

MINUTES

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

July 23, 2026

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners was held at the Central Library starting at 11:06 a.m. on the above-written date.

1. Roll Call:

Present:	President	Mayra Valadez
	Vice President	Linda Blank
	Commissioner	Valerie Lynne Shaw
	Commissioner	Fabian R. Wesson

Absent:	Commissioner	Kelly Besser
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Also: City Librarian John F. Szabo, Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman, Deputy City Attorney Josh M. Templet, administrative staff, and members of the public.

- 2. Opening Remarks:** Board President Valadez remarked on the strong attendance at the Centennial Festival a few weeks ago and extended thanks to Centennial 100 Co-Chairs Madeline Peña and Christina Rice for their leadership, Lupie Leyva for her stage management, and Poet Laureate Brian Sonia-Wallace for his moving poem. She concluded by thanking everyone who helped make the event a success.

- 3. Approval of the Minutes:** None.

- 4. Staff Recognition:** *(Taken out of order)*

Assistant City Librarian Susan Broman welcomed the Staff Development Day contributors and recognized their essential roles in planning and organizing the successful event. The following staff members were honored for their contributions: Monique Atkinson, Maria Bonilla, Karcy Bowles, Tamiko Boyd, Brenda Breaux, Claudia Aguilar, Aaron Chiang, Kristian Comeaux, Joyce Cooper, Kelly Davis, Anna-Marie Farquhar, Anthony Foreman, Vi Ha, Corinda Humphrey, Llyr Heller-Humphreys, Wendy Huss, Eishu Ito, Marcie Jones, Ashley Kagan, Frances Lee, Zoila Martell Sobvado, Mary McCoy, Meredith McGowan, Krosheska Portillo, Madeleine Rackley, Vanesa Ramirez, Isabella Ramirez Sandoval, Brooke Sheets, Martha Sherod, Jennifer Siron, Phoebe Swan Guiot, Shayera Tangri, Alvin Tsui, Sofia Urbina, Emily Wooten, Eileen Ybarra, Caroline Zakarian and Violet Zalkind.

The Board presented certificates of recognition to the recipients in attendance, expressing gratitude for their commitment, service, and contributions to the Library Department and the City.

- 5. Public Comments on Matters Within the Board's Jurisdiction:**

The Board heard four public comments from the following community members: Callisto Lane, Ben Eubanks, Kaye Sergeant and Glen Bailey.

6. **City Librarian's Comments and Announcements:** City Librarian John F. Szabo reported on past and upcoming events.

7. **City Librarian's Reports:**

Consent Items

- a. **Acceptance of gift of Birding Backpacks for the East Valley Area Branch Libraries from the San Fernando Audubon Society.**

City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended acceptance of a gift of Birding Backpacks for the East Valley Area Branch Libraries from the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. These backpacks, which are equipped for birdwatching, are designated to extend the popular program to the East Valley area.

Discussion

Commissioner Wesson inquired how many backpacks were included in the donation. Director of Branch Library Services Joyce Cooper stated that 35 were received, noting that the Audubon Society had previously donated 30 backpacks to the West Valley Area Branch Libraries in November.

It was moved by Commissioner Shaw and seconded by Commissioner Blank to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Blank/Shaw/Valadez/Wesson); Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Besser).

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2026-31

RESOLVED, that a gift of Birding Backpacks for the East Valley Area Library Branches valued at \$3201.50 received from The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society be accepted; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a letter of thanks be sent to The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, expressing the grateful appreciation of the Board and staff for the generous gift.

- b. **Acceptance of a gift of \$5,000 to the Octavia Lab at the Central Library by OBE Worldwide/The Infatuation.**

City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended accepting a \$5,000 gift to the Central Library Octavia Lab from OBE Worldwide/The Infatuation. The Infatuation, a restaurant discovery platform, sponsored an event in Los Angeles featuring an exhibition of historical and contemporary Los Angeles restaurant menus. Curated by Creator in Residence Tian Nguyen, the exhibition highlighted the Central Library's Menu Collection through large-scale reproductions. The festival drew several thousand attendees, significantly raising awareness of the library's collection. The \$5,000 honorarium was provided by the organizer to support the Octavia Lab in recognition of the library's participation.

It was moved by Commissioner Shaw and seconded by Commissioner Blank to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Blank/Shaw/Valadez/Wesson); Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Besser).

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2026-32 (C-30)

RESOLVED, that a gift to the Octavia Lab at the Central Library by OBE Worldwide/The Infatuation of \$5,000 be accepted and deposited in a new sub-account in Trust Fund 831, and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a letter of thanks be sent to OBE Worldwide/The Infatuation for their generous support for the Octavia Lab.

c. Acceptance of gift of Gajin Fujita painting titled “100 Years L.A. Central Library”.

City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended accepting the donation of an original painting titled “100 Years L.A. Central Library” by Los Angeles artist Gajin Fujita. The artwork, currently on display in Special Collections, was created and donated by Mr. Fujita in celebration of the library's centennial. Mr. Szabo highlighted Mr. Fujita's longstanding support as a library ambassador—noting his previous contribution of artwork for a highly popular commemorative library art card, as well as youth art workshops led alongside his wife, Angela Fujita.

It was moved by Commissioner Shaw and seconded by Commissioner Blank to approve the following resolution. The motion passed with 4 Ayes (Blank/Shaw/Valadez/Wesson); Noes: 0. Absent: 1 (Besser).

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2026-33

RESOLVED, that the painting titled “100 Years L.A. Central Library” donated by Gajin Fujita in honor of the Central 100 celebration be accepted; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a letter of thanks be sent to the Gajin Fujita, expressing grateful appreciation of the generous gift.

8. Presentation: Los Angeles Public Library LGBTQIA Committee

LGBTQIA Services Committee Co-Chairs Celia Avila De Santiago, Senior Librarian in the Exploration and Creativity Department; Edwin Rodarte, Senior Librarian in the Emerging Technologies Department; and Violet Zalkind, Library Assistant in Access Services Department, presented a detailed overview of the LAPL LGBTQIA Committee's activities and initiatives. The LGBTQIA Services Committee was established around 2014 following the "Leading from Any Position" workshop, which inspired administration to create staff interest groups across the library system. Starting with five initial participants led by David Hagopian (Senior Librarian, Platt Branch), the group formalized its goals, established long-term sustainability, and renamed itself from LGBT Interest Group to LGBT Services Committee to focus on outreach, programming, policy, and service delivery. The committee's mission strives to ensure that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities have access to information, helpful staff, and a welcoming library community. Open to all staff classifications, the committee provides professional development, leadership opportunities across

subcommittees, and staff connections. Outreach efforts include participation in community events such as the Pride Parade, Dyke Day, Trans Pride, and DragCon. Programming spans story times, craft programs, lectures, film screenings, and author talks, such as Alicia Roth Weigel in conversation with Jacob Tobia. Advocacy initiatives encompass staff concerns, mandatory gender identity staff training, internal name-change procedures developed with HR and Library Administration, conference presentations, podcast recordings in the Octavia Lab via a ONE Archives grant, and AIDS Walk fundraising. Supported by staff advocates, the committee maintains dedicated patron and intranet pages at lapl.org/lgbt and collaborates year-round with partner organizations such as the LGBT Center and DTLA Proud. Upcoming plans include attending Downtown LA Pride and Models of Pride, exploring gender-diverse restrooms, updating staff training and booklists, expanding branch programming, and planning for the annual Pride Parade.

Discussion

Commissioner Shaw inquired about challenges the committee has faced and ways the Board can provide support. Ms. Avila De Santiago expressed appreciation for the Library Administration's ongoing support, noting that the committee's initiatives and outreach are consistently approved throughout the year. She emphasized that the most impactful support from the broader community is remembering that the library's LGBTQIA services, programs, and resources are available year-round, extending well beyond Pride Month.

Board President Valadez thanked the co-chairs for their presentation and commended their external community outreach as well as their internal efforts to advise staff, curate collections, and develop tailored programming for the LGBTQIA+ community, especially for young patrons who want to feel seen and can be themselves in places like libraries.

9. Commissioners' Announcements and Comments

- Board President Valadez remarked on the extreme heat, highlighting that libraries serve as vital cooling centers and emphasizing that access to cool spaces is a key equity issue. While preparing for the meeting and reviewing consent agenda items regarding Gajin Fujita, she learned that he grew up in East Los Angeles, specifically Boyle Heights, and spent significant time at the library during hot summer days. She noted that this insightful aspect of his personal history reflects a shared experience among many Angelenos.
- Commissioner Blank expressed concern regarding comments on the Friends MOA, emphasizing that the issue should be agendaized or resolved directly with the Friends groups. She noted that she recused herself from early discussions due to her role as a Friends group board member, and stressed the necessity of supporting Friends groups to prevent their loss.
- Commissioner Shaw echoed this concern, highlighting the existence of a fund created by the Library Foundation intended to assist Friends groups with legal matters.
- Commissioner Wesson remarked on the joy and pride she experienced in attending the Centennial Festival. She concluded her comments by encouraging the Board members to attend and participate in more library events and programming.

Next Board Meeting Notice: The next Regular Meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, July 23, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., and will be held at the Central Library.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mayra Valadez
President

Lynda Achi
Secretary to the Board