



Albert Lea
Public Library

211 E. Clark Street
Albert Lea, MN 56007

507-377-4350
alpl.library@gmail.com
www.alplonline.org

Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2025

5:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

Present: Annice Sevett, Andrew Gustafson, Becky Tennis Hanson, Cheryll Intihar, Vicky Robson, Keith Van Beek (City Council Representative), Dawn Kaasa (Freeborn County Representative), Cindy Gilbert (ALPL SELCO Board Representative), Cathy Malakowsky, Matthew Tessmer

1. Approve Minutes of the February 19, 2025 Meeting

The following correction was noted for the minutes.

Page 1, No. 2: "Elect Chair for 2024" - change '2024' to '2025'

Gustafson asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Hanson made the motion, Robson seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 19, 2025 meeting as corrected.

2. Old Business

a. Director's Report

An update was given on the migration to the new integrated library system (ILS), Evergreen. The migration took place on Thursday, May 1. Before the migration, staff were given time to train on the new system, test library data to report potential problems, and practice to get comfortable with day-to-day tasks. Staff reported feeling trained and ready to start using the new system. The public catalog was also customized with the library branding and menu links ahead of the migration date. The transition for ALPL was not ideal. Staff anticipated the presence of some glitches given the age of the previous software, but staff encountered problems that were identified in testing and were told would be resolved when the new system went live. Staff found workarounds until these issues were resolved, but they were very time intensive. Data cleanup and some less impactful glitches remain for SELCO to work on behind the scenes. The basic functions of the new software are working. The communications plan (presented at the last board meeting) was followed closely to inform library patrons about the change. Most individuals who visited or called the library in the days before and after the migration knew it was taking place. This helped staff manage the glitches in areas that heavily impacted service to patrons.

Statistics for winter programs were shared. Overall, winter programming efforts were successful, with 143 programs offered and 4,063 attendees. The number of programs and attendance were slightly higher than last year's statistics for the same period. This increase was largely due to the expanded program offerings for tweens and teens.

An update was given on the impact of the changes made to Hoopla. After four months, the average monthly invoice for 2025 is \$1,816.13, compared to the average monthly invoice of \$2,617.44 for 2024. This is within the budgeted amount for the service.

A preview of the upcoming summer library programming was presented. A variety of programming for all ages has been planned, with 112 total programs scheduled. Highlights include an escape room planned in partnership with the Recreation Department, a new YA book club for teens, a watercolor florals and charcoal class, three monthly sessions of Read to a Dog, a make your own paper workshop hosted at Wind Down Wednesday, a session of drop-in crafts for adults, and the fourth annual Local Author Festival.

b. 2025 Goals

A revised list of goals for library services in 2025 was presented that incorporated the board's discussion from the February meeting. Goals include: (1) identify marketing strategies and opportunities to increase awareness of the library services, including increasing engagement with existing library media channels, (2) provide educational opportunities for staff to continue to grow and expand their knowledge and skills, including facilitating cross-training opportunities, (3) expand services to Freeborn County's immigrant and refugee communities using the 2024-2026 plan as a guide, and (4) curate services and program opportunities to reach individuals who do not utilize existing services.

An update on the progress made on the library's 2025 goals was given. Highlights include: the wide reach of advertising about the software migration, presentations about library services for Kiwanis and Thorne Crest Senior Living Community, completion of a collection development course by the new children's librarian to be compliant with state statute, cross-training staff on adding items in the new software, plans to have library staff work in a rotation to facilitate cross-training, the start of patrons utilizing the new Books-by-Mail service, and library staff promoting tween and teen summer programs at Southwest Middle School.

c. 2024 Annual Report

The full annual report was shared with board members. Notable statistics include the percentage of digital items borrowed, the number of new library cards issued, and the total number of public computer sessions. Board members asked about the impact of going fine free on the budget and rate of materials returned late. Sevett stated that the budget impact was minimal, and while it is difficult to measure the rate of materials returned late, there has not been a noticeable increase.

3. New Business

a. County Funding

Information was provided about the county's notice to the library that funding may be reduced for the 2026 budget. Such a notice is required by state statute. Kaasa provided additional context, explaining that the county budget for 2026 is being affected by uncertainty at the state level. This notice was provided to fulfill obligations to the state statute should library funding need to be reduced; it is not a notice of the county's intent to reduce the library's funding. The county budget and library funding will be decided in July.

b. Albert Lea Public Library Strategic Plan Update

An update on the library's strategic plan was given. Because SELCO provides strategic planning services for no additional cost, the library will complete a new strategic plan separate from the city. SELCO is available to begin the process this summer. The planning process will involve surveying community members both in-house and through communication channels, a workshop with library staff, and a workshop with board members and other library stakeholders. The survey is expected to take place during the summer, with the workshops occurring later in the summer, around August. Sevett will update board members of the timeline and expected workshop dates as they are confirmed with SELCO.

c. SELCO Foundation

Information was provided about the SELCO Library Foundation and upcoming changes to its management. The library's account with the SELCO Library Foundation holds funds disbursed by SELCO for the Interlibrary Loan Dividend. SELCO libraries receive this dividend if they lend more materials to other SELCO libraries; the amount of the dividend is determined by the ratio of materials lent to materials borrowed. SELCO is moving this foundation to be managed by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF). The board was asked to vote to approve keeping the library's funds with SELCO and moving them to be managed by SMIF.

The board asked clarifying questions about the difference between the SELCO Library Foundation and the Albert Lea Public Library Foundation, the current funds held in each foundation, and what these funds are used for. Sevett shared that the SELCO Library Foundation is a separate fund from the Albert Lea Public Library Foundation, stated the approximate amount of funds held, and detailed that both foundations' funds are typically used for new initiatives or capital expenditures that are not included in the annual budget. Discovery kits were provided as an example of a project funded by the SELCO Library Foundation. Additional chairs for programs were provided as an example of a project funded by the ALPL Foundation.

Hanson moved to approve keeping the library's funds with SELCO and moving them to be managed by SMIF. Intihar seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve keeping the library's funds with SELCO and moving them to be managed by SMIF.

4. SELCO Board Report

Gilbert provided updates on her activities representing the library on the SELCO Board of Directors, Legacy Committee, and Advocacy Committee. The SELCO Board of Directors will meet next week on Tuesday, May 27th. The library's experience of the ILS migration will be shared. Gilbert is on the slate of candidates to serve on the Executive Committee. The Legacy Committee recently approved funding for Community Collaboration Grants for several SELCO libraries. These grants provide libraries up to \$7,000 in funding for a partnership project with non-library entities. The Advocacy Committee is keeping track of both state and federal legislation affecting libraries. State legislation is currently in the committee phase. One key issue is funding for Minitex, which facilitates state-wide interlibrary loan and provides access to databases and other electronic materials. At the federal level, an injunction has been issued against the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which distributes federal funds to states for various funding efforts. Additionally, the Supreme Court is deliberating a case on the E-Rate program, which provides discounts to schools and libraries on the cost of broadband internet and other telecommunications services.

5. Board Comments or Concerns

The board asked for updates on the following items: (1) if Rep. Peggy Bennet or Sen. Gene Dornink responded to the letter the library sent as part of the Minnesota Library Association Library Legislative Day, (2) the progress of removing inactive library cards, (3) the status of the Minnesota Author Tour, (4) visits from the Adult Education Center, and (5) the status of a Freeborn County representative to the SELCO Board of Directors. Sevett shared that (1) no response was received, (2) progress has been made as fees under \$25 and older than 10 years were removed and those inactive users deleted, with plans to continue similar cleanup regularly, (3) the author tour is looking to be rescheduled for the fall and, schedule permitting, the library should be able to host the initially scheduled author, Marcie Rendon, (4) the visit last fall went well and hopefully similar visits can be scheduled, and (5) Kaasa has had difficulty finding a potential representative; potential representatives, including current board members whose terms are expiring soon, were discussed.

Board members shared feedback from the community, including a request for religious materials in Karen being added to the collection and interest in restarting the Nonfiction Book Club.

Van Beek asked about the history of the decision for the library to close on Saturdays and be open on Sundays. Sevett shared that the decision was made by the previous director based on the use of the library by county residents outside of city limits on Sundays, the lack of other available recreational options in the community on Sundays, and the ability for all staff to regularly have two days off per week regardless of the structure of their schedule.

6. Adjournment

Gustafson asked for a motion to end the meeting. Robson made the motion, Intihar seconded. The May 21, 2025 meeting of the Library Advisory Board concluded at 6:02 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Matthew Tessmer