

Potomac LAC Meeting Minutes

Dec 17, 2025

LAC Member Attendees

Gael Cheek
Sylvia Diss
Sheila Graves, Co-chair
Caitlyn Jennings
Rosemarie Lentini
Don Libes, Secretary
Patty McGrath
Roger Williams, virtual

LAC Member Absentees

Karen Grimm, 0 previous meetings missed
Anne Ma, 5 previous meetings missed
Michael Namath, 0 previous meetings missed
Cara Seitchek, 0 previous meetings missed
Mallory Starr, 8 previous meetings missed

Other Regular Attendees

Nancy Samson, Branch Supervisor
Jim Montgomery, Montgomery County Library Board Liaison

Other Regular Attendee Absences

Kirstra Otto, Acting Regional Mgr, past Connie, Regional Mgr for Connie Morella, Chevy Chase, Kensington Park, Little Falls, Noyes, Potomac

Other Attendees

Patrick Fromm, virtual

Names and abbreviations (unofficial, for convenience and clarity)

FOLMC: Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (old)
Friends or OneFOL: One FOLMC (new)
FOLP: Friends of the Library, Potomac Chapter (old)
FOPL: Friends of the Potomac Library (new)
PL: Potomac Library
MCLB: Montgomery County Library Board
plac: Potomac LAC mail list

Chair called meeting to order 7:05pm

Agenda previously distributed by Sheila via plac.

Minutes from Previous LAC Meeting

Sept minutes:. Gael moved to approve. Patty seconded.

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Membership Updates

Ella Hu resigned from LAC, Aug 2025

Milly Kahn resigned from LAC, Dec 2025

Kirstra Otto, Regional Manager Report

Absent.

Nancy Samson, Potomac Library Manager Report

More teen programs, more teen attendance. Mark is doing a great job getting more teens involved in the Teen Advisory Board.

Never got to hire another children's librarian.

Still one storytime a week (Mondays) probably until Feb or 2 children's programs a week for now.

Jim: Some branches have to turn people away. Does PL?

Nancy: Room is always packed. Room limited to 63 people so we sometimes have to turn people away despite having 2 sessions at 10:30 and 11:30.

Jim: Is there any kind of reservation system?

Nancy: Yes. [Lengthy description omitted.]

Getting ready for holidays. Upcoming big program for us is Chinese New Year in Feb - fire horse theme. We take out all the tables to make space. Amy Chan will be doing calligraphy and chinese art.

Last year we had 200 people.

Sundays

Nancy: We're getting a lot of questions about Sunday closures.

We are trying to turn Sunday closure into more weekday programs.

We will have more staff during times of higher attendance. Sunday is not a day of high attendance.

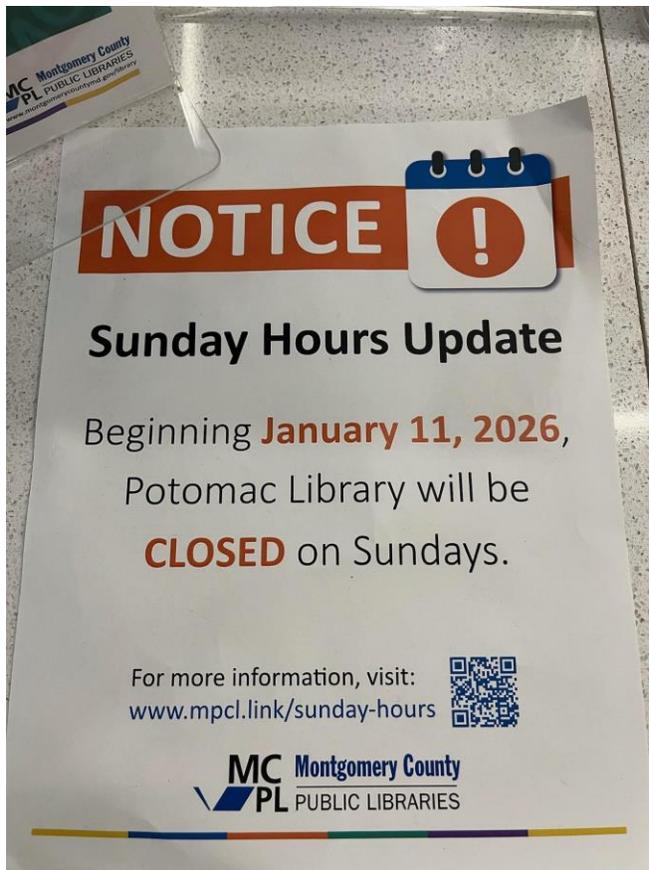
Don: Sunday closures are not due to budget cuts?

Nancy: No.

Patrick: When we instituted Sunday hours after re-opening from COVID, we cut back weekday hours but we have found Sunday was not well attended.

Gael: How are you getting patron feedback about Sundays?

Nan: We have posters around the library and an announcement also appears on the website, both with QR codes and links. [See photo]



Gael/Sylvia: Posters don't appear to be asking for feedback.

Roger: Are you tracking people/feedback calling in about Sunday?

Patrick: Yes, tracking direct calls for me and separately for feedback form.

To date, 187 responses. Most are essentially just "Don't close my branch!"

Roger/Gael: Odd to request feedback after the fact rather than before. Doesn't feel like this was well thought out. More of a management decree, not a budgetary issue.

Patrick: Correct.

Roger: Who made this decision?

Patrick: I did.

Roger: It is a management decision but we don't know management's metric of success. Can we?

[OWL stopped working. This took some time to address.]

Gael: So you're doing this to improve whose experience?

Patrick: To improve life/work balance of staff. Also, Sunday hours strained the ability to offer more programs when most people are in the branch. Sundays are too skeletal staffed which was a security issue if one person was running a program leaving just one person at the front desk.

Roger/Gael: How are you going to measure success?

Patrick: Foot traffic counts; programming numbers; collection usage: borrowing/returns.

Roger: How often will we see reports?

Patrick: Annually usually but we'll report something for the first quarter of 2026.

Roger: Once you do have enough data, please share with LAC.

Patrick: We'll prepare stats for the Board and share that with LACs.

Gael: So at PL, we should expect more programs during the week, right?

Patrick: We should have more circulation staff and info staff. Expect an additional person during the day.

Nancy: We haven't heard a lot of feedback yet. We expect to hear more after Jan 11 when the closures begin. We expect to hear more from our big Sunday users like our many high-achieving students who spend their entire Sundays in the library.

Patrick: 187 from feedback, 23 from Potomac.

Gael: Feedback how?

Patrick: Again, posters around the library.

Gael: Can LAC facilitate feedback?

Jim: Would help me if LAC said "we have undertaken steps to get feedback and here is what we have found."

Sheila: We'd like to make sure we hear feedback from patrons. Should we staff a table in the library to gather feedback?

[Omitted discussion of when to staff: Before/after closure? Best hours? Who volunteers?]

Consensus: Rosemarie and Gael will staff a table on Jan 20th and 27th from 5pm-6pm.

Sheila: Gather comments and send them to me. I will forward them to Jim.

Further discussion of changing and reversing Sunday policies.

Jim: It takes 9-10 months to deal with bureaucracy, getting approvals from county officials, approvals from unions, etc. It would take a lot of money/staff to reverse.

Roger: So if this is a failure, it would be hard to hear that from management.

Patrick: And the reason LACs/public didn't hear it in advance is that we have to talk to lawyers, unions, before going public.

Patrick: But if we get more funding, we'll know what people want.

[OWL stopped working again due to a power supply problem with Nancy's computer. This took extensive time to recover from.]

Gael: I stopped getting notices about MCLB meetings.

Other LAC members said they also have stopped getting announcements/invitations to MCLB meetings.

Jim: Will look into it.

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board Liaison Report

Report of last Board Meeting

1. Impressed by the Director's concern about dealing with bureaucracy of the government and board. Darcell was torn about whether they could talk to bureaucracy before talking to staff without them feeling blindsided.
2. Darcell is seeking a way to hear from the Board and LAC while dealing with the union, government. [See previous discussion about Sunday hours]
3. Board believes LACs can be helpful.
4. Board wants LACs to advocate now about the budget. After the budget has been developed, Darcell wants LACs to support whatever the board has recommended.
5. We are working on a letter from the Board to County Exec on budget recommendations. Focus on after-effects of COVID, significant loss of staff since then. Need more staff to give them their days off, to stop turning people away. # of people using library card at least once a year is down 30% since COVID. Anecdote about people not knowing about Storytime program and library existence in general. Want to tell CE Elrich that libraries are strained.
6. Have been going to the Board for 8 years. Some of it used to be as a Board member of FOL. I'm encouraged by what I'm seeing now.

Gael: Councilmember Marilyn Balcombe said MCLB doesn't have any up-county members. Recruitment for MCLB needs better representation.

Jim: We've heard that before. It's a concern.

Sheila: Patrick, are you going to have a report?

Patrick: No. My attendance tonight is strictly to address Sunday hours.

Nancy: Is Elrich term-limited?

Jim: Yes, term runs to end of 2026.

Nancy: Elrich has been a good friend of libraries. I'm concerned the next CE might not be such a friend of libraries.

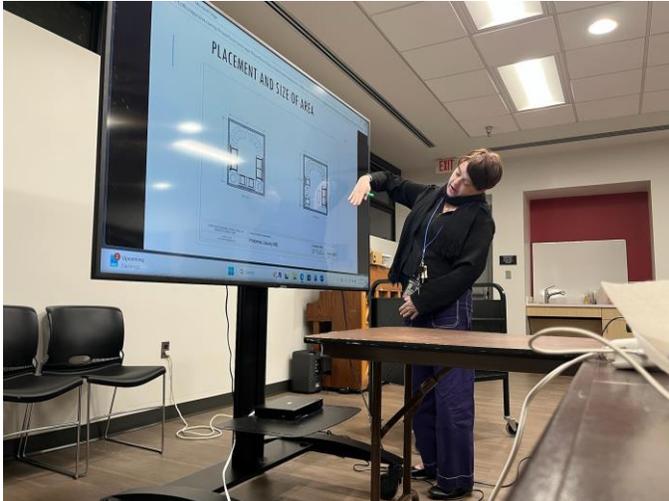
Roger: Damage control is an indicator of poor planning.

Patrick: Acknowledged. I have to balance a lot of things such as the work force. We're never going to give everyone everything they want.

Old Business

Furniture

Nancy showed seating plans for the back of the library. We're redesigning the area in the rear by the newspapers into an area of 15'x14' for 10-12 people. Hoping this will make the library more comfy and cozy.



Showed types of couches, chairs, tables. Rounded couch with tables and two ottomans. Puzzle table.



Easily moved out of way for special events.

Chairs are built to last. 25-30 years!

More conducive to reading the newspaper.

Jim: Cost?

Nancy: \$15-20K.

Sheila: When will it happen?

Nancy: We will probably pay in Feb with installation in April.

Jim: From this year's budget?

Nancy: Paid by FOL.

Jim: FOL has approved it?

Nancy: Patrick and I have discussed this.

Exterior Trash Pickup

Sheila/Gael: Read contract, obtained from councilmember's aid, and it looks like we have someone who is supposed to do outside pickup within 50 feet.

Gael: I don't understand why they're not doing it.

Gael: Shelley Kreitman, Garden Club (GC) rep said ARC used to do it but is not doing it any longer so GC people have to spend time doing it.

Gael: Rep said they are only doing what is in the contract but now that we've read the contract, seems like they are not living up to the contract. I've sent this info to the GC so we have to wait for GC to get back to us.

Nancy: Someone is picking up trash but I don't know who it is.

Roger: Could be a liability if someone is not picking up trash that someone slips on.

Gael: I don't know if we should follow up.

Jim: Per Angelisa at the Board meeting, complaints like this should be directed to Nancy. Do that before LAC gets further involved.

Security camera for entranceway

Sheila has that been resolved?

Nancy: No. It's above my pay grade.

Sheila: It is needed to give a broader view. Please send a work order for it.

Impromptu Field Trip to Examine Bathrooms

Don et al: No bathrooms have hooks for coats or purses or books in any of women's, men's or family bathrooms.

Nancy: I will address this.

[Computer driving Zoom ran out of power, lost power.]

Display Case

Nancy: Cannot talk about this because we lost Patrick.

Use of Potomac Library Rooms

Don: Why are some groups allowed to use rooms until 8pm while others are allowed to use them until 9pm? I cannot figure out how any groups have been reserving rooms to 9pm because CUPF doesn't allow it.

Nancy: CUPF only allows booking rooms when libraries are open.

Don: And yet people are using the rooms past closing time. Last week, WMCCA was allowed to use this room until 9pm. The week before, Secure Potomac was kicked out at 8pm. Both of these are similar community groups.

Nancy: Some groups have asked for permission and I've granted it.

Don: So can this be described on the website rather be kept a secret?

Nancy: I can ask MCLB/Darcell to address this.

Display Cases

Recitation of issues with display cases.

They remain empty to date.

Lost Patrick so nothing conclusive in discussion.

Gael: Why are display cases closed for a year? We need elaboration about policy.

Potomac Day

Sheila: Are we expected to do anything for Potomac Day?

Nancy: Attended state meeting. PG County is running out of room so there is a push to digitize.

This suggests a possible idea for days leading up to Potomac Day: Community Preservation

Days where state librarians visit libraries; Patrons bring documents; Librarians help digitize.

We can expect to help about 20 people/day.

Preservationists will help people learn how to preserve documents.

Sheila: Is PL committing to participate in Potomac Day?

Nancy: Yes!

Gael: We used to dress as characters and march in the parade with a banner.

Nancy: We have a banner!

Sheila: Used to have a table to promote FOL. But now we should promote library resources at

PL.

Someone: Isn't it early to start working on this?

Don: We should work with FOL who already are attending. Recounted anecdote of FOL booth in October.

Jim's Community Report

Circulated to plac.

Sheila/Gael: Nicely done.

Next meeting Feb 17

8:45pm: Patty moved to adjourn. Gael seconded.