

Northwood Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting

Date: 1/9/2026

FINAL

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

A motion to call the meeting to order carried unanimously at 9:15a.m.

Minutes

- December meeting minutes approved with an amendment requested by the treasurer regarding the November minutes. She had been unable to attend the December meeting when the November minutes were reviewed and wanted the amendment to reflect opinions she would have expressed at that time.
- Given that the discussion about her request arose in this current meeting of 1/9/26, the amendment can be found under the Addendum section at the end of these minutes.
- Typos to be corrected by the secretary and submitted to the director.

Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer's was tabled with a plan to review the reports at the February meeting
- Board discussed upcoming significant expenditures from the Trustees account
 - Painting contractor's work is done and a check for \$1,184 covering his invoice was approved.
 - Anticipated ~\$5,000 deposit for historic building preservation consultant expected in March or April

Director's Report

- Director presented strong year-end statistics despite multiple closures in December
- Closures due to winter weather, unexpected elevator shutdown, and holiday schedules
- Library recorded 13,288 physical item checkouts
- High digital usage demonstrates value of New Hampshire downloadable book consortium service
 - 9,251 digital downloads through ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines
- Visitor counts and program attendance showed slight increases over previous year, reaching approximately 5,000 visitors annually
- Senior cafe continues to serve as important community function, filling gap left by Northwood's lack of senior center
- Library received generous \$50 donation from Jo and Tom Chase with no restrictions on use
- Additional donations came through Amazon wish list
- Wish tree donations fewer than typical due to limited open hours
- Thank you notes will be sent to all donors
- Library transitioned from Mailchimp to Library Aware for newsletter distribution as Mailchimp no longer adequately supports free accounts

Expenditure Report

- Expenditure report through December 31st remains preliminary as December invoices continue to arrive
- Board reviewed and signed two purchase orders exceeding \$999.99
- First purchase order for Library Aware software used for promotional materials and now newsletters. Cost is justified by the effectiveness of the application
- Second purchase order for New Hampshire downloadable book consortium annual fee

Trustee Business: Budget

- Budget Committee has approved the town budget and scheduled a public hearing for January 14th at 6:00 PM in Town Hall. Board members and director plan to attend to address any questions.
 - Up to date answers to questions about salaries and benefits will be difficult to provide because of recent step increases retroactive to each employee's anniversary date approved by the BOS just before Christmas.
 - Increases in health insurance are likely to be greater than in the past because of recent changes in congressional legislation
- Only Budget Committee can now make changes
- The director hasn't yet received wage change forms needed to recalculate all salary and benefit figures so library budget numbers in the approved budget will be outdated.
 - All agree that the salary increases are critical and much appreciated, but they can bring some unintended consequences.
 - Salary increases under a default budget must still be met, compelling library to cut services in other areas and book purchases
- Timing and process raise concerns about communication, necessary paperwork, and planning at the library as we had already cut back on 2025 book purchases, for example

Invoices and Trust Funds

- Beyond purchase orders mentioned, trust fund discussions focused on waiting for MS-9 form to be posted after 2025 closes out
- MS-9 will show available interest earnings
- Board noted it could potentially use building maintenance trust funds to help with unexpected costs of completing energy efficiency and safety grant process.

Old Business: Lift

- Elevator installation is complete but still awaits state inspection before it can be used
- Library's lift company responsible for arranging state inspection as part of their contract
- Director actively following up by phone and email
- Contractor indicated he would "nudge" state inspectors again
 - Delay may stem from inspector shortages at state level, compounded by holiday period in late December and early January
- Extended closure of elevator creates significant accessibility challenges for patrons

Project List/Building Maintenance and Technology Librarian

- Building maintenance project list remains on back burner while solar project takes priority
- No safety inspections or joint loss meetings have occurred since last meeting

Technology Librarian Opening

- Technology librarian position remains vacant since December 23rd when previous employee gave notice
- **Library has cycled through six technology librarians since 2018-2019, highlighting challenges of part-time structure**
 - After extensive discussion, board decided to postpone hiring until budget outcome is known
 - If full-time position passes, it will attract significantly stronger candidates. Part-time alternative does not work

- Our IT contractor told director he could provide list of qualified candidates immediately if position offered full-time hours with benefits
 - He confirmed that no one wants part-time work without benefits regardless of pay
- Decision creates substantial strain on remaining staff
 - Director spent over an hour on phone with IT company 1/8/26 while they remotely worked on computers so she could repeatedly enter passwords
 - Patron tech support requests continue, often occurring when assistant librarian is unavailable due to story time or other duties, so director has to respond to them
 - These are further examples of a part-time position problem hampering the director's ability to focus on the work most beneficial to the library

New Business:

Deliberative Session

- Deliberative session (DS) will be held Tuesday, February 3rd at 6:00 PM in Northwood School gym as the first evening session rather than traditional Saturday format
- Trustees discussed and approved library closing at 4:00 PM that day to allow staff to attend
- Trustees reviewed and approved the publishing of information updates the library will compile between now and the DS
 - We currently have nine small pieces with important information for voters to know and it's the trustees job to inform them and encourage attendance at the DS to create a healthy debate about differing viewpoints
 - We may add 1-2 more to the series The director and secretary will finalize a schedule for posting the updates.
- Distribution channels: Facebook through Northwood Community Chat and Rational Northwood groups, library website, and email newsletter
 - Facebook posts will be published through the secretary's account but clearly identified as updates from the library trustees
- We discussed other ways to get information out
 - Handouts at DS including infographics, circulation statistics, and newsletters (about 10 copies of each)
 - Secretary may create poster boards for library table if there is room
 - Trustees will review collaboration with the Friends of the Library

Knotweed,

- Knotweed remediation project continues with bags left outdoors as planned
- Paul Eaton from Keep It Native will present at the February 13th meeting to discuss management strategies
 - Alternate Pat Savage has led the effort to address this issue, with much appreciation from the board, but will be absent with a plan to attend via FaceTime

Legislation

- Legislative concerns include House Bill 1214, which would allow towns to elect to have BOS manage libraries directly, leaving trustees in an advisory capacity only
- House Bill 314 regarding municipal electioneering restrictions was voted "inexpedient to legislate"
- Revision to RSA 201-D now requires libraries to provide parents access to their minor children's current library records
- Director is reviewing options for updating our policies for verification

Board Vacancy

- Pat Vaillancourt announced she will not seek re-election as treasurer after serving multiple three-year terms
 - Her work has contributed greatly to the board's ability to function and she will be missed
- Alternative Dana Hochgraf intends to file for this open trustee position during January 21-30 candidacy window

Meeting Schedule

- Board decided to continue meeting the second Friday of each month at 9:00 AM

Update about Energy Efficiency and Safety Grant Application

- Solar project progresses toward February 12th grant application deadline
 - The director has been informed that this date is flexible if more time is needed
- The director has identified four contractors
 - The grant must comply with aspects of the Buy America Build America program
 - Porter Electrical is one of the four and reportedly is very familiar with this grant process and the program requirements.

Warrant Article

- Raise and appropriate" language is reportedly required even though the town does not have to raise new funds through tax increases. Accepting this grant and all its benefits will not result in an increase in tax rates because all the costs will be paid by the grant.
- The trustees discussed concerns about public misconceptions caused by this language and efforts to inform the public
 - Information updates about the Warrant Article will be explored
 - The Friends of the Library may be able to coordinate a mailing to all town residents that explains the issue.

Addendum

- The treasurer raised her strong objection to having accepted a reimbursement check from the town that didn't follow previously agreed upon operating procedures
- The secretary and chair referenced the board's discussion at a prior meeting about the need to deposit the check through an alternative path because of time constraints in this isolated instance. The board approved the deposit through the alternative path at the time with the treasurer voicing her dissent.
- Following that decision, the board asked the treasurer to deposit the check
- The check was for \$528.80 from Alfred Parsons Trust fund for music books.
- The treasurer then deposited the check but does not feel her dissent had been adequately noted. The trustees discussed and approved the inclusion of this addendum to correct that.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm