



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2026 | 7 pm

Savage Branch

Board members present were: Rob Mentz, Chair; Phillip Dodge; Vice Chair; Antonia Watts, Treasurer; Elizabeth Banach; Dawn Popp; and Kelly Smith. Also present were staff members/citizens including, Dorna Anderson, Lew Belfont, Angela Brade, Mary Brosenne, Sarah Cooke, Stacey Fields, Cari Gast, Kathleen Klebba, Jessica Lee, Marcy Leonard, Steve Lewicky, Tanya Malveaux, Megan Royden, and Stephanie Shane.

Rob Mentz called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Stephanie Shane gave an update of the Friends & Foundation of HCLS, on behalf of Friends Chair Nana Owusu. She related that the Friends have exceeded their annual fundraising goal, raising \$192,600 in total donations to date, including 54 new donors and over \$34K in grants received. The branch raffle is on track to raise \$14K. Upcoming fundraisers include Books N Brew at Oscar's Ale House on April 21 (\$50/ticket with a goal of raising \$1,500) and Tavern Talk at Backwater Books on April 26 (\$30/ticket that is partly funded by a Maryland 250 grant from the Maryland 250 Commission, an instrumentality of the State of Maryland).

Megan Royden gave an update as a representative of the Howard County Library Workers United. Her testimony is attached at the end of the minutes.

The Board unanimously approved the Board meeting minutes for January 21, February 18 and February 27.

Tonya introduced Marcy Leonard, COO of Public Services, who provided an update on Metrics that Matter. Marcy highlighted the 13 qualitative and quantitative data points that track HCLS' progress toward the goals of the three priorities in its Strategic Plan, including circulation and use of early resources and responses from Elkridge teen surveys.

I announced Spring signature events, comprised of the Bauder Battle of the Books Author Event on April 11 and Battle of the Books on April 24. I then discussed the FY 26 Operating Budget slide that shows where we were at the end of February in terms of progressing through the Objects.

The Board reviewed the proposed FY 27 Capital Budget which reflects the Southwest Branch and renovations to the Elkrige Branch in FY 28, along with requesting state and other revenue for the Downtown Branch in FY 27 and 28. The Board approved the proposed capital budget.

The Board discussed proposed changes to Supplement 3's appendix: How We Choose, which included adding language required by the Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) on the Freedom to Read Act, taking out a line on page 2 and page 6, and changing the reconsideration requester to residing in Howard County. The Board approved the proposed changes to the appendix.

The Board then approved the proposed FY 26 and FY 27 calendar, along with proposed FY 27 Board meeting dates. They further approved the FY 27 Nominating Committee comprised of Rob Mentz and Liz Banach.

Rob adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm to convene in closed session.

Below is a summary of the closed session held on March 18, 2026.

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:
 - a. Time of closed session: 8:18 pm – 9:13 pm
 - b. Place (location) of closed session: Savage Branch
 - c. Purpose of the closed session: to discuss personnel matters and collective bargaining

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:
 - a. Names of members voting aye: Elizabeth Banach, Phillip Dodge, Rob Mentz, Dawn Popp, Kelly Smith, and Antonia Watts
 - b. Members opposed: none
 - c. Members Abstaining: none

3. Statutory authority to close session:
 - a. This meeting was closed under the following provisions of General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b)(1) & § 3-305(b) (9) (add others as needed)

4. Listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:
 - a. Topic description: To discuss personnel matters and collective bargaining
 - b. Persons present for discussion: Tonya Aikens, Dorma Anderson, Elizabeth Banach, Phillip Dodge, Stacey Fields, Steve Lewicky, Rob Mentz, Dawn Popp, Kelly Smith, and Antonia Watts.
 - c. Action Taken/Each Recorded: The board discussed the Collective Bargaining Agreement, along with personnel matters.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **7 pm on Wed., June 17, 2026** at the Glenwood Branch.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tonya Aikens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tonya Aikens
President & CEO

Good evening.

For those I haven't had the chance to meet yet, I'm Megan Royden and I work at the Miller branch as an Instructor and Research Specialist. I'm also President of AFSCME Local 6359, representing public library workers in Anne Arundel County, Enoch Pratt in Baltimore City, Frederick County and of course here in Howard County.

I wanted to start by saying thank you for extending the invitation for Howard County Library Workers United to speak at board meetings going forward. My focus as president is on our members - on ensuring they have the strongest possible work environment in which they can thrive. I believe the best way to achieve that is through collaboration and partnership. A strong union and a strong library system go hand in hand; each helps to build the other up.

Conflict is not our aim. But partnership is a two-way street, and so far, we have not been able to find a way to navigate it together. Things need to change. The current path is not sustainable.

The events of the past several weeks have been deeply damaging to every aspect of the library system. I saw firsthand the hurt, stress, and anxiety experienced by our on-call staff as they learned they would lose jobs they valued and paychecks some depended on to live. Benefited staff suffered alongside them, witnessing the pain of their colleagues. Our community, too, was shocked and outraged to see what appeared to be the same greed, self-interest, and short-sightedness that has defined the Trump administration play out here at home. The library's reputation has taken a hit from this that will be difficult to repair. I have personally heard from elected officials and journalists who described the official HCLS response on this situation as callous and dehumanizing and who could not understand how library leadership failed to recognize that.

And this seems to be the crux of our problem. Time and again, when issues arise between the union and library leadership, we cannot even agree on the basic facts. It becomes nearly impossible to move forward when it feels like we are operating in entirely different realities.

Regarding the recent wages settlement, I left that meeting feeling hopeful. It seemed we had finally worked together in good faith to reach a compromise. So it came as a complete shock and felt like a

betrayal to hear library leadership later state that, as part of the settlement meeting, they had “shared that wage increases above five percent would require reductions to personnel”.

I need to be absolutely clear that that did not happen. I was in the meeting myself and can attest to that, just as every member of the union’s team can. While I will not discuss settlement details in a public forum, I remain more than willing to review them in a private setting, as I attempted to do on the morning of February 24th when I reached out to CEO/President Aikens and Board Chair Mentz.

I don’t say this tonight to escalate conflict or to assign blame. I say it because it is essential to understanding why this reaction to the library’s decision has been so strong. I’m sure this has not been an easy month for any of you, and there may be aspects I’m not aware of. But we

cannot repair this relationship without a shared commitment to good faith, understanding, and mutual respect.

We all care about this library system. We all want it to succeed. But that success cannot be built on a foundation of mistrust, miscommunication, or decisions that harm the people who make this system work every day. If we are serious about partnership, it must begin with honesty, accountability, and a willingness to sit down together, acknowledge what has happened, and find a path forward.

We are ready to do that work. We are ready to collaborate. But we cannot do it alone. So tonight, I am asking that library leadership meet us there. Because our staff deserve better. And so tonight, I am asking that library leadership meet us there. Because our staff deserve better. And so does our community.

Thank you.