



Manatee County Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2026

Central Library Conference Room, 10 a.m.

Roll Call

Present:

Christine Callahan
Jim Russell
Ashley Dawson
Ericka Dow
Chelsea Ross-Munro
Commissioner Amanda Ballard

Unable to Attend:

Patsy Ugarte
Lauren Quinn

Guests:

Commissioner Tal Siddique
Mall Chaney

Call to Order

10:00 a.m. by Chairman Jim Russell. Jim took attendance and read the mission statement.

Approval of Minutes

Jim inquired if everyone reviewed the minutes from April 15, 2026. Christine made the motion to approve the minutes with one correction to the next meeting date, and Ashley seconded. All were in favor; the motion carried. Therefore, Jim announced the minutes were approved with date correction. Patsy Ugarte approved the minutes via email before meeting.

Library Services Updates & Information

- Facility Updates: Chelsea introduced herself to the Board and went over facility updates.
 - Rocky Bluff:

- Groundbreaking has been moved, possibly late fall. The Rocky Bluff staff have been wonderful and have planned programs for summer on short notice. They are excited to host the Summer Learning Program this summer. Rocky will now be able to offer their branch as a voting location.
- Lakewood Ranch Second Floor:
 - Furniture has been ordered and staff will begin working on the first floor.
- Washington Park Kiosk:
 - Brooke included printouts of the kiosk we are looking at. Molly advised that the request will go before the Board of County Commissioners at a budget meeting in June. It's been suggested for us to be innovative and with the new park opening, we thought this would be a good pilot. Total cost is about \$550,000, with the kiosk being around \$250,000.
 - Christine asked if interfaced with our current applications.
 - Chelsea stated it will be set up as a location and holds can be picked up there. The main benefit is that it is available 24/7.
 - Molly mentioned the community center there; there will be a lot of kids around.
- Central:
 - Continuing to work on remaining work orders from the storms in 2024. Currently working on baseboards and painting.
- Statistics: Ericka Dow went over statistics.
 - Archive Lab is coming up on its three year anniversary. Over 20,000 hours have been spent digitalizing in this space. Digital archiving has increased 10% this past year, 45,000 digitalized items online. A Facebook group has been working on heritage and history; they use the Archive Lab and assist with corrections in our collection.
 - Mango Languages is being discontinued at the end of May. We do regularly review our online services, the cost per use could be better used in other places. Staff have created a guide to share with the public for this change, Press-Reader has a lot of international magazines available.
 - Since October 1, 2025, there have been over 75,000 articles opened in Press Reader. Libby has had close to 282,000 checkouts, Kanopy has over 40,000 visits. Kanopy did arrive after October 1st. The Library App has had over 1000,000 uses.
 - Summer Learning begins on May 30, 2026, Road Trip USA is our theme, and we are using Beanstack for this. There have been over 560 reservations already. Veronica from Marketing will be sending out communications next week.
- Staffing:
 - We are currently in the process of interviewing for Administrative Specialist; there are a few OPS positions posted also. These OPS positions are assisting us with filling gaps throughout the system to get by at this time. Our Braden River Youth Librarian retired last week, she is now off to Italy.
 - County Librarian: Molly stated that she was hoping to extend an offer today.
 - Jim asked if we knew how many people in Manatee County have a library card, with his research it looked to be around 148,000, about 1/3 of the County population. Working with dealerships in the area and wants to verify the data.
 - Ericka advised that standards state 30% of population. This number is correct.
 - Chelsea advised that we have hired three internal employees for the Bookmobile, these were all part time staff that have been promoted to full time.

- Bookmobile Discussion:
 - Commissioner Siddique asked how patrons can request materials on the bus, is there a plan to track the material so we know what areas are interested in specific types of materials.
 - Ericka advised Library IQ can show mapping of areas with cards and card types. It is a great visual and we will see if we can provide this for viewing.
 - Molly advised the Bookmobile will be its own branch, so it will be tracked.

New Business

- Update from Commissioner Tal Siddique:
 - Commissioner Siddique stated that library services are one of the services that we see a healthy increase in.
 - Would like to look for ways to see if services are updated with community. One of the older libraries is Central, one of two urban libraries. What are the services we can offer? City Halls construction is coming soon and more housing by Wares Creek. Pittsburg University focusing on Arts is looking at some existing buildings around downtown. If they can justify, they would build a permanent structure. Does Central align with Urban living? We will be starting off with shelving and furniture for Central and Palmetto, R&R for \$400,000 to replace furniture, desks and chairs.
 - Shelving is original at Central; how can we make the library safer for families to use? While mapping the shelf spacing, it was taking up computer space which is not good, so we are still working on this. Bring the height down and wider, make them mobile so we don't have to hire people to move them. This is a public safety goal. LWR has displays on top of their shelves which is nice. Central's estimate was around \$700,000; we want to ensure we are doing this right.
 - Commissioner Siddique asked what else everyone would like to see.
 - Jim stated that he believes the county is doing a great job with homelessness, the county has stepped up and is trying to assist. The eight acres that were provided were great.
 - Commissioner Siddique stated he likes to look at local libraries when traveling, the services have to match the spacing. What can we be doing more of at Central, Palmetto and possibly South Manatee? Libraries are repositories of knowledge; the core will not change but technology will. Some ideas are to open up space here at Central for the public, meeting spaces have been discussed. There is no teen center here, we would like more youth engagement. Tying in with other non-profit organizations, it is not staff responsibility to handle mental health crisis. Conversations with Turning Points and Career Source about a presence. This is an area where we can have a middle class working project, none of the libraries have that service today. Instead of us offering, would like to invite them in. What can we do to integrate with the library on career resources? Would like to see ideas from the advisor Board on how to update the library for urban. No big changes to the library, some ideas.

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- Jim stated he and his wife have gone to Lakewood Ranch for a program, Lakewood Ranch has stepped outside of the box on their programs.
- Christine asked about selling the Central Library, before there were talks of selling and now it sounds like we would like to keep it.
- Commissioner Siddique stated that the city has been interested in the area. This building would cost about \$3 million to build in the 70's, today the cost would be \$60 million. Lakewood Ranch was \$27 million with overages. Costs are increasing and concern is the city does not know the cost. The county does not have another library or facility that could take centralization, storage would be needed.
- Jim stated that we need to fix what we have here.
- America 250:
 - Ericka let everyone know that the Freedom Museum is coming to Lakewood Ranch Library May 22nd thru May 24th. This is a national program, six total going around the country. It includes interactive exhibits that are engaging and informative.
 - Table event at Manatee Village Historical Park for 50 years. They are going to have a big event with historical resources. This event is on July 11th.
 - We are allowing staff to dress up the week leading up to July 4th weekend. More decorations are coming and book exhibits are up at all locations since the beginning of the year.
 - Letters to the Future Campaign: These display stations are out and set up. Anyone can do this, and we have a time capsule that we hope to have a celebration for. We currently have another time capsule on the second floor.
- Voting Locations:
 - We will be a polling site for 2026; a breakdown has been provided of where we are offering early voting and election day polling. All sites will be participating; Lakewood Ranch and Rocky Bluff will be polling sites for all elections. We are proud to be a polling site again this year.

Old Business

- None

Action Items

- Advisory board members to consider what library services they would like to see downtown.
- Ericka will provide community data map from Library IQ.

Comment

- Mall Chaney:

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- Member of Friends of Central Library, Manager of Bookstore, invited all to come into the bookstore, a Patterson book is only \$2.00. Mall thanked Commissioner Siddique for easing her mind on the tearing down of Central. A lot of patrons inquire when they visit.
- Commissioner Siddique stated that investing in new furniture is happening, more things are to come.
 - Commissioner Ballard stated that with this Commission, there are no changes.
- Mall advised that the Bookstore would start accepting Zelle in June.

With no further business to discuss, Jim motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ashley seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:58 am by Jim Russell

- Next meeting: 06/17/2026
- Time: 10:00am
- Location: Central Library – Central Library Conference Room