

Northwood Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting

Date: February 13, 2026

Final Draft

In attendance: Betty Smith, Chair; Pat Vaillancourt, Treasurer, David R Coursin, Secretary; Dana Hochgraf, Alternate; Donna Bunker, Library Director. Absent: Pat Savage, Alternate.

A motion to call the meeting to order carried unanimously at 9:06 a.m.

Minutes

- Approval of January minutes after minor corrections made and submitted as the final draft.

Treasurer's Report

- Current Grano fund balance: \$6.91 with the most deposit occurring in March 2025.
- The donor's intentions are currently unclear, and we will clarify in order to determine next steps.
- Current balance of \$13,001.06 as of 1/1/26 after payment for interior painting and petty cash reimbursement
- Pat Vaillancourt is retiring from the treasurer's role on the board and Dana Hochgraf is running for the position. We discussed options for transition after election and swearing in.
 - Pat's term ends after March 10 election
 - The subsequent swearing-in of the newly elected treasurer may delay the formal transition of banking authority and signatory updates.
 - Pat will complete and present the February financial report at the March meeting.
 - After swearing-in, a brief special meeting may be required to officially elect the new treasurer
 - Pat will monitor any transactions until then and turn the March financial reporting over to the new treasurer at that time.

Director's Report

- The director's report was reviewed and discussed and is attached as an addendum at the end of these minutes.

Expenditure Report

- Reviewed current year-to-date expenditure report.
- Because the town budget has not yet passed all budget lines currently show a \$0 allocation, so all spending appears as negative or over-budget.
- Trustees agreed:
 - It is not meaningful to evaluate percent-of-budget at this stage.
 - Formal tracking and analysis of lines will begin once the operating budget is approved and loaded into the system.
 - Town operating budget is not finalized until March, which misaligns with a calendar-year operating reality.
 - A fiscal year starting on April 1 could resolve issues but that is town's decision.

Trustee Business

Audit Preparation

- Audit due date: February 17, 2026
- Status:
 - Pat is assembling all required financial documents, vouchers, bank statements, and reconciliations

- Chair questionnaire has been completed by Betty
- Document security:
 - Materials will be locked in the trustee filing cabinet until requested by auditors
- Next steps:
 - Verify auditors' preferred delivery method (digital vs. physical)
 - Prepare a brief index of documents to expedite auditor review

Budget Challenges

- Current operating status:
 - No approved operating budget until the town budget passes
 - All expenditures are temporarily reflected as negatives due to zero allocations
- Ongoing issue:
 - Potential default budget for a third consecutive year
 - Staff wage increases are not reflected in the operating lines, creating pressure to reduce other expenses.
 - Not fair to staff receiving wage increases
- Operational impact:
 - Significant curtailment of discretionary expenses required to remain within likely constraints
 - The solar evaluation invoice, assumed paid in last year's budget, was not and must be paid from the coming year's budget.
 - Monitor town budget timeline and outcomes
 - Prepare contingency spending plan for a default budget scenario
 - Communicate with staff about interim purchasing limits

Donation

- New donation of \$400 from Charles Schwab on behalf of donor Melanie Hamilton.
- No restrictions indicated on the gift; treated as a general library donation.
 - Deposit funds into the library trustees' account.
 - Include this donation on the next official list of gifts and in the next Treasurer's report.
 - Director to prepare and send a thank-you/acknowledgment.

Notary

- Director's notary commission is expiring; renewal fee is ~\$75-\$80.
- To avoid creating extra work for the outgoing Treasurer:
 - Director will pay the renewal personally and request reimbursement after Dana is formally elected Treasurer.
 - This defers check-writing until after officer elections and transition.
- Trustees affirmed the ongoing value of having a staff notary available at the library.

Trust Fund Balance Sheet

- Trustees need an end-of-year trust fund balance sheet for 2025 for their records and the audit.
 - Instead of constructing it manually, the director will contact the Trustee of Trust Funds to obtain the 2025 year-end balances directly.

Old Business

Legislation

- Discussed House Bill 1214:

- Would allow a municipality's governing body (e.g., Board of Selectmen) to assume governance of a public library by town vote, converting elected library trustees into an advisory-only board.
- Consequence: Library staff would become town employees under direct municipal control, and trustees would lose independent authority granted under existing RSA.
- Reviewed current status
 - Bill had a hearing and is moving forward in committee.
 - Governance by the trustees provides continuity, institutional memory, and independence from unpredictable political influences whereas governance directly by the BOS could undermine all these benefits.
 - If enacted, a town resident could put such a change on the ballot in the future.
 - Trustees, staff, and patrons must contact their state representatives to oppose the bill.
 - Continue strong positive communication about library impact and projects to maintain public support.

Lift

- The new accessibility lift:
 - Failed inspection on January 31.
 - Issues:
 - Half wall on one side needs to be full height.
 - Internet/cable lines behind the lift must be covered or relocated per code.
 - The lift company has been notified; they acknowledged oversight and said they would "take care of it," but schedule remains vague.
- Recent activity:
 - Brian (contractor) inspected on site to identify exact work needed.
 - Hopes to return with a plan and crew next week.
- Constraints:
 - Even after physical corrections are made, a state reinspection must be scheduled, and the state inspection office is short-staffed.
- Impact:
 - Patrons who rely on the lift must currently use the longer, outside route around the building, which is especially difficult in winter.
- Plan:
 - Director will call the company about once a week for status updates.
 - Director will also update the Town Administrator that the lift remains nonfunctional.

Project List / Building Maintenance

- No items have been marked completed since prior review.

Solar Project Updates

- Funding application:
 - CDSR budget narrative submitted (soft deadline: February 12)
 - Some form glitches were encountered and resolved; awaiting confirmation/acknowledgment from Tiffany

- Project leadership:
 - Bob Knowlton has volunteered as project manager
 - Brings construction expertise for a complex project
 - Will attend vendor site visits and help assess scope, schedule, and installation logistics
- Vendor engagement:
 - Plan to recontact the original four vendors (original proposals from March 2025) to request updated pricing and timelines
 - Clarification needed on battery backup specifications to meet a 48-hour requirement
- Next steps:
 - Schedule site visits with vendors and define updated RFP elements (especially battery specs).
 - Secretary will contact vendors to schedule site visits.
 - The director will confirm CDSR submission receipt with Tiffany and clarify any follow-up materials

Warrant Article

- Community/political support:
 - Republican committee reportedly will not oppose the petition warrant article supporting the project
 - The recommendation will be included in a mailing to all Northwood households
 - The secretary will try to confirm with the committee chair
- The director, David, Pat Savage, and Dana will coordinate messaging about passing warrant article and benefits of the project.

New Business

- Facebook Comments
 - Trustees reviewed and confirmed our decision not to respond to comments posted online in response to our postings. Our goal is to publish information to the community
- Messaging Efforts
 - Friends meeting on 2/23 will include review of all-town mailing in include focus on warrant article #33 re the solar grant that Dana and Pat are working on at the request of the Friends.
 - No cost to the taxpayer
 - Summary of benefits of solar grant
 - To be mailed prior to 3/10 election so info is fresh in mind.
 - Our Northwood News, ONN, article by David and Donna about benefits of the solar grant is scheduled to publish in March edition, prior to election. This is second major channel for reaching town voters.
 - Paid political ad in ONN from Fred and Gale Tobbe will encourage voters to vote yes on WA #8 and pass an operating budget.
- Meeting room policy clarification
 - The library does not have a formal, reservable meeting room
 - Groups may use available tables on a first-come, first-served basis, understanding the inherent limitations of the space

- No privacy
 - Must vacate during staff lunch and at closing time
- Historic preservation assessment grant:
 - Application due: April
 - Consultant: May (scheduled for June)
 - Grant would cover 50% of cost

Schedule

- Operating hours:
 - Public: 10 AM–6 PM
 - Director schedule: 8:30 AM–5 PM Monday–Thursday, plus Friday/Saturday 10a-1p. Friday flexible.
- Attendance policy review:
 - Current system is not working effectively for the small staff
 - Director will continue to explore options suitable for a small staff

Staff Compliment

- Thank-you note from patron Kirsten Cicchetto for horse/animal books and coloring pages
- Action: Share recognition with staff and consider related collection highlights

Technology Volunteer

- Offer from Mikah McFadden to assist with Facebook posting, updating library website information
- Trustees discussed how to include postings by Mikah that coordinate with messaging efforts and make use of library's website and FB page without compromising password security of the library's sites.
 - Mikah's help is certainly needed, but the best path forward isn't clear
 - The director will discuss further with Mikah, and trustees will review at next meeting.

Meeting with Paul Eaton

Paul and his company Keep it Native address invasive pest management issues like the knotweed growth on library property. He is a conservationist and is knowledgeable about the options for treating knotweed. He is trained and licensed to use chemical treatments and has contracts with Northwood to manage knotweed problems on various town properties. He is very aware of the knotweed growth on abutting properties and of the library's current efforts to constrain growth responsibly on library property. Most recently, this is a result of Pat Savage's efforts, and the trustees appreciate her willingness to managing the problem. Paul confirmed the benefits of her approach and we will stick with it with her help.

Addendum:

FEBRUARY 2026 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

January computer tally: 28 patrons

2026 computer tally: 28 patrons

January Downloadable Audiobooks: 809 items

2026 Downloadable Audiobooks: 809 items

January circulation: 972 items

2026 Atrium circulation: 972 items

December new patrons: 1

Total number of registered library card holders: 1,257

MEETINGS

February 13 – Trustee Meeting 9:00am

February 23 – Friends Meeting 4:00pm

PROGRAMS

February 2, 9, 23 - Senior Café 1:00pm

February 4, 11, 18 - Story Time 10:30am

February 4 – Afternoon Book Discussion 2:00pm

February 5 – Genealogy Workshop 2:00pm

February 7 – Sock Hop 10:30-11:30am

February 14 – Cookie Crush: Valentine Cookie Decorating 10:00am-12:30pm

February 17 - Chesley Writers 3:30pm

February 18 – Evening Book Discussion 7:00pm (Virtual)

February 25 – Tiny Tot Art 10:30-11:30am

February 25 – Youth Crafternoon 3:30-5:00pm

February 26 – Lindsay & Her Puppet Pals 6:30pm

NOTES

1. Library closed Monday, February 16, to observe Presidents' Day

GIFTS

Barrington Public Library – Book: “Giving Up Is Unforgivable” by Joyce Vance
Exeter Public Library – Book: “Northwood, NH Cemetery Book 1”

Susan Carr – 11 Sherburne Hill Road – Book: “A Collection of Lies” by Connie Berry

Betsy Dunbrack – 21 Lower Camp Road – Book: “The Story and Recipes of Lake Shore Farm”
by Joann Bailey

Dana Hochgraf – 1 Overlook Road – Book: “The Weight of Snow and Regret” by Elizabeth
Gauffreau

Patricia Savage – 153 Lower Deerfield Road – Books: “African Dreams: The Story of Jane
Goodall & the Chimps of Gombe” by Patricia Savage; “New England Wildlife Alphabet” by
Sarah Fenerty

Jim Vaillancourt – 34 Cove Way – Books: “Integrated Landscaping: Following Nature’s Lead”
and “Integrated Landscaping: Following Nature’s Lead: Revised and Expanded” by Lauren
Chase-Rowell, Mary Tebo Davis, Katherine Hartnett, and Marilyn Wyzga; “Landscaping at the
Water’s Edge”; “The Best Plants For New Hampshire Gardens and Landscapes”; “Northwood
Lake: Diagnostic/Feasibility Study”