Northeast Ohio Regional Library System
Minutes of Board Meeting held on January 20, 2026 Virtually (due to severe weather) at 11:00am

Call to Order
This meeting was called to order at 11am by President Jen Grill.

Roll Call (RC)
Board members present: Robin Bartley, Jen Buch, Katie Cooley, Jen Grill, Meghan Harper, Carrie Kibby, Melissa Mallinak, Patrick Manning, Laura Ponkivar, Cheryl Slater, Marisha Sullivan, Scott Trimmer, Jen Welsh

Board members absent: Bali Culver

Late arrivals: None

Board members attending via Zoom: Robin Bartley, Jen Buch, Katie Cooley, Jen Grill, Meghan Harper, Carrie Kibby, Melissa Mallinak, Patrick Manning, Laura Ponkivar, Cheryl Slater, Marisha Sullivan, Scott Trimmer, Jen Welsh

Staff members present: Ragan Snead, Melissa Lattanzi, Hillary Brown, Jill Grunenwald, Mary Ellen Powers

Staff members absent: None

Introduction of Guests: None

Approval of Agenda (RC due to virtual)
Melissa M moved, and **Katie C** seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Approval of Minutes of November 14, 2025 Meeting (RC due to virtual)
Robin Bartley moved; Melissa Mallinak seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Correspondence:
President, Jen Grill has nothing at this time.

Ms. Snead has received a thank you to Melissa Lattanzi and the NEO staff for the Summer Reading Workshop and for the past decade of professional development.

Reports:
Fiscal Officer/Financials (Enc 2) (RC):

Fiscal Officer Mary Ellen Powers

- Finishing up end of calendar year tasks including tax forms, which were the bulk of the recent work. November is not yet reconciled but there is nothing of note for the month; it was low volume and very typical.
- On Friday 1/16 we received the quarterly check from the State Library.
- Audit update:
    - The IRS continues to state that there is a mistake on the 1049X form; this is the number we know is incorrect and is the issue we have been working towards resolving.
    - Next audit will be handled by the state auditors after we close the FY22-23 audit.
        - What is the impact of this further delay?
            - The biggest impact is likely budgetary due to continuing to pay for Bluebridge—we are paying $6600 annually for this.
            - Secondarily, there may be an issue with institutional memory; we do not know what specific aspect of our work will be focused on and the longer it takes from the time we are being audited, the less likely we will be able to provide sufficient explanations.
    - Going to be calling IRS this week to try to clear this up. IRS response appears to vary drastically based on who answers the phone.
    - Is there someone at the state level who can help us get through this? An ombudsman type role perhaps? We have not yet found this person if they do exist.
- Jen Buch moved; Jen Welsh seconded a motion to approve the financials. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Executive Director (Enc 3)

Ragan Snead submitted a written report for the Board packet highlighting the following:

- OLC
    - Many of the staff from larger library systems are not aware that they are gold members! Hopefully the new handouts and the welcome emails will assist with this knowledge gap.
    - NEO-RLS had their own table and was very well-received.
    - Going to be attending and tabling next year in Sandusky—we will have our own table when OLC is in our region.
    - Other regionals are considering putting together a presentation for next year that we may be part of, not a ton of details as of yet.
        - Please remember to protect the capacity and boundaries of the NEO-RLS staff during this process.
        - Jen Buch indicates as OLC Program Chair will that having people who use the NEO resources present would be useful for the presentation proposal.
        - Jen Grill indicates that the HR division would be interested in sponsoring the presentation to help its chances of success.

- Upcoming consulting work with Willoughby-Eastlake, Morley, Elyria, and Euclid public libraries.
    - We have also submitted an RFP for strategic planning from Cleveland Public Library, which is likely going to be a larger scope than what NEO-RLS can do on our own, but we may be able to assist them with part of it.

Continuing Education Coordinator (Enc 4)
Melissa Lattanzi submitted a written report and highlighted the following:
- Very busy start to the year with the summer reading programs!
- Children's SRP has been getting very good surveys and was well-attended.
    - Teen and Adult are both slower for registration—we're down about 20 people from last year, but we usually get some last-minute registration.
- Upcoming large events:
    - Customer Service Conference is coming up April 23, focusing on professionalism and credibility; presentations are almost finalized. Lots of high-interest topics on the docket.
    - Director's Retreat will be held on a different date than it used to be—May 7-8 instead of Memorial Day weekend. Focus will be on AI.
- Reasons that the stats are lower this past November compared to 2024:
    - OLC in November meant we programmed lighter this year
    - No tech conference
- There is also a Northeast Ohio Nonprofit Summit on March 20 that Ragan is looking to attend with the NEO-RLS staff that may give some more contacts.

Marketing and Engagement Coordinator (Enc 5)
Jill Grunenwald submitted a written report and highlighted the following:
- OLC was a big success, crediting a lot of it to the tabling presence and handouts
- From February 2026-February 2027 there is a statewide Toni Morrison celebration with crossover from the America 250 celebration. Jill had a call with the organizer to see how we can support and expand their reach through the libraries.
- Newsletter has less stats due to the holiday break, but statistics are looking great.
    - Drop in the delivered rate for 12/17 due to the regular clean-out
- October's social stats were phenomenal due to the Open House resulting in a taper off in November/December.
- Soon we will have a year's worth of data! Jill is excited to crunch these numbers.
- Potentially getting new vendors from OLC—no one on board quite yet, but getting there.
    - Vendor page on website has been re-alphabetized and will be reformatted once Jill and Vieth figure out the best option for achieving the goals of the page.

Programs and Services Associate (Enc 6)
Hillary Brown submitted a written report and highlighted the following:

- Did attend OLC, but forgot to put it on the report! As well as tabling and attending sessions, Hillary was in the Gadget Gallery room promoting the Tech Kits, which are one of her focus items for this year.
- The last few months have had a lot of focus on the Message Boards and Active Learning Communities.
    - All current Active Learning Communities are now represented on the message boards and some have started to gain traction.
    - Hillary is building documentation to help with the process of getting logged in and opting in to the message boards; this has proved to be a sticking point.
- New Active Learning Community for Workplace Wellbeing has been getting good registration, hopeful for the future!

Board Officers

Resolution #2026-15 Recognition of Service (Enclosure 7)* **(RC due to virtual)**

- Resolution to recognize Pam Matthews, who is no longer on the board. Her role can either be filled now or through the elections process and the term would end in 2028 either way.
    - This zone has been historically tricky to fill—Zone 3
        - Currently no other Zone 3s on the board
    - Jen Grill and Ragan to reach out to Zone 3 libraries and we can use the elections as a fall back in case we don't find anyone.
- Melissa Mallinak moved; Patrick Manning seconded a motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Advisory Groups

Technology: Ragan Snead

- Met in December and discussed a website audit for both the public side and member backend of the website.
    - Membership portal sees very low usage, but we would like to start using it more, so we are going to be updating it as indicated in the strategic plan.
- Hillary Brown gave an update on Tech Kits and got feedback from the group.

DEIA: Ragan Snead/Marisha Sullivan

- This group has grown since moving it to an Advisory Group, which accomplishes the purpose of the change.
- Demo of the message boards for the group
    - DEIA Active Learning Community board activation will be a project for this group, including a resource list.
- Discussed the awards process and suggestions for improvement around equity and accessibility.
    - Feedback will be brought to the Awards Committee meeting tomorrow for integration.
- Also working on vetting the resources on the DEIA resources page on the public website.

Committee Chairs

Finance Committee: Melissa Mallinak

- Audit Update (see Financial Officer update for details.
- Letters of Intent Update—it's looking good!
- Discussed carryover projections.

Current Business

Board Training Recap and Reflection

Touchbase on what the board felt about our board training and what we would like to put into action going forward.

- Ragan sent out an email with specific questions on feedback. General consensus was that the speaker was great, but respondents worried about the lack of action steps created during the time to address the ideas we came up with.
- We really want to have that understanding of financial reports training speaker—please make this the next board training.
- Also great to have a meta conversation at all about the way we operate as a board and the ways that we compare to other boards.
- Can we plan to create action items from what we thought up?
    - Potentially using message boards for sharing documents like committee rosters instead of Teams since some board members cannot access.
        - Remember that we can't conduct business on the message boards—intent will be to use it more as a document repository than anything else.
    - Ways to get to know each other better as whole people:
        - Add institution names and zone/type indications to our nametags.
        - Add position as well as above info to the top of agendas and minutes.
        - Add an icebreaker to next meeting.
        - Have a shared meal and discuss board buddies after the June meeting.

Strategic Plan Update (Enclosure 8)

Annotated version of the plan in the board packet to help keep us in the loop

- Highlighted items are accomplished—it's only been 6 months and look how much has already been done!
- Red dates are the objectives being addressed next. Discussion of individual items:
    - Membership portal and website audit
        - Are the new legal requirements for web accessibility being considered as part of this? It will be!
        - Board members will send resources and NEO will begin with staff training on best practices in web accessibility.
    - Internal workflow audit: scaling down to a standard form of documenting procedures (will be Q4 rather than Q3 as indicated).
    - Work on the salary scale is being done by the Personnel Committee.
    - Regular schedule for library visits and meet and greets now has a three-prong approach

    - Reaching out to new directors for 1:1 visits
    - Meet and greets for library staff
    - 15-20 minute staff day presentations, especially for larger systems
- How are outcomes being measured?
  - Scott Trimmer is assisting with creating a dashboard for our data collection and analysis that we can use for this. Example: we can see if the libraries we do meet and greets with increase in usage of NEO-RLS resources after our visit.

New Business

Budget Appropriation- #2026-16 (Enclosure 9) *(RC)

Transfers to cover increases in the following vendor fees: Bluebridge (accounting, retained for audit), Vieth (website), and the software for the tax forms.

- Vieth's price increase was significant (nearly 100% increase); we were grandfathered in at the lower rate, but the number of accounts we have on our website is causing the increase. The website audit may help us identify excess members.
- Is there any way to decrease the cost of Bluebridge? Not really, we're already as low as we can be.
- Scott Trimmer moved; Patrick Manning seconded a motion to adopt the resolution. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.

State Library of Ohio 2nd Quarter Report (Enclosure 10)

Included in the packet for sake of completeness and transparency, but there is nothing here we haven't seen before.

Next Board Meeting Location

Morley Library is under construction that will keep us from using their location.

- Kent State can host since we moved to virtual today! We will share parking information. If you require accessible parking or **closer parking but do not have a hangtag**, please reach out to Meghan in advance.

Items too Late for the Agenda:

None

Public Comments:

None

Upcoming Meetings

AWARDS COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 21, 2026 | 1:00 p.m.
Virtual – Zoom

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 | 9:30 a.m.
Kent State University Library

1125 Risman Dr.
Kent, OH 44242

FULL BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 | 11:00 a.m.
Kent State University Library
1125 Risman Dr.
Kent, OH 44242

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 | 1:30 p.m.
Kent State University Library
1125 Risman Dr.
Kent, OH 44242

Adjournment (RC due to virtual)

Jen Buch moved, and Jen Grill seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 12:55pm.