

**DETROIT LIBRARY COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
SPECIAL MEETING
JULY 21, 2026**

NOTED

The meeting was held in Main Library's Galleria. The meeting was also available via Zoom.

President Hicks called the Special Meeting of the Detroit Library Commission to order at 2:08 p.m.

Roll call attendance:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------|
| ➤ Adams | Present |
| ➤ Bounds | Present |
| ➤ Frierson-Haynes | Present |
| ➤ Williams | Present |
| ➤ President Hicks | Present |

Excused: Commissioners McClendon, Milton

Administrative Staff: Mondowney, Brown, Dale, Funchess, Norfolk, Peele, Simmons, Simon, Tarleton, Williams

Present Also: M. Deangelo, Mallorie DeVilbiss, J. Dietlin, Deborah Dorsey, Latonya Foster, Ken Gabriel, Karen Garrette, Kalana Gates, Tyrand Goodwin, A. Kaylin, Frank Kijoga, Noah Kincaid, Joyce Krom, Annette Lotharp, Torria Love, Tina Manley, ASE Marketing, Vernadette McAllister, T.C. Mills, Carolyn Mosley, Detroit Notetaker, Margaret Notetaker, Yvette Rice, Jeffrey Senior, Jackie Sullen, Megan Summers, Brian Vance, Mattie Wiggins, Brian Will, Debra Williams, Jackie Williams, Cheryl Wright, Tracey Wyatt

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

COMMISSION ACTION

Commissioner Frierson-Haynes moved approval. Commissioner Bounds supported.

Roll call vote:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| ➤ Adams | Yes |
| ➤ Bounds | Yes |
| ➤ Frierson-Haynes | Yes |
| ➤ Williams | Yes |
| ➤ President Hicks | Yes |

The agenda was approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Latanya Foster – She inquired about the reopening of the Monteith Library.

President Hicks explained that the Commission is normally on recess July and August and this was a special meeting to handle a specific matter. Public comments would be limited in their responsiveness.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S RETIREMENT

President Hicks said that the Commission received an announcement at its May 19, 2026 Commission meeting from the Executive Director that she plans to retire.

President Hicks outlined the need to initiate a search process and create a mutual agreement for the Executive Director to cover the transition period. He also proposed planning public events to celebrate the Executive Director's contributions and years of service.

Commissioner Adams raised concerns about Mrs. Mondowney's retirement announcement being sudden and not flowing naturally. Some of the Commissioners knew about it prior to the May 19, 2026 announcement, but many of the Commissioners did not know about it.

Commissioner Adams asked the following questions to the Commissioners who knew of the pending retirement:

- Why weren't there discussions about an extension of the Executive Director's contract?
- How did the retirement announcement come about? What happened for it to come up so suddenly? Was it pushed? Was it solicited?

Commissioner Adams said that she missed a few meetings because of caregiving and the death of her mother. She said when she came back, this retirement announcement came out of the blue. She said that she was surprised and even more surprised that the retirement was imminent and there were no plans in place for an extension of the Executive Director's contract or a time period of when the retirement would take place.

Commissioner Adams said that this would interrupt the natural flow of operations and asked if there was a proposed draft extension of the Executive Director's contract?

President Hicks said there is no draft contract extension but requested the Commission to authorize him as the President, to draft the agreement, to meet with the Executive Director so there is concurrence with both sides, and to present the agreement to the full Commission for ratification.

Commissioner Adams said that the Commission has never given authority to the President to construct an agreement. She had been through the process several times and the Committee on Administration and DPL's legal counsel drafted the agreement, negotiated the terms with the Executive Director, and then present the agreement to the full Commission for approval.

President Hicks said that for his comfort level, he wanted to draft an agreement and have a conversation with the Executive Director around the specifics of the agreement.

Commissioner Adams said that this was not an action item on the agenda. The items on the agenda only specified discussion.

President Hicks said that all of the items on the agenda were action items even though they were listed as discussion items.

Commissioner Bounds raised concerns about a timeframe for the extension transition period since the Executive Director's contract ended June 30, 2026 and any particular questions the Commission should be addressing in this discussion.

President Hicks said that he made a limited number of inquiries to other institutions that suggested a general timeframe anywhere from 3 months to 1 year to execute the process of selecting a new Executive Director.

President Hicks suggested creating a month-to-month mutual agreement with the Executive Director. He said that he did not want to create a full-length contract after the Executive Director announced retirement.

Commissioner Adams said that she was even more concerned that President Hicks was consulting with different institutions without consulting with the Commissioners. She was confused and concerned about what is being proposed.

President Adams said that she had been through the process of engaging a search firm and searching for personnel with that search firm. The first step is to engage a search firm and she did not recall seeing a contract or an RFP for a search firm that and that process would take at least 60 days.

Commissioner Adams said that once the search firm is engaged, then they have to start the search. She said this is not an easy process and a month-to-month agreement with the Executive Director would lend more uncertainty to the operation and stability of the library.

President Hicks said for clarification, he did not consult with anyone to do any particular work. He said he needed to understand how much time is normally associated with an Executive Director's search. He said that his consultation on that question was googled on the internet.

President Hicks said that he would need the following specifics from the Commission in order to draft an agreement:

- What transition timeframe would the Commission would be comfortable with?
President Hicks suggested a month-to-month agreement.
- The Commission agree that all benefits of the Executive Director continue under its current structure.
- The Executive Director retains operational authority throughout the transition period.

Commissioner Williams raised concerns about why this matter was not discussed at the June 16, 2026 Commission meeting and what is in place since the Executive Director's contract has expired?

Minutes were approved at the September 15, 2026 Commission Meeting

She also had concerns about the month-to-month agreement and suggested a one-year employment agreement for the Executive Director to allow stability during the transition.

President Hicks said that if the month-to-month agreement is not the preference of the Commission, then adjustments can be made.

President Hicks said that the matter was not discussed at the June 16, 2026 Commission meeting because it was a community meeting that was relatively long. President Hicks said that Mrs. Mondowney has continued to fulfill her duties and obligations without a contract.

Commissioner Bounds thanked Mrs. Mondowney for her professionalism and dedication to the Library for continuing to work without a contract. It is deeply appreciated even though this is not the conversation to have in public.

Commissioner Bounds agreed with Commissioners Adams and Williams stating that stability within the organization is important and the Commission should have a plan in place.

Commissioner Bounds agreed with a one-year employment agreement for the Executive Director, if the Executive Director is open to the suggestion. She said during that one-year period, the steps of getting a search firm in place and setting up the transition process would take place.

Commissioner Adams said that she concurred with extending the Executive Director's current contract for one-year. She added if the Commission decided to create a new contract, in past practice, the following steps would take place:

- The matter would go through the Committee on Administration (COA).
- The COA would work with DPL's legal counsel and the legal counsel would develop an employment agreement to ensure it is legally binding without any emotion or bias.
- The agreement is presented to the Executive Director and her attorney to review.
- The agreement is then presented to the full Commission for approval.

Commissioner Adams said the Commission President has never been given the authority to draft or negotiate the Executive Director's contract in the past. She said if it is the Commission desire to go with a new contract, it would be best to stick with prior practices.

Commissioner Frierson-Haynes said for clarification, this matter is going back to the COA to develop a contract that can be presented to the Executive Director and the Commission within 30 days to see if it is amicable.

Commissioner Bounds asked if there was general agreement among the Commission that a new draft contract was needed or is it possible to consider extending the current contract?

President Hicks said that the current contract contains some personnel elements and if we're going to proceed along that route, then we would need to move into a closed session to have discussion.

Commissioner Adams said that a closed session meeting could not take place because it is not listed on the agenda. You have to state a reason for a closed session meeting.

Commissioner Adams raised concerns about violating the Open Meetings Act for a Special Meeting due to the lack of proper agenda items without a specific purpose. A Special Meeting is for a specific purpose and the purpose has to be on the agenda. It's not to thwart anything, it is the law.

President Hicks said that he did not catch the following agenda items for discussion before the agenda was approved:

- Executive Director's Retirement -**Discussion**
- Steps Necessary for the Executive Director's Transition – **Discussion**
- Initiating a Search for a New Executive Director for DPL – **Discussion**

President Hicks said these items should have been action items and he should have said something before the meeting moved forward. He asked if the Commission would like to schedule another meeting and set these items as action items?

Commissioner Frierson-Haynes asked if we needed an action item to start the search or should we wait until we have the contract and then start the search?

Commissioner Adams said that an action item to engage a search firm to start the search is needed if we are doing this professionally.

Commissioner Bounds said before scheduling another Commission meeting, it seems worthwhile to refer this matter to the Committee on Administration (COA) to discuss the following items and bring them back to the next Commission meeting:

- What is needed to extend the Executive Director's current contract?
- What is needed to create a new interim contract?

President Hicks said that the COA was working through the contract when the Executive Director informed the COA members she was retiring.

Commissioner Adams asked when was this item discussed at a COA meeting?

Ms. Rice, Executive Assistant, said that a virtual closed session COA meeting without the Executive Director was held on Friday, May 8th and an in-person closed session COA meeting with the Executive Director was held on Monday, May 18th.

Commissioner Adams asked how could the COA work through the contract without the other Commissioners being aware that the members are working through the contract?

President Hicks said that the contract that expired had certain provisions in it. The COA was doing its work consistent with a contract that had already been signed and was specifically going through the evaluation process.

Commissioner Adams said that the evaluation process cannot be conducted by a committee alone.

President Hicks said that it was not planned to be conducted by a committee alone. He said when the COA began the discussion, the Executive Director indicated to the COA that she plans to retire.

President Hicks said therefore, there was no particular reason to continue the evaluation. He said the Executive Director announced her retirement at the May 19, 2026 Commission meeting. He said that was the sequence of this matter.

Commissioner Williams suggested next steps should be that the COA returns to the Commission with the recommendation of the extension of the Executive Director's current contract or a new contract for the Commission to vote on in the next Commission meeting. She said that seems to be the right action for the Commission to take.

President Hicks said that no action could be taken on the item at today's meeting because it was not listed on agenda as an action item.

Commissioner Bounds said that even though the Commission could not take action on this item at today's Commission meeting, it could still be referred the COA.

Commissioner Bounds requested that the COA bring a recommendation to the Commission to extend the Executive Director's current contract or create a new contract, and include a specific timeline of steps so that the Commission can discuss that timeline as part of action at the next special Commission meeting rather sooner than later.

Commissioner Williams agreed with Commissioner Bounds' recommendation adding that the contract be extended to one year.

President Hicks said that the recommendations from the Commission are making decisions for the Committee on Administration.

President Hicks asked the Chair of the COA, Commissioner Frierson-Haynes, if she was willing to have this item formally referred back to the COA.

Commissioner Frierson-Haynes said yes.

President Hicks said that the item will be referred back to the COA with the intent to craft a recommendation that outlines whatever steps would have to be taken for a search firm and celebrations. He did not say if the steps would include a one-year contract because that is a Committee discussion. If the item recommendation comes back from the COA and it did not include a one-year contract, it would be up to the Commission to amend the recommendation to include a one-year contract.

Commissioner Williams said that a timeline is needed to determine the next steps for a search firm and retirement celebrations. She said the most important thing is to get the contract in place. She said we are putting the cart before the horse or the horse before the cart. In any sense, we are out of order.

President Hicks said that the Commission should be included in the evaluation of the final selection of the search firm. He also said the last job description of the Executive Director should be reviewed and updated.

Commissioner Bounds suggested having a conversation about things that should be part of the Committee on Administration discussion which includes:

- Discussing the possibility of a search firm.
- Discussing a timeline. There was general conversation about a one-year timeline.

Commissioner Adams said that she wanted the Commission to keep in mind that Mrs. Mondowney announced her retirement without a date and that date could be any day in the future. She said that the announcement was unusual because typically when an announcement is made, without coercion, there is a plan in place.

Commissioner Adams said that we can do the following:

- Have a conversation with Mrs. Mondowney about the terms of her contract extension or a new contract.
- Have a discussion with DPL's Procurement Manager about the process for engaging a search firm.
- Have a discussion with the Human Resources Director and Procurement Manager about the process for the entire search.

Commissioner Adams said that we are not going to hold up the Executive's Director contract just to make sure we have the process right for initiating the search.

Commissioner Adams said that the Commission should give assurance to Mrs. Mondowney, as we have in the past, when she continued to work after her contract expired, that the Commission was negotiating and bringing forth a new contract.

Commissioner Adams said that she had not heard any of that assurance before today that Mrs. Mondowney is getting a document that commits the Commission to her and her continuance at the Library. She said she would like this done as quickly as possible so we have that commitment between the Commission and Mrs. Mondowney.

Commissioner Adams said that if we want to have search committee, an ad hoc search committee could be established.

President Hicks asked Mrs. Mondowney if she would like to say anything.

Mrs. Mondowney said "this kind of feels like the movie Ghost."

Mrs. Mondowney said what is most important is that this institution has survived for over 160 years. It will continue to do so without any of us. Stability for the Commissioners and staff throughout the years is a great thing. It is also important for the community.

Mrs. Mondowney said that she was willing to be part of transitioning and continuing the stability.

The Commission scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, August 6th at 1:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSION ACTION

Commissioner Adams moved to adjourn. Commissioner Frierson-Haynes supported.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.