



LIBRARY COMMISSION DRAFT MINUTES

Date: November 24, 2025

Recording: https://oakland.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=81835ee0-ca2f-11f0-a7da-005056a89546

Location: Main Library, 125 14th Street, Oakland, CA 94612

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Gabrielle Sloane Law called the meeting to order at 5:46 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: 9

April Bell
Mary Cain-Simon
Kevin Covarrubias
Carolyn Jones
Justus Samuels
Gabrielle Sloane Law, Chair
Cristina Tostado
Alex Weinberg
Karen Zukor

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: 4

Chiye Azuma, Vice-Chair
Gay Plair Cobb
Andrea Henderson
Anand Patel

STAFF PRESENT: 2

Jamie Turbak, OPL Director
Kere Gonzales, Executive Assistant to the Director

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of Draft Minutes: October 27, 2025

Commissioner Weinberg made a motion to approve the minutes as published.

Commissioner Samuels seconded. Commissioners Bell and Zukor abstained. All others in favor. Motion approved.

3. Open Forum/Public Comment

There were no members of the public present; public comment was closed.

4. Treasures at Main

Director Turbak introduced two staff members, Erin Sanders from the Oakland History Center and Ian Hetzner from the Magazine and Newspaper (M&N) room, two of the departments at Main which assist with deeper reference work at OPL.

Ian Hetzner explained that while some things can be found on the internet, there are a lot of things that cannot. In such cases, a visit to M&N can help locate hard-to-find articles.

As an example, Ian used his research of Don Barksdale, an Oaklander and basketball player who was on the 1948 Olympic team and was the first Black NBA All-Star in the 1950's. Ian had asked Google and ChatGPT to find articles about Don Barksdale. While a few were found, neither found an article that had been in Ebony magazine in 1949 which featured an in-depth profile of the athlete. Ian found the Ebony article using a periodical index in the M&N room. A periodical index is an index divided by timeframe and subject matter. Once the subject matter is located, M&N staff will locate the periodical among their archives which encompass three floors and go back 150 years. Using that Ebony article, Ian was able to find out about businesses owned by Barksdale and dive deeper into his life and legacy.

Ian also talked about the microfilm collection at M&N such as the Oakland Tribune, NY Times, Wall Street Journal, etc. and how older versions of those periodicals can not be found online either.

Erin Sanders shared information about the collections at the Oakland History Center (OHC) such as postcards, photos, maps, books, newspaper clipping, and archives.

Erin shared that OHC has a vertical file collection which houses over 7,000 different topics and includes everything from neighborhood newsletters and events flyers to newspaper clippings. She also shared that the map center has tax assessor block books and neighborhood development maps. OHC also has collections which highlight Oaklanders such as a Black Panther collection and a Jack London collection.

Erin shared that OHC also has Oakland Public Library archives, photo collections of various locations and people of Oakland, glass plate negatives, house history resources, posters and more fun stuff.

Erin closed by sharing the contact information for the OHC- ohc@oaklandlibrary.org.

5. Annual Report to Life Enrichment Committee

Chair Sloane Law stated that she had not yet received any highlights of the good work that has been done and reminded commissioners to send her examples of the great work that has been accomplished, or they are proud of at their branches to be included in the report.

This report will be discussed and finalized at a future meeting before going to the committee in the Spring of 2026.

6. Commissioner Reports and Updates

These were the commissioner reports and updates:

- Commissioner Jones had nothing new to report.
- Commissioner Covarrubias reported that he is focusing on the orientation materials and familiarizing with the commission.
- Commissioner Cain-Simon reported that Elmhurst has an active Friends group convening monthly for litter walks. Elmhurst is also having a job fair in January with people from skilled trades that will do presentations for the job seekers. She also reported that maintenance is improving at Elmhurst. Commissioner Cain-Simon reported that the carpet has been shampooed at Chavez. She also reported that the Amigos group has been discussing fundraising, general maintenance, and the frustration with the landlord not maintaining the property.
- Commissioner Sloane Law did not have a branch update but reported that they had a recent conversation with City Finance staff and the OPL advocates regarding the “Roadmap to Fiscal Health” that is coming out soon.
- Commissioner Weinberg reported that the last of the speakers in the fall series had been at Rockridge the previous week.
- Commissioner Tostado reported that MLK has been doing clean ups. She also reported that Asian branch is having an Asian Disco Night on December 13th. The last report was that the pest problems at Asian branch are starting to resolve.
- Commissioner Zukor reported that Melrose put out a call for volunteers for its Friends group and the membership is growing. She also reported that the maintenance issues at Temescal are being addressed more rapidly.
- Commissioner Samuels reported that West Oakland has new windows which are very nice and open the space up. He also reported that the Friends group is growing as new members are joining.
- Commissioner Bell reported that she has been doing the same as Commissioner Covarrubias, focusing on the orientation materials and familiarizing with the commission.

7. Director’s Update

Director Turbak shared the following:

- The **West Oakland Teen Zone** project is underway and furniture, flooring, and electrical work has been ordered. Installation should begin in December and will likely run into January. The project will also include new seating, tables, and shelving.

- Oakland Public Library honors the life and legacy of Coach Beam with [a lovely blog post](#) featuring newspaper articles about him from our archives. Also, there is a memory book on the 1st floor in the lobby where many have been writing lovely memories and tributes to him. We will offer the book to his family at the end of the year.
- If you're traveling out of Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport this holiday season, look for OPL on the big screens! Starting the week of Thanksgiving, travelers will see ads promoting Libby and our free reading resources on 30 digital screens at gates throughout the airport.
- In partnership with East Bay Agency for Children, East Oakland Engagement Team disbursed 200 turkeys at 81st Avenue in approximately 45 minutes. People started lining up as early as 8 am and received a number. The turkeys and a box of fixings arrived around noon.
- [50 Years Bright: Asian Disco Celebration](#). Join OPL on Saturday, December 13, 2:30-4:45 pm as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Asian Branch Library! This high-energy, family-friendly event will feature a joyful mix of Cantonese disco and songs in Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and more — celebrating the rich tapestry of Asian cultures that have shaped the heart of our community.
- **Spread Holiday Spirit!** On Friday, December 19, the Main Library will host an event featuring free haircuts and a [clothing/food/toy giveaway](#)! The librarians organizing the effort are looking for volunteers to help with set-up on Thursday, 4-6:00 pm and to help with the event itself (either from 11:00am – 2:00 pm or from 2:00-5:00) on Friday. If you are interested and available for any of these shifts, please reach out to me to sign up. Toy donations are being sought – please drop off in the Children’s Room or first floor at Main. More information will be forthcoming about this event for commissioners.

8. Committee Announcements

- **Community Engagement**
Is currently building a contact list of allies and community partners who share OPL’s audience and goals.
- **Sustainability**
Committee did not meet.
- **General Plan Ad Hoc**
Last planning meeting was cancelled, and the next one is on December 3rd.
- **Action Plan Ad Hoc**
Committee did not meet.
- **Room Naming Ad Hoc**
Committee has not met yet.

9. Chairperson’s Update

Chair Sloane Law shared she continues to be involved with the OPL Advocates and invites commissioners who are interested to attend upcoming meetings.

10. Agenda Building

December 2025- Recess

January 2026- Elections, Commissioner Assignments, Annual Report to LEC

February 2026- Annual Report to LEC

Spring 2026-

11. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:13pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kere Gonzales, Executive Assistant