



# Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Library Advisory Committee

Date: 05/14/2026  
Time: 5:30pm  
Minutes prepared by: Chrissy Harrington  
Location: Wentworth Library

## Attendance:

- Mary Janice Alongi District 1
- Ann Matthew Baussan District 2
- Kari Cahn District 4
- Lee Knutson District 5
- Lynette Cargill District 6
- Mary Ellen Gallagher District 7
- Sarah Yusuf At-Large Youth
- Jennifer Reichert Simpson Deputy Director
- Hayley Tompkins Deputy Director
- Heather Stephenson Assistant Library Director
- Chrissy Harrington Sr Library Administration
- Russ Cogar Collections Manager
- Julie Dorn Materials Selection Manager
- Stacy Lenarz Wentworth Library Branch Mana

## Call to Oder:

- The meeting was called to order by Kari Cahn at 5:31 pm

## **Introduction & Welcome New Members:**

- Kari Cahn welcomed and introduced the new members which included Hayley Tompkins the new Deputy Director of the Dakota County Library, Mary Ellen Gallagher District 7 and Sarah Yusuf At-Large Student

## **Public Comment:**

- No public comment was made

## **Consent Agenda:**

- Kari Cahn asked the committee to approve the January and March Meeting Minutes and Statistical Report due there was no quorum during March 12, 2026 meeting
- Mary Janice Alongi moved to approve the January 8, 2026 Consent Agenda and Ann Matthews-Baussion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- MaryJanice Alongi Moved to approve the March 12, 2026 Consent Agenda and Mary Ellen Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Learn to Read: Julie Dorn**

- Julie Dorn came to talk to the committee members about the Learn to Read initiative that is taking place in Dakota County during the Fall of 2026 and Spring of 2027
- The Minnesota Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, passed in May 2023, is a comprehensive literacy law designed to ensure every child reads at or above grade level, beginning in kindergarten.
- Julie gave the committee members statistics on why the READ act was passed in Minnesota
- In general, the United States only has 36 percent of students reading at grade level, Minnesota is at 49 percent and Dakota County is at 48 percent
- MELSA, the Metropolitan Regional Library System, has provided Literacy support funding to Dakota County Library and other member libraries
- With this funding, Dakota County Library will enhance it collections to help build reading skills

- Dakota County Library will be adding Decodables books that will help teach children of all ages to read, write and develop phonemic awareness
- Staff will work with Reading Partners of Minnesota to coordinate volunteers that will do one-on-one Tutoring with any age child that would like more help at all the libraries throughout the County
- There will be take home resources that families can pick at all libraries starting in the fall of 2026
- All libraries will have Play Kits that will also enhance young children to read

## **Director Report: Jennifer Reichert Simpson**

- The Wentworth Library reopened up on May 6, 2026 after a 12 month renovation that transformed the space to the delight of the local community
- Community response was overwhelmingly with more than 1,540 visits on the opening day
- The Wentworth Library also saw nearly 1,000 visitors during celebration event that took place from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on May 6, 2026
- TownSquare Television, The West St. Paul Reader, Lake 11 and the Pioneer Press covered the reopening of the Wentworth Library
- Over 2,300 books and materials were checked out on opening day
- The new temporary Burnhaven Library has new hours that will start on May 11, 2026 which have align with visit patterns
- The new hours are as follows: Monday-Thursday 10 a.m.-6 p.m
- Friday and Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m
- Closed on Sundays
- Dakota County has been working on a new webpage to meet accessibility standards and better serve residents use of county services online
- The library will also get updates to its page and residents will be able to access the library more readily
- A go live date for the new website has not yest been selected
- A record-setting 1,400 teen job seekers and their caregivers attended this year's Dakota-Scott County Teen Job Fair at the Western Service Center on Saturday April 11, 2026
- This annual event reduces barriers to employment by providing information about available positions and the ability to complete application onsite for 20 local employers.
- The Big Ideas mobile learning lab brought VR headsets and equipment simulators to inspire teens exploring careers in the skilled trades

## Wentworth Library Report: Stacy Lenarz

- Stacy said when they were closed this past year patrons regularly visited the new library location at the Northern Service Center
- Wentworth has a wonderful reopening celebration on May 6, 2026 1,549 people visited the library
- The patrons are loving the new imaginative play in the Children's area, comfortable seating along the windows, an engaging, exclusive teen space, and plenty of places to meet, study, and connect
- The Wentworth Library still did outreach last year with 42 events and 3,613 people attend
- The Wentworth Library hired a new Teen Services Coordinator that will help create a welcoming space in the library and to connect with teens where they are in the community
- The Wentworth Library is excited to be partnering with Dakota County Public Health Communities for All and Cow Tipping Press to offer a 5 week summer creative writing session for adults with disabilities
- Saturday July 19, 2026 from 2-3pm Wentworth Library will be hosting Joe Davis and the Poetic Diaspora as part of the DCL's Summer Music Series

## Updates from Committee Members:

- Lynette Cargill let the Committee Members know about the Reading in the Park at Aronson Park during the Pan-O-Prog days in Lakeville this upcoming July 4-12 2026
- Please join the Heritage Library for Reading in the Park at Aronson Park in Lakeville MN on July 7<sup>th</sup> from 1pm-3pm bring your favorite book and enjoy the outdoors with your fellow community members

## Adjournment:

- Meeting ended at 6:24pm

## Tour of Wentworth Library

## Adjournment/Next Meeting

Date: July 9, 2026

Time: 5:30pm

Location: Farmington Library- Farmington