocacy and the township's financial situation contributed to the success of this annual appeal.

**Internal Affairs:**

**i. Budget:** Mary Kay Moran is applying for a state grant through Senator Haywood's office that would offset the \$100,000 reduction from the Township. Senator Haywood put CTLS in for the possibility to be awarded a grant for \$100,000 through the Senatorial Discretionary Fund. Mary Kay Moran received a proposal form to outline how we would use the grant, and selected youth services, which would have been impacted by the cut. The library system's proposal was approved through this first step, and the grant was assigned to the Department of Education. Mary Kay Moran received that application on January 16, completed and submitted the application on January 22, and expects to hear by mid-February if CTLS will be awarded the grant. If the library system does receive the grant, it would be level funding for the third year in a row. The funds will be allocated to the youth services department, and if CTLS receives the grant, funds that would have gone towards those services could be reallocated to other areas. The library would not have to cut part-time hours or reduce service hours, and would be able to provide a 2% cost of living increase and bring some staff up to the minimum salary threshold. Mary Kay Moran explained that she has multiple budgets prepared, in the event that CTLS does not receive any grant funding, or receives partial funding from the grant. The Board does not have a budget to approve tonight, but CTLS leadership is prepared with options while we wait for the results of the grant application.

- **Questions and Comments:** Julie Haywood added that Board is also preparing for this year and the following years, with the expectation of further reductions in revenue from the township. The Internal Affairs Committee is discussing what it would look like to propose a dedicated library tax, how to propose a library tax, and how to get community and Township support. The Internal Affairs Committee is also exploring utilizing interest income for operating expenditures, while being clear that the library system will not be using its fund balance for operating expenditures.
- Jessika McLaughlin asked what information about the budget cuts has been communicated to library staff. Mary Kay Moran responded that the situation has been discussed at leadership meetings, but there has not been an all-staff announcement. Jessika McLaughlin suggested sharing some updates to alleviate unnecessary stress and uncertainty.

**Community Advisory Committee:** The Community Advisory Committee did not meet in January, as the members were not available. The next meeting is scheduled for February 10. Last January the Committee held its first full meeting, with the agenda set for a central library project which has come and gone. The Committee will conduct another agenda setting session this year in February. Tim Gaudreau and Julie Haywood emphasized the value of the Community Advisory Committee, both in supporting library advocacy efforts, and in gauging and exploring the community's interests, concerns, and feelings about the libraries.

**Strategic Plan:** The refreshed Strategic Plan has been updated with the language changes suggested by the Board at last month's meeting. Mary Kay Moran reminded the Board that the finalized strategic plan is included in the New Business Packet. CTLS is now in a transitional period between previous and new plan. The new SPLIT team has not met since the first meeting with Amanda, and the original SPLIT team has been working on a progress report on the 2022-2025 plan, which is just about finished. Julie Haywood and Mary Kay Moran are also working on letter to community. Once the final draft is ready, Mary Kay Moran will send out the final draft for the Board to review. CTLS will share the strategic plan report on our website, in our newsletter, and on social media. The report will be digital, as it would be too expensive to print and mail to everyone. The SPLIT team has also discussed the possibility of doing a video to promote the progress the library has made. Mary Kay Moran hopes that the progress report will be finished in the next couple of days and can then be shared with the Board. CTLS will form staff work teams to plan action items, and the SPLIT Team will review the action items, and determine how to enact them over the next three years of this plan. Julie Haywood suggested sending hard copies of the strategic plan progress report to each of the commissioners. Emily Cheramie-Walz suggested inviting the Cheltenham Commissioners to a small reception to reveal the strategic plan and discuss goals with them. The overall goal is to communicate the achievements from last three years and publicize the goals for the next three years of the new plan.

**Facilities:** Mary Kay Moran updated the Board on a number of facilities concerns.

- **Glenside Retaining Wall:** On October 22, someone backed into the retaining wall of the Glenside library and knocked it over. CTLS filed a police report and checked the security cameras, but there was not a visible license plate in the footage. The township facilities manager came out the next day to review the damage. On November 24, the facilities manager informed Mary Kay Moran that they were in the process of submitting a claim for repairs, but she did not hear back until recently. A contractor evaluated the damage to the retaining wall, and determined that while the entirety of the wall will need to be replaced, it is currently stable, and will not be fixed before the spring. Mary Kay Moran did ask if CTLS could remove the big chunks of wall, but Allen Brown thought that the contractor might reuse the materials.
- **EP Library Roof:** The Elkins Park Library's roof began leaking on December 27. CTLS closed the library, as the leaks were in public areas, and called the township that day. Ron, one of the facilities assistants, removed the damaged ceiling tiles and checked the roof, but the Library System did not receive a report on the condition of the roof. A roofing contractor inspected the roof after the snow had melted, and confirmed that the drains were clear, but the roof is in poor condition, and the leaks are coming from water puddling along the seams where the roof has been repaired over the years. Mary Kay Moran spoke with the facilities manager a couple of days later, who said he is looking for a repair that would last 5-10 years. The Township will not replace the inside ceiling tiles before the repairs because they could be damaged by further

leaks. The contractor thinks the roof may be the original from the early 80s, which would be expected to last about 20 years, and is now past the end of its life. If they redid the roof, the modern roof material would last 40 years. Mary Kay asked for a quote for repairing or replacing the roof, and the contractor said he would send the quotes to Allen Brown. On January 22, a few weeks later, there were more leaks in the building. Mary Kay reached out to the facilities manager, but did not hear back. Yesterday, January 27, the staff heard dripping and observed a wet ceiling tile in the staffing area.

- In the meantime, CTLS finally received the ability to submit building maintenance tickets through the township software. Mary Kay Moran could not update the original ticket, so she submitted a new one, and has not yet heard anything back.
- The Board discussed the snow and ice on the roof which is likely to exacerbate the damage. Emily Cheramie-Walz emailed the township manager and Allen Brown that no response to something that is critical is not an option. The librarians are covering the computers with tarps. The library system needs to know what the plan is and when we can expect the roof to be fixed. Emily Cheramie-Walz will talk to Alyson Elliott about it tomorrow, and let Board know what she says.

**LM and EC:** Mary Kay Moran updated the Board on the status of the East Cheltenham and La Mott Libraries. If the library system had been flat-funded by the Township, it would still amount to two years of cuts with inflation. Even if CTLS does receive the \$100,000 state grant, the library will not have the funds to open the East Cheltenham Library this year. When the La Mott Library reopens in 2027, CTLS will likely not have the funding to staff it. Nicole Lynch and Mary Kay Moran met with a librarian from the Timberland Library System in Washington State. Their libraries are in a very rural area, and have several branches with expanded access and one self-service branch. Patrons who have signed up for special access, gone through an orientation and signed an agreement can access the library without staff present. This model is an option to provide access to the East Cheltenham and La Mott Libraries without fully staffing the branches. Mary Kay believes that setting up the system was about \$20,000. They have the services CTLS is interested in, including holds pickup, self-service checkout, popular collections and computer access. At Timberland they also offer limited weekly programming. The Township will run a computer lab at La Mott, so CTLS would not have to provide that service for that branch. Mary Kay Moran emphasized that the library system will need to have extensive communication with the township and the community if leadership decides that this is the necessary setup. Jessika McLaughlin brought up the importance of making sure the setup is not a barrier, and should be as accessible as possible.

Mary Kay Moran clarified that at the La Mott Library, patrons would have swipe-in access only to the library space, and only during specific hours when the community center was already staffed. For patrons to be able to access that library space, the building would have to be open, with a township staff member at the desk. Multiple people could be in the space while the building is open and the person at the front desk could physically see them. The library system can set the rules regarding hours, ages, etc. To be allowed access, patrons will have to sign that they will not bring in another adult with them. In the Washington setup, they have a record of the swipes, and security cameras set up to cover everything in the library. Mary Kay Moran is not sure if that was included in the setup costs.

Mary Kay Moran hopes that after next Tuesday's meeting, we will have a timeline for the La Mott Community Center and an idea of what to expect.

**Electricity:** Mary Kay Moran is looking into ways to decrease electricity supply fees. With the Township's assistance, the libraries could switch suppliers through the PA Power Switch Program. Even though the PECO bills come to CTLS and we pay them, the library system does not own the buildings, and cannot negotiate rates or change suppliers. Mary Kay Moran does not know if they would have to change all of the suppliers throughout the township, or if they have a contract with their electric suppliers. The libraries are currently supplied by Constellation. Nicole Lynch added that once the Elkins Park Library's January PECO bill arrives sometime next week, we will have a better idea of what the increase is. Emily Cheramie-Walz added that the commissioners did all receive an email from PECO that the township's ongoing investments in natural gas and electric infrastructure projects will result in a cost-savings, but did not specify how much or for whom.

**Glenside Offices:** Mary Kay brought up that the administrative offices in the basement of the Glenside Library have been very cold. The office is usually 58 when staff arrive in the morning. Today, the temperature didn't warm up to 65 degrees until 3:00 in the afternoon. The office staff each have space heaters and wear scarves and blankets. TRIAC, who service our HVAC, says that our system is not the right sized system for this building. Julie Haywood suggested the possibility of staff working from home, as those are temperatures at which we close the EC and LM branches for the winter. The basement offices are on a concrete slab, the door does not sit right in its foundation, and the windows are single-pane PVC. The furnace and air-exchanger are working correctly, and the library space is a comfortable temperature, but the current system cannot keep the basement warm. If the building's HVAC system is replaced, it would be a township expense. The Board discussed the possibility of transitioning over to gas heat, the useful life of these systems, and the question of investment into the buildings based on their uncertain long-term future. Because of lingering questions about the Township's facilities in the future, the La Mott Community Center did not fit the Keystone Grant criteria. For free standing library buildings to qualify for Keystone funding, they must remain libraries for the useful life of whatever is being replaced. Emily Cheramie-Walz suggested looking into the Local Share Account (LSA) for repairs of equipment and infrastructure. The libraries will not be in a centralized location for at least a couple of years, so the Board and township will need to figure out temporary solutions while we are unsure of the buildings and library system's futures. For the Glenside Library, Mary Kay Moran recommended the upgrading the windows and the vestibule to make the basement more energy efficient.

**Board Comment:** None.

**Public comment:** None.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- The next External Affairs Meeting will be held on Monday, February 2 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Governance Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 10 at 6:00 PM.
- The next Internal Affairs Committee Meeting will be held on Monday, February 9 at 4:00 PM.
- The next Community Advisory Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 10 at 7:00 PM.
- The next Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 25 at 7:00 PM at the Glenside Free Library.

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