DEARBORN PUBLIC LIBRARY
LIBRARY COMMISSION MEETING
Henry Ford Centennial Library - Room 111
Wednesday, October 14, 2026
Proposed

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

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

Department of Public Works:
- Director Tim Hawkins - Present

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Hawkins called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM

II. Public Comment

Chairperson Hawkins read a comment from former part-time Library employee Ryan Drew. He asked for a status update on the part-time staff layoffs, if they are still considered temporary, if displaced employees will be given priority in rehiring, and why the administration is not updating them more proactively. She responded that renovation status updates with photos are appearing posted on the website, and staffing updates appear in the meeting minutes. She added that Library administration staff lack the capacity to make individual calls, that staff will be contacted as the branches reopen, staffing patterns are being reviewed, and there will be some restructuring.

Dearborn resident Helena Thornton spoke about her brother who volunteered with FOLD for five years before he was recently dismissed. She said he had received no training, and she was not contacted as his next of kin and legal advocate. She recommended process improvements. Director Podzikowski responded that he was trained with a checklist, and several attempts had been made to correct the disruptive behavior that was one of the causes of his dismissal. She added that the FOLD coordinator and staff were unaware that he needed accommodations or had an advocate.

Dearborn resident and former part-time Library employee Amanda Stegner said that, apart from one rehire, she knew of no other employees who had been relocated, despite applications and interviews. She added that the City jobs currently posted were impractical due to either distance, specialization, or being of a short-term and temporary nature. Chairperson Hawkins will contact the City's HR department. Director Podzikowski said she would reach out to colleagues in other nearby library systems.

Dearborn resident Kathryn Takach praised the improved visibility of the branch renovations, and the STEM grant awarded by the Library of Michigan. She said she was disappointed that no formal debrief was held following the August City Council meeting, and that nothing was posted for Library Card Sign-Up Month in September. She noted that October is Michigan Library Appreciation Month and urged the board to give the staff commendation to boost low morale. She added that the Library millage was passed by a wide margin, and speculated that the staff were a key reason why. She noted that job titles and pay grades were negotiated through union bargaining, referring to the board's discussion in September.

III. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

IV. Approval of Minutes - September 9, 2026 regular meeting

A motion to approve was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad. Minutes approved as submitted.

V. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Hawkins proposed to move the branch updates ahead of the consent agenda. Motion to approve as amended made by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad, supported by Vice Chair Dagher. Motion carried.

VI. Old Business

A. Bryant and Esper Renovations Update

DPW Director Hawkins shared photos of the progress at the branches. He explained that the first-floor ceiling at Bryant has been removed and the tin decking is being painted to stop corrosion. The former Chamber of Commerce partition walls have been removed to make way for the STEM center. The rest of the building will be restored to its original character, including the original Pewabic tile fireplaces. He added that mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work is underway. Floor cuts will be re-poured, followed by framing and drywall. Rooftop HVAC units will provide consistent air conditioning throughout the building. He anticipated that reopening would be in April.

Esper Branch has been fully gutted for a new STEAM Center, and the entire roof is being replaced. Other work includes a frost-free foundation at the door, new exterior slabs, trenching for floor boxes, an outdoor café seating area, and roof

drains will be moved to the exterior walls. Director Hawkins expects Esper to open before Bryant, though not every STEAM feature may be ready on opening day.

Director Hawkins noted that making both buildings watertight before winter is currently the top priority. Change orders have exceeded $150,000 to date, and no additional funding has been requested. He added that building tours will be scheduled once the floors are repoured and the sites are safe.

Chairperson Hawkins added that the Commission had been misled about the project start date, and the resulting delays substantially increased costs. She added that the Commission's goal is to bring the laid-off staff back to work as soon as possible.

VII. Consent Agenda

A. Historical Museum Report

B. Library Director's Report

An item from the Museum report was deferred to public comment. A motion to approve was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Commissioner Hammoud. Consent agenda approved as submitted.

VIII. Financial Report

A representative from Finance was unable to attend. Chairperson Hawkins urged the commissioners to bring budget priorities to the table for discussion in November, as well as a discussion on room-naming rights. She added that most funds will be committed to the building projects and STEAM equipment and in-house activities so the Library remains debt-free. She confirmed that the budget line for rehiring staff remains unchanged.

IX. New Business

A. PastPerfect

Chairperson Hawkins proposed adding a computer with the Museum's PastPerfect software, so patrons could browse their catalog from the libraries. Assistant Director Hancock was asked to look into it. Vice Chair Dagher called for a master plan covering the Museum's direction and funding, and suggested academic partners, such as UM-Dearborn's labor and Arab-American studies programs.

Chairperson Hawkins requested that the Museum directors and archivists come to the November meeting, adding that preserving materials and the condition of the facilities were a priority. Historical Advisory Commissioner Bugeia described poor archive storage, including moisture damage, and concerns for the floor weight. The group discussed appraising and auctioning Museum items. Bugeia added that items are already deaccessioned and sold within City guidelines.

B. Upcoming Events

Chairperson Hawkins reported that she volunteered at the Museum's Brews & Boos, saying it was a great event with higher attendance than in previous years. She added that she heard a lot of positive feedback, with many attendees saying they were unaware of the Museum and its offerings. She urged Director Podzikowski to continue sharing events, and encouraged the commission to volunteer.

X. Additional Comments

Vice Chair Dagher asked if there were any volunteer opportunities for the dismissed FOLD volunteer at the Museum, like groundswork, that would require less public contact. Director Podzikowski said she would find out.

Historical Advisory Commission Bugeia pulled the note about a newly displayed 1965 Ford Mustang from the consent agenda for discussion. She noted that it was a secret project planned with Lee Iacoca at the former Fairlane Motel on Michigan Avenue. It was purchased with an anonymous $30,000 donation.

Director Podzikowski introduced Asia Herron, who returned from the part-time staff layoffs as a full-time Library Supervisor.

Director Podzikowski reported that the administration will be meeting with the City grants director about potential grant opportunities. Chairperson Hawkins added that any fundraising efforts should be coordinated with the City grants office to avoid competing with one another.

XI. Next Meeting - November 18, 2026

The November meeting was moved forward one week due to Veterans Day on the 11th. The meeting will include the branch projects, and focus heavily on the Historical Museum. Chairperson Hawkins added that she hopes to hear more from the City's HR department regarding the part-time staff by that time.

XII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Dagher, supported by Secretary/Treasurer Jawad. The meeting adjourned at 5:59 PM.