SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 16, 2026 | 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Information

- Date: July 16, 2026
- Time: 4:30 p.m.
- Location: Main Library Koret Auditorium, held in person; remote public observation available via Zoom (ID: 939-2760-8689) and telephone (1-877-853-5247)
- Commissioners Present: President Calhoun, Commissioner Lopez, Commissioner Bolander, Commissioner Kenaston, Commissioner Menon
- Staff Present: Margot Shaub, Commission Affairs Analyst; Michael Lambert, City Librarian; Christina Mitra, Program Manager, Hormel LGBTQIA Center; Leah Esquerra, Social Worker / Social Services Manager; Jennifer Keys and Salvador Lopez Gonzalez, Health and Safety Associates (present in audience); Rachel Kinnon, Program Manager, Jail and Reentry Services Unit; Dr. Jeannie Austin, Jail and Reentry Services Librarian; Doreen Horsten, Branch Manager, Park Branch; Jamie [last name not stated in transcript], Exhibitions/PR staff; Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor, Chief of Branches (departing); Christy Estrovitz, Assistant Chief of Branches
- The meeting opened with the Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgement

Agenda

- Item 1: General Public Comment
- Item 2: Discussion of the Hormel LGBTQIA Center and Pride Highlights
- Item 3: Discussion of the Social Services Report
- Item 4: City Librarian's Report
- Item 5: Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the June 18, 2026 Commission Meeting Minutes

Item 1: General Public Comment

Note: General public comment is for matters within the Commission's jurisdiction not on the day's agenda. No commission discussion is recorded for this item.

Public Comment —

1. Anonymous Speaker ("Josiah Bartlett" narrative)

The anonymous speaker, presented a fictional narrative featuring a commissioner named "Josiah Bartlett," who had investigated the library and written a letter to fellow commissioners. The letter

alleged a pattern of illegally restricting public comment as part of a longer campaign to create barriers around the Commission, The letter concluded by threatening to call for the dismissal of the City Librarian if fewer than three commissioners were willing to act on the alleged problems, and otherwise to resign the fictional character from the Commission.

2. Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association

Mr. Warfield noted that he observed only four commissioners present at the start of the meeting and that no formal call to order had been issued. He described the Sunshine Task Force's finding that the Commission violated the law by reducing public comment time from three minutes to two minutes per agenda item without a public process, and alleged additional violations including interrupting speakers mid-comment without explanation, cutting off allotted speaking time.

3. Jason Gibbs, Retired Librarian

Mr. Gibbs cited strong voter support for library funding ballot measures, Proposition E (1994, 70%), Proposition D (2007, 74.5%), and Proposition F (2022, 82.5%) along with the library's 2018 ALA Library of the Year recognition, arguing these achievements came when the library was committed to free and equal access to information, knowledge, and reading for the community. He criticized the current strategic plan, Project 2030, as "word salad" and "innovation speak."

4. Jessica Lipnack, Board Member, Friends of the San Francisco Public Library

Ms. Lipnack announced that the Friends had just completed a record annual fundraising campaign with the highest number of donations in the organization's history, and that fundraising for the Mission branch renovation had concluded successfully at $1.1 million raised. She reported that fundraising for the Chinatown branch renovation continues, with the project expected to be completed in 2028 and noted an upcoming Friends book sale on Saturday, August 8, at the Potrero Hill donation center.

Item 2: Discussion of the Hormel LGBTQIA Center and Pride Highlights

City Librarian Michael Lambert introduced Christina Mitra, Program Manager for the Hormel LGBTQIA Center, who presented an overview of the Center's 38-year history (founded 1988, 30th anniversary celebrated in April 2026), collections (13,967 books/magazines/periodicals; 1,094 circulating; 12,673 reference; 200 active periodical subscriptions), archives (220 collections; 2,707 digitized images; 227 archive requests in FY26), programming (42 programs; 2,707 total attendees in FY26, consistent over three years), key community partnerships, and this year's Pride Parade participation (102 marchers; first-ever inaugural planning team of 8 staff members including 4 pages and 2 library assistants).

Public Comment —

1. Anonymous Speaker

Anonymous speaker shared a personal memory of the fourth anniversary of Stonewall that took place outside the main library and was attended by approximately 80 to 100 people; the speaker noted that the only prominent public figure present was Mrs. Milton Marks and that the accomplishments of the community and the Hormel Center mean that finding books by James Baldwin or Truman Capote no longer requires a specialized trip to the Center.

2. CNL Representative, Harvey Milk Memorial Branch

The speaker, identifying as a Neighborhood Library Council representative for the Harvey Milk Memorial branch, praised the Hormel Center's intergenerational programming focus and praised the Pride Parade organizing efforts, the staff-decorated shirts, and the library's visible promotion of reading and banned books at Pride.

3. Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association

Mr. Warfield said he is always glad to hear about library collections and programs but raised concerns about the discoverability of the Hormel Center's reference collection, noting that the vast majority of the title collection are in closed shelving not browsable by the public and suggested approaches to increase discoverability.

Commission Discussion —

1. Commissioner Lopez

Commissioner Lopez thanked Christina Mitra for the report and offered congratulations to the entire staff for their work in cataloging and preserving LGBTQIA history for future generations, stating that the ongoing, often behind-the-scenes work of catalog-maintenance is important and deserving of recognition. She stated she had no questions, characterized the 30th anniversary as celebrating "30 years of resistance," and expressed that knowing history is being preserved for generations to come makes the work so important. No staff response was requested or given.

2. Commissioner Calhoun

Commissioner Calhoun expressed deep appreciation for the staff's work and asked Christina Mitra about her strategy for evaluating and acquiring new materials. Mitra described consulting trade review publications using Collection Development Office tools, and consulting with local to stay current across local, national, and international voices. The commissioner expressed appreciation for the deliberate attention to local Bay Area and San Francisco writers and artists.

Item 3: Discussion of the Social Services Report

City Librarian Michael Lambert introduced Leah Esquerra, Social Worker and Social Services Manager, noting she is the first social worker ever embedded in an urban public library (since 2009) and is internationally recognized as a model for the field. Ms. Esquerra presented an overview of the Social Services program covering: the HASA (Health and Safety Associates) program structure; in-library outreach ("in-reach") methodology; social services atrium tabling (launched May 2026, 463 patrons served in two months); over 80 free community resource listings maintained for staff and patrons; resource binders delivered to 10 branches; outreach statistics (8,000 contacts in FY23 growing to over 14,000 in FY26); key community partnerships including regular partner tabling by Department of Aging and Disability, Behavioral Health Services, Sequoia Living Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Family and Children Services; special events including a Simply the Basics hygiene market (179 patrons, approximately 1,700 hygiene items) and an Institute on Aging elder-abuse awareness panel (70 attendees); and staff training programs. Two HASAs — Jennifer Keys and Salvador Lopez Gonzalez — were present at the meeting.

Public Comment —

1. Jason Gibbs

The speaker said they could remember the conditions at the Main Library before Leah Esquerra and the social services team joined and characterized the change as night and day.

2. Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association

Mr. Warfield acknowledged the many positives of the social services program and said he is always glad to hear about such work, but raised longstanding concerns about the visibility of the HASA program at branches, acknowledged that visibility has improved since then but argued that there still appears to be no permanent signage at the main library indicating where the social worker's office is located or when social services staff are available.

3. Starchild, Chair, Libertarian Party of San Francisco

Starchild raised a concern about age-based access restrictions at "The Mix," the library's creative media and music production space at the main library limited to patrons aged 12 to 18, arguing that adults who wish to use its unique facilities have no equivalent option available to them at any time, which he characterized as a form of age discrimination.

Commission Discussion

1. Commissioner Bolander

Commissioner Bolander thanked Leah for the presentation and the HASAs for their work, and asked how branch placements for HASAs were determined, how the program measures success, and what key advice Leah gives when consulting with libraries worldwide about starting similar programs.

Leah explained that Mission Bay and Eureka Valley were designated as high-needs branches and selected for HASA placement on that basis; described program success as assessed primarily through anecdotal outcomes and for advice to new programs, emphasized the primacy of community partnerships and the essential inclusion of the lived-experience voices of those being served.

2. Commissioner Menon

Commissioner Menon praised the social services program as "a gift that keeps on giving" to San Francisco residents and asked how they choose which libraries to have social service staff at, how they measure success and what's the key piece of advice they give to other libraries asking for advice.

3. Commissioner Kenaston

Commissioner Kenaston asked how patrons access the social services resources in practice, whether appointments are required or whether the service is walk-in.

Leah explained that no appointments are needed; access flows through HASA outreach on library floors, through atrium tabling and through library staff who can print information and offer to connect patrons with the social worker via phone call.

4. President Calhoun

President Calhoun thanked Leah and noted that he remembers when the social services program started in 2009 and that learning about it at that time confirmed for him why library work matters, expressing gratitude to Leah and the team on behalf of all San Francisco residents.

Leah thanked her team of health and safety associates, crediting their generosity with their time and willingness to share their personal stories as the true foundation of the program's success.

Item 4: City Librarian's Report

The City Librarian's Report comprised four presentations: (1) Jail and Reentry Services (JARS), by Rachel Kinnon and Dr. Jeannie Austin; (2) Read to Recovery, by Doreen Horsten, Branch Manager, Park Branch; (3) the John Cotton Dana Award for the Skateboarding San Francisco exhibition, presented by Jamie Wong; and (4) a personnel update on the departure of Chief of Branches Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor. City Librarian Lambert noted that the evening's illustrate how SFPL aspires to serve as a thoughtful navigator and caring gateway to resources.

Public Comment

1. Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association

Mr. Warfield praised the Read to Recovery program specifically for being friction-free compared to other library programs: permanent signage is up at all times so the resource is present even when no staff member is there, materials are available to anyone with no library card required, and there is no technology, device, or QR code needed to access books.

2. Starchild, Chair, Libertarian Party of San Francisco

Starchild raised concerns about restrictions on the community free-materials display area at the Eureka Valley branch, which he said had been moved from a highly visible front-entrance location to a less visible interior spot, with restrictions placed on what materials can be left there.

3. Christy Estrovitz, Assistant Chief of Branches

Ms. Estrovitz thanked Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor for her leadership, her thought partnership, and for making the library's branches a place where staff want to work and want to stay. She stated that the Berkeley Public Library is fortunate to be gaining her.

4. Catherine, Volunteer CNL Representative, Chinatown Branch

Catherine said she had initially come to the meeting specifically to ensure Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor would receive appropriate recognition, and, finding that she already had, offered her own appreciation for Rebecca's work facilitating Community Neighborhood Library (CNL) meetings in an encouraging and organized manner and for actively helping volunteer representatives seek support for library-related matters, and noted that Rebecca's presence and contributions at CNL meetings will be missed. She wished Rebecca well in her new role at Berkeley.

Commission Discussion

1. Commissioner Lopez

Commissioner Lopez thanked staff for the JARS presentation and expressed particular appreciation for the work done with a population she described as often ignored or silent, expressing thanks to Dr. Austin for her willingness to continue volunteering with the Mellon grant after departing SFPL and offering to support the program in any way possible. She said the Read to Recovery program addresses topics not usually associated with libraries and that the no-questions-asked, free-book access model provides relief for people who don't want to speak to anyone, while the option to connect with Leah Esquerra is there for those who do — noting the two programs complement each other well.

2. Commissioner Menon

Commissioner Menon observed that the theme threading through the evening for them was "we see you" that the programs of recognizing and serving people who are often overlooked. The commissioner thanked Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor for her work for both patrons and staff. Menon asked Dr. Austin about restrictions on books sent to incarcerated people.

Dr. Austin and Rachel Kinnon responded that some safety-and-security-based restrictions exist, and that the more pervasive nationwide problem is lack of funding rather than content restrictions with San Francisco's library budget making it possible for incarcerated patrons to have access to current, high-quality books.

3. Commissioner Bolander

Commissioner Bolander offered general thanks for all of the evening's presentations and then asked Doreen Horsten which Read to Recovery books are most popular. Doreen responded that the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous Big Books are consistently the first to be taken; yoga and Eastern philosophy titles go very quickly, reflecting San Francisco's cultural interests; and supportive texts such as 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and Just for Today are frequently requested. The commissioner noted that the commissioner had been present for Doreen's original presentation and disclosed that as a person in recovery, the program holds personal significance to them; Doreen acknowledged this. The commissioner also noted growing patron requests for Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Alateen, Overeaters Anonymous, and Gambling Anonymous titles, some of which are difficult to obtain through standard library vendors and require additional ordering steps.

4. President Calhoun

President Calhoun thanked presenters and offered specific thanks to Rebecca Alcala-Veraflor for what she has done for people in the branches, both patrons and the staff who do that work every day and characterized each program heard that evening as part of the future of San Francisco.

Item 5: Discussion and Possible Action to Approve June 18, 2026 Commission Meeting Minutes

Staff noted that SFPL Commission meetings are posted in their entirety on YouTube. Public comment was opened and speakers were reminded to limit comment to this specific agenda item.

Public Comment

1. Anonymous Speaker

The anonymous speaker announced that at the June 18, 2026 Commission meeting they had spoken three times and subsequently prepared three written summaries of those statements for inclusion in the minutes, which they submitted by registered mail.

2. Peter Warfield, Executive Director, Library Users Association

Mr. Warfield said the June 18 minutes have more detail than some past minutes but still lack the specificity that makes public comment meaningful. He said his points about library access barriers, like the need for personal headphones to listen to meetings his Summer Stride comments and his City Librarian's report comments were insufficiently captured.

3. Starchild, Chair, Libertarian Party of San Francisco

Starchild expressed support for the previous two commenters' requests for detailed, complete, and accurate minutes that fully reflect the specifics of what members of the public say. He also urged the Commission more broadly to allow public comment on each agenda item and to give members of the public as much leeway as possible in their comments, rather than holding speakers to narrow topic limits.

Commission Discussion and Action

Commissioner Keniston moved to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2026 Commission meeting and Commissioner Bolander seconded the motion.

Action: The motion passed with four ayes and one abstention.

Ayes: Calhoun; Lopez; Bolander; Kenaston — Abstain; Menon.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 PM.

Link to Commission Meeting

ADDENDUM

Under Administrative Code section 67.16 of the Sunshine Ordinance, any person who spoke during public comment at a meeting of a Charter board or commission may supply a brief written summary of the comments to be included in the minutes if it is 150 words or less. The summary is not part of the Commission's official minutes, and the Commission does not vouch for its accuracy.

Anonymous Public Comment Submission

Item 1: General Public Comment

Stop the Hate, Stop the Ignorance - Don't give money to or accept money from the Friends of the Library. A fictional Library Commissioner, Josiah Bartlett, writes as follows: Fellow Commissioners, I have found that illegally restricting public comment is part of a long effort. Library Commissioners and management officials you are treated well to create the impression that you deserve it. Persons not in your group are treated with disrespect, insulted and scorned, to create the impression that they deserve it. This is an attempt to create an invitation only society. If people are denigrated it is because you denigrate them. Claiming status over them is reinforcing an illusion. There is a direct connection between knowledge and respect for the public. Breaking the law is significant. Respect for the law is respect for the words that provide equality and access to the truth, creating a decent society. You destroy truth.

Item 3: James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center and Pride 2026 Update

Stop the Hate, Stop the Ignorance - Don't give money to or accept money from the Friends of the Library. This might help you appreciate how far we have come. One of my earliest library experiences was on leaving the library I noticed a crowd. Perhaps 1971 or 72, it was the fourth anniversary of something called, "Stonewall." The speaker said it was appropriate because the public library was the largest "closet" organization in America. The only prominent person was Mrs. Milton Marx, who apologized that Milton Marx had to go to a bar mitzvah .I now know what "Stonewall" is. I know what a "closet" organization is. And politicians don't miss it for a bar mitzvah. A commemoration of how far we have come is that you don't have to go to the Honnel Center to find a book by Truman Capote, or James Baldwin or any number of people.

4: Approval of Minutes of June 18, 2026

Stop the Hate, Stop the Ignorance - Don't give money to or accept money from the Friends of the Library. At this meeting of June 18, I spoke three times. I submitted three summaries of those statements for inclusion in the minutes. I submitted them by registered mail

because Ms. Shaub was not available to receive them. I want to see how you keep that out of the minutes, if I don't say anything else.