DEARBORN PUBLIC LIBRARY
LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING
Henry Ford Centennial Library - Room 111
Wednesday, September 9, 2026
APPROVED

Commissioners:
- Chairperson Dr. Cheryl Hawkins - Present
- Vice Chair Ali Dagher - Present
- Secretary/Treasurer Jihan Jawad - Present
- Adam Abusalah - Present
- Claudia Hammoud - Present
- Dr. Ryan Lazar - Present

Library Administration:
- Library Director Patty Podzikowski - Present
- Assistant Director of Technical Services Mark Hancock - Present
- Assistant Director of Programs & Services Rebecca Hermen - Present
- Office Assistant III Daniel Smith - Present

Historical Museum:
- Historical Advisory Commissioner Mary Bugeia - Present

Legal Department:
- Assistant Corporation Counsel Amanda Atwy - Present

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Hawkins called the meeting to order at 5:00PM

II. Public Comment

A comment from Dearborn resident Kathryn Takach was read by Director Podzikowski. She raised concerns about the lack of visible updates on the renovation projects, and expressed frustration that both branches are closed simultaneously. She suggested that the Library apply for the American Library Association's Year of STEM grant. She expressed her appreciation for the Summer Reading Challenge wrap-up, and concern for the well-being of the staff during the August 18 City Council meeting and early facility closure. She also noted that the public comment link on the website was broken.

Director Podzikowski thanked Takach, and noted that the public comments went through Monday.com, to which the Library no longer has access. She noted that a different grant was awarded, and is on the agenda for discussion, and added that grant opportunities are being constantly monitored. In regard to the Council meeting, she noted that while no formal debrief was held, no staff had come to her experiencing any significant trauma; and that the staff are all aware that the City offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if they feel unsettled and would like to speak with a professional.

III. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

No conflicts of interest to disclose.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Dagher to move commissioner introductions up the agenda, supported by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad. Motion carried.

IV. New Business

A. Welcome new commissioner

The board formally welcomed new commissioner Claudia Hammoud, an attorney and lifelong Dearborn resident. The group exchanged introductions.

V. Approval of Minutes - July 8, 2026 regular meeting

A motion to approve was made by Vice Char Dagher, supported by Commissioner Lazar. Minutes approved as submitted.

VI. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Hawkins proposed the addition of Upcoming Events to the New Business section. A motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad. Meeting agenda accepted.

VII. Consent Agenda

A. Historical Museum Report

Historical Advisory Commissioner Mary Bugeia reported that the Historical Museum welcomed 526 guests across its facilities over the prior quarter, alongside 24 archival researchers.

She noted funding was secured to restore the Pioneer School classroom, with matching funds contributed by the Museum Guild.

She highlighted future programming, including an exhibit for the Old Car Festival scheduled September 12 & 13, as well as the "Boos and Brews" fundraiser, slated for October 9.

She reported that the Museum earned $7,698 from Homecoming parking fees. She added that students had painted a mural on the office wall as a part of a city-wide art effort.

She reported that State approval was granted for a historical marker for the McFadden-Ross House, with text wording currently pending finalization.

Motion to approve made by Vice Chair Dagher, seconded by Commissioner Abusalah. Motion carried.

B. Library Director's Report

A motion to approve was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad. Consent agenda approved.

VIII. Financial Report

Director Podzikowski advised that the City fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, with preparations typically made in October and November. The group asked Director Podzikowski to invite City Finance staff to review issues before the December deadline. Vice Chair Dagher stressed that the budget must anticipate the reopening of both branches, and plan for marketing and appropriate staffing levels.

The group discussed the possibility of naming rights for Library spaces for supplemental revenue. Vice Chair Dagher advised that this would likely need approval by City Council, or a new ordinance.

IX. New Business

A. Resignation of Commissioner Amira Haidar

Commissioner Haidar resigned upon her acceptance of a City position. The board and Library administration expressed their thanks to her for her service.

B. Grant Notification

Assistant Director Hermen announced that the Library had received a $25,000 grant for a "Makerpreneur" program, designed to help students use the SparkLab equipment and sell their creations. She added that the grant will fund the majority of the new equipment at Esper.

She explained that the program will consist of two sessions beginning after October 1, and will involve collaboration with the chamber and some other organizations within the City. She aims to have the participants recognized by City Council, or featured at Night of Innovation in the spring.

C. Library Material

Director Podzikowski reported that there was an inquiry at the August 18 Council meeting about the selection and procurement process for materials. Policies, procedures, and processes formulated by the Library and the Michigan Library Association were shared with the Commission. Chairperson Hawkins noted to add this item to the October agenda for further discussion.

D. Upcoming Events

Chairperson Hawkins reported a September 11 commemoration to be held in front of HFCL. Additionally, she indicated that there are many opportunities for outreach that could potentially be done by volunteers of the commission, the Foundation and the Friends group. Director Podzikowski will send this information to all relevant parties.

Chairperson Hawkins also commended the staff and patrons for their handling of the relocated August 18 meeting. Assistant Director Hermen noted that despite the disruption, 20 families attended the day's story time.

X. Old Business

A. Esper and Bryant Renovations Update

Public Works Director Tim Hawkins gave visual updates on the ongoing building projects. He noted that asbestos remediation is completed at Bryant, and the materials have been moved to storage. The building is now a clean shell, allowing for reconstruction. He noted that original building features are being uncovered, such as arched masonry; staff are interested in exposing and preserving them wherever possible. He added that some issues with ADA compliance arose with the proposed addition of a study room on the third floor.

At Esper Library, materials have been removed, and demolition has begun. Flooring is being replaced, and electrical and plumbing are being installed underneath. The windows have been removed and boarded up while sizes and placements are being considered. Exterior ceilings will be replaced with a more resilient material. Original sections of the building have been reviewed for fire code compliance. He noted that the goal is a coherent, unified design throughout.

To summarise, Hawkins noted that the Bryant project was primarily restorative, while Esper would be undergoing complete reconstruction. Bryant has a targeted opening of April 2027, adding that the early target of December is unrealistic. He noted that Public Works and the Library administration meet every Thursday with the contractors and architects to maintain progress and make decisions personally.

The group discussed the future reconstruction of Warren Avenue, and potential impact on Esper Library. It is currently anticipated that on-street parking will be preserved. HAWK crossing was previously suggested by staff, though no commitment has been made.

B. Library Millage

The millage was renewed for 10 years, with over 75% of voters approving.

C. Staffing Update

Patty Podzikowski reported that the staff are shifting departments and taking on new duties in response to the July 1 temporary layoffs. She added that the Library is currently managing a staffing shortage due to recent resignations, leaving approximately 25 full-time employees instead of 28. Interviews will be conducted within the next week to fill the open positions.

The group discussed revisiting job titles, responsibilities, and pay grades to tailor to Library operations. Vice Chair Dagher noted that the City had indicated there would be additional staff when the two branches reopen, and wants to ensure they will honor that commitment.

Director Podzikowski noted that while staff morale has been impacted by the layoffs, patron complaints have been minimal. She added that study and work spaces are packed, and additional seating and study areas are being explored within the existing footprint.

The group discussed potential pipelines to attract skilled volunteers to encourage community involvement, and to ease the burden on staff.

XI. Additional Comments

No further discussion.

XII. Next Meeting - October 14, 2026

XIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Commissioner Hammoud. The meeting adjourned at 6:13PM.