

City of Mesa

Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date: November, 18th 2025
 Time: 5:30 p.m.
 Location: 2425 S Dobson Rd
 Mesa, AZ 85202

Members Present

Lonica Rowley, *Chair*
 Kristin Ricklefs-Johnson, *Vice Chair*
 Karina Wilhelm
 Mark Powell
 Ellen Bachman
 Christal Cline
 Megan Sterling
 Jo Wilson

Staff Present

Polly Bonnett
 Jesse Simms
 Stacey Akahoshi
 Jenn Lopez
 Anna Mathews
 Sara Lipich
 Megan Guderian
 Zach Gomez-Robinson
 Tony Garvey

Members Absent

James Martherus

Guests Present

Charlotte McDermott
 Shaney Blackburn-Aguirre
 Lee Swanson

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
Call to Order	Chair, Lonica Rowley, called the meeting for the City of Mesa Library Advisory Board to order at 5:35pm. on November 18 th , 2025.
Approval of May Meeting Minutes	The September 23rd minutes were moved by Ellen Bachman and seconded by Megan Sterling. The minutes were unanimously approved by all board members present. AYES – Rowley, Ricklefs-Johnson, Sterling, Wilhelm, Powell, Cline, Wilson, Bachman NAYS – None
Public Comments	No Public Comments
Introductions, Recognitions, and Announcements	All staff and board members present introduced themselves.
Facilitated Design Charette for the Red Mountain Library Children’s Room	Polly Bonnett, Library Director, introduced Lee Swanson from Richard Kennedy Architects to the board. Polly began the discussion by mentioning the Library Master Plan and sharing that survey results indicated a strong desire for improvements to the Red Mountain Library. Lee reviewed the overall master planning process, which included facility analysis and input from a task force. Staff leadership also emphasized the importance of creating a cohesive feel across all library locations, with Red Mountain specifically identified as a site in need of upgrades. The Children’s Area renovation was highlighted as part of this need. Lee shared photos of children’s areas across all locations, noting examples of flexible spaces, welcoming signage, and upcoming features at the new Gateway Library, including interactive and flexible storytime spaces. Jenn Lopez, Library Branch Coordinator outlined the goals for the renovation, including creating cohesive and playful spaces, adding more manipulatives, incorporating traditional activity areas, supporting experiential learning, increasing space for families, and ensuring the Children’s Area serves as a destination for kids and caregivers. Kristin asked what specific improvements Red Mountain requires, and Jenn responded that the library needs more manipulatives, additional furniture, and another storytime space. Lonica noted the importance of ensuring parents have adequate space as well. Kristin asked about accessibility features, and staff referenced the autism certification program and the sensory room at the Gateway Library. Jo asked about target age ranges for the space, and Jenn stated that all ages use the area and that designated spaces would be beneficial. Jo and Lonica also noted the lack of dedicated space and activities for tweens. Jesse Simms, Assistant Library Director, provided a proposed project timeline, stating that design work could begin in July 2026 (FY 26–27) with the potential renovation completed by June 2027. He shared ideas such as converting the Roadrunner Room into a sensory space and relocating collections, including moving nonfiction to the opposite side of the library. Additional needs include a new dividing wall between THINK Spot and the renovated area, a

AGENDA ITEM**DISCUSSION**

new service desk, more shelving and furniture, updates to the family restroom, interactive projector displays, and expanded manipulatives. Jesse also noted that there are no current plans to add full-time staff to support the changes. Lee then led the group through a design charrette exercise using concept trading cards. Polly concluded by explaining that the next steps involve presenting the project to the City Manager in February. Depending on funding and prioritization, the City Manager may move the project forward to the City Council for consideration. In response to a question about funding, Polly noted that the city manages over 400 facilities and that the Master Plan clearly showed the need for investment in Red Mountain. She encouraged the board to share their interest in the project with their Council representatives.

Hear a presentation on how a grant awarded to the Mesa Room will enhance the space

Library Associate Shaney Blackburn-Aguirre gave a presentation explaining her role as a cataloger and outlining the Mesa Community Chronicles project. She noted that the project requested \$60,000 in funding and was awarded \$55,500, with \$42,000 allocated for hardware and interactive screens and the remaining funds designated for scanning, metadata work, and educational programming. She described the project as an initiative to create a digital archive that preserves and shares Mesa's collective memory, enhances educational opportunities, and improves accessibility to local history. The timeline includes receiving funds in early 2026, installing the exhibit in the spring, and launching it to the public later in 2026 with a community showcase event. The exhibit will be located on the first floor of the Main Library and will feature three 80-inch interactive screens displaying content such as a brand gallery, random object gallery, exhibit gallery, and map gallery. Shaney also discussed potential collaborations with local businesses and community partners, including the Arizona Museum of Natural History, MCC Archives, ASU, and library patrons. She closed by noting that all funds are expected to be fully utilized by December 2026 and emphasized that this initiative provides an exciting opportunity to bring Mesa's stories to life.

Directors Update

Polly shared that in September, staff were asked to provide information on salaries and how they compare to other cities around the Valley. She explained that Mesa hires pages at 5 percent above the base pay and, because Arizona's minimum wage increases annually, the library requests corresponding annual adjustments to page wages. Management Assistant, Tony Garvey explained that once page staff complete 1,040 hours, they become eligible for a pay step based on the most recent Council-approved increase. He also noted that there is a training budget dedicated to pages for specialized development. Polly discussed the City's benchmarking process, which occurs every two years and compares staff salaries with other jurisdictions across the Valley. She and Tony reviewed how Mesa Libraries compare to other library systems, noting that during the last benchmarking cycle many paraprofessional classifications received a 10 percent increase, and professional classifications received 15 percent. Polly also highlighted that the City operates a wellness center available to staff at no cost, and Tony added that employees have access to up to \$14,000 in training funds. Polly advocated for updates to minimum qualifications and the addition of Library Clerk positions. Karina emphasized the importance of cultural recognition of staff and asked whether raises will continue. Polly explained that City Council approves step increases based on recommendations from OMB, which typically fall between 3–5 percent. She concluded by mentioning that beginning in the new year, the board will have additional time to share updates.

Identify items for future agenda

No items were identified.

Next Meeting Dates

January 20th, 2026 – Main Library 2nd Floor Saguaro Room

Adjournment

Board member Jo Wilson moved, and Mark Powell seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 pm. Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:
 AYES – Rowley, Ricklefs-Johnson, Sterling, Wilhelm, Powell, Cline, Wilson, Bachman
 NAYS – None
 The next meeting will be held on the 20th of January 2026 at the Main Library in the 2nd floor Saguaro Room.

Lonica Rowley, Chair signs for minutes