Portage Lake District Library Board of Trustees
Special Meeting Minutes
June 11, 2026 – 7:00 PM

The special meeting of the Portage Lake District Library Board of Trustees was called to order by President Sylvia Matthews on June 11, 2026, at 7:02 PM in the Portage Lake District Library Community Room. Board members present were Sylvia Matthews, Timothy Scarlett, Lora Repp, Joanna Chopp, Will Cantrell, and Allison Neely. Absent was Jennifer Donovan.

Staff members present were Catie Gardner, Holly Nemiroff, Boni Ashburn, Fawn Lucero, and Susan Autio.

There was a large group of over 40 members of the public in attendance.

Opportunity for Public to Address the Board/Correspondence (5 minutes per person/30 minutes total): Members of the public were invited to comment, up to 5 minutes each for 30 minutes total, with an additional second public comment period at the end of the meeting.
Several community members addressed the Board: Aili Palmer, Liz Brotherton, Rebecca Subert, Claire Helakoski, Kim Sigelko, Carolyn Dekker, Glenn Bugni, Jula Okalski, Sandi Marvar, Reino Kesti, Amanda Lutey, and Molly Powers. They all spoke in support of the Hancock School Public Library, its staff, and the services that they receive there. Many emphasized how important this library is to the community, and what a disservice it would be if it were to no longer be in operation.
Robin Meneguzzo had questions about how long that the PLDL board had known about the situation as it stands today with the Hancock School Public Library. Britta Benedict, Friends of the PLDL President, pledged the support of the Friends to the Hancock School Public Library.

Motion by Scarlett, supported by Repp, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Hancock Library – Sylvia Matthews, PLDL Board President, read a written response to the community about the Hancock School Public Library. She discussed and explained the contract, which originally was drafted on November 1, 2018, between PLDL and the Hancock School Public Library. The onus of responsibility of keeping the Hancock School Public Library with its current services and staff, falls to the Hancock School Board, and the funding needs to be done through them, whether it be a millage or some other source. Boni Ashburn, the Hancock School Public Library Manager, agreed with the summation given by Sylvia, and added some additional details. Tim Scarlett clarified further with information delineating the difference between a school library and a district library, and the legalities that are entwined with them. Will Cantrell gave additional budget information about the Hancock School Public Library, and how the funding for each entity works. Sylvia closed the board's portion of the meeting, sharing sadness about the potential of losing any library, but especially the Hancock School Public Library.

Opportunity for Public to Address the Board: Aili Palmer wondered if it's up to the school district to fund the public library and gave additional comments. Sara Niemeyer wanted people to know that the library would not close, but that the hours would likely be reduced, and they would lose their current staff members. Susan

Burack wonders if the community can raise money for the library and seeks a creative solution. An additional member of the public wondered if there is a possibility for another contract with PLDL to continue the services until a long-term solution can be found. Dean Woodbeck and Whitney Warstler from Hancock City Council have been working with their city attorney looking at the possibility of contracting with someone to keep things operating as they are now. They invited the public to their Council meeting, as this topic will be on their agenda. Robin Meneguzzo asked what were the contractual obligations between PLDL and the Hancock School Public Library, and whose responsibility was it to communicate the information back before the library got into this situation? Another member of the public understands that there is time that is needed, and questions whether something like a GoFundMe would work? Sara Niemeyer is a member of the Hancock Public Schools Foundation and shared with the group that if people wanted to donate through them and direct their donation to the library, it would go there. Charles Liggett shared his support of the Hancock Public Library and in seeking a long-term solution. Another person suggested that if Hancock School Public Library had a group like PLDL's Friends of the Library, that would be a good group to organize to help support the library. Jean Battle wonders what the exact dollar number is to keep the library open. She was also questioning whether PLDL is "in charge of" the Hancock Library. There was continued open discussion between the board members and members of the audience discussing possible solutions and different ways to try and keep the library open and running as it currently is, prior to reaching the critical point at the end of June when the contract between the PLDL and Hancock School Public Library ends.

Adjournment: Motion by Cantrell, supported by Chopp, to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 PM. Motion passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, at 7:00 PM at the Portage Lake District Library Community Room.