

Bemidji Public Library Board Minutes

August 19, 2025

Present: Ken Hansen, Sandi Marshall, Heidi Johnson, Nancy Erickson, Lynn Eaton, Sheri Warren, Sara McKinney

Absent: Megan Lysford, Deb Rossman

Guests Present: TJ Rhodes, Bemidji Pioneer

The Aug. board meeting, chaired by Ken Hansen, was held in the library meeting room at 5:00 pm. Guest reporter from the Bemidji Pioneer, TJ Rhodes, was introduced.

Approval of agenda and meeting minutes: Sandi moved to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Heidi. Motion passed. Nancy moved to approve the June minutes, seconded by Heidi. Motion passed.

1. **Manager's Report:** Branch Regional Manager Sheri Warren provided written and verbal reports.
 - a. **Usage Statistics:** The activity report for July shows good utilization with 11,143 customers and an increase in checkouts to 8,838. The children's programs were well attended, with the pet show a favorite.
 - b. **Financial and Budget Report:** The financial report for July included expenses paid for the facility rental for the recent book sale (\$977.50 out of Board-controlled funds), and for book disposal at the end. The water fountain and a broken window were repaired. Sheri noted that an individual threw a rock through a front window and was subsequently held and charged by the police.
 - c. **Misc. News:** Sheri presented a session at the national ALA conference in late June in collaboration with State Library Services, on staff retention. It was well attended. Upcoming dates the library will be closed for holidays through July 4th. The June storm caused significant damage, with trees down, blocked entrances, broken railing, and the air-handler on the roof displaced, requiring a crane to reposition. The library was closed for 3 days, and there was no interior damage. Repairs awaiting insurance adjustment. Sheri gave an update on the issues regarding unhoused people gathering around the building. She met the City Manager, Rich, and received approval to proceed with installing locks on the bathroom exterior doors. Staff will unlock doors upon request and monitor usage. There have been concerns with bathrooms used for drug and alcohol use, storage of those items in the ceiling tiles, and overdoses requiring intervention with Narcan and law enforcement. A meeting between library and city officials, including the chief of police and city manager, is planned for August 26 at 1pm at City Hall to discuss issues related to homelessness such as loitering, smoking, garbage and debris collection in the shrubbery, and disruptive behaviors that result in decreased library usage by families. Ken and Lynn will attend with Sheri. It was noted that shelter gaps this summer have resulted in people having nowhere to go, and that this is a total community issue. Sheri also noted that library staff are becoming burnt out from increased monitoring and enforcement, including enduring occasional abusive behavior.
 - d. **Library Closures:** Sept. 1 (Labor Day) and Oct. 13 for a staff training day.

- e. **Upcoming Programs/Events:** The summer reading program was successful; kids liked the spinning wheel for prizes. Two programs had to be cancelled due to the storm. Book Craft with Artist in Residence was rescheduled to Sept. 13. Outreach events were held at the local county fair and Take Back the Night event.
2. **KRLS Report:** Lynn reported that there was no July meeting and that the next meeting would be in September. The agenda will focus primarily on budgeting for 2026. It is also expected that an HQ personnel issue related to a union-related grievance will likely be discussed.
3. **Old Business:**
 - a. **2025 Book Sale:** Sandi reported that the sale was a huge success, with gross revenues of \$8,073.75; the best ever. She and Heidi split the days for supervisory coverage, and Joyce did a wonderful job organizing volunteers again, and was present for the entire event. Deb coordinated with the Bearded Hauler to move the books prior to the sale; we need to provide him with the \$500 stipend for his help. Sheri will contact Deb regarding an invoice. Heidi will contact Joyce regarding a final report. Thanks to all for a great effort and successful outcome! It was noted that there were some complaints made regarding aggressive and rude behavior by a couple resellers on the first night, however the complaints were not shared during the event itself.
 - b. **Board Minutes posted on KRLS Website:** Sheri stated there is a new staff at HQ who is now posting our minutes. Sandi asked that our board opening be posted as well, including on the city website.
 - c. **Appropriate patron activity in and outside library:** See above. TJ Rhodes indicated that he has been assigned to investigate issues related to homelessness in the broader community and is interested in the library's experiences following the report by two community members at the June city council meeting.
4. **New Business:**
 - a. **Smoking on Library Property Policy:** Sheri will bring a draft of a proposed policy to the next meeting, based on city policy, for review and approval as a local board policy.
 - b. **2026 Book Sale:** The dates of June 22-26 have been reserved with the church, and the deposit has been paid. There is a new interim secretary contact, Kate Trosen.
5. **Friends of the Library Report:** Thanks to the Friends for their part in the annual book sale. There is no August meeting, and the Sept. meeting will be a full-day retreat. A sensitive volunteer situation was discussed.
6. **Adjourn:** Heidi moved to adjourn around 6:30 pm, seconded by Sandi. All approved.
7. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be September 16, 2025. The board will revisit the needs assessment idea, to be funded with a portion of a recent large donation. Sheri will draft a proposal to the city, to be accompanied by a letter of support from the board.

Respectfully submitted, Sandi Marshall, Secretary