

**BLACKWATER REGIONAL LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
February 18, 2026**

Present

MeChelle Blunt – Southampton County
Ora Briggs – Sussex County
Sylvia Claggett – Isle of Wight County
Deborah Dawson – Surry County
Charlene Herrala – Isle of Wight County
Pam Lease – City of Franklin
Kathy Lippard – Isle of Wight County
Margie McClenny – Southampton County
Karen Richardson – Sussex County
Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris – City of Franklin
Kisha Watford – Southampton County
Johanna Wiggins – Isle of Wight County
Ben Neal – Library Director
Bonnie Lauver – Assistant Library Director
Debbie Carter – Budget & Finance Manager

Remote (via Zoom)

Absent

Chair, Deborah Dawson called the meeting of the Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees to order at 3:05 p.m. at the Franklin Branch.

Consideration of Remote Meeting Participation Requests

None

Agenda

Ms. Lease moved, and Ms. Watford seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Minutes

Ms. Blunt moved, and Ms. Lease seconded the minutes be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Public Comment

None

Correspondence

None

Library Director's Report

One PT vacancy as of 2.8.2026

Winter Reading Program is off to a strong start with Beanstack

Fiscal Year, YOY through January 31st shows increases in circulation, meeting room usage, and new users

Mr. Neal explained that House Bill 236 has been pulled until next session. The Representative will work with VLA to make the bill stronger for everyone.

HB1 & SB1 – minimum wage legislation passed House and Senate, will increase minimum wage to \$15.00/hour by 2028

Delegate Wachsmann introduced HR48, commending the Smithfield Branch on 100 years!

Committee Reports

Budget & Finance – Ms. Lease – The committee met prior to the Board meeting. They voted to direct staff to research investing \$100,000 of reserve fund. BRL receives .12% on the current money market account. Options will be presented to the Board at the March meeting.

Personnel & Policy – Ms. Briggs – no report

Long Range Planning – Mr. Neal – There are three versions of the strategic plan in today's handouts. Please send Mr. Neal and Ms. Dawson your preference by March 1st. The Board will vote at the March meeting.

Accounts Payable

Ms. Richardson moved, and Ms. Herrala seconded that the accounts payable be filed for the Annual Audit. The vote was unanimous.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

None

Board Member Comments/Announcements

Ms. Watford – attended Author's Meet & Greet at Rawls and enjoyed it!

Ms. Blunt – The Links, Incorporated (Suffolk VA Chapter) will hold a Black Family Wellness Expo at the Workforce Development Center on March 21, 2026. Please contact her for more information.

Ms. Wiggins – attended a great meeting on women's health at Smithfield!

Ms. Lippard – excited about the new shelving/renovations at Smithfield!

Ms. Briggs – Sussex Community Coalition is working on the building. Hopes to have daycare operational by September 2027.

Ms. Richardson – book club kits are great!

Ms. McClenny – attended Paws to Read at Rawls and loved it!

Announcement of Next Meeting

The next Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees meeting will be on March 18, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. at the Franklin Branch.

Adjournment

Ms. Blunt moved, and Judge Harris seconded the meeting be adjourned. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Carter for
Ora Briggs, Secretary