

Library Trustees Meeting 9/12/25

Final

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

Meeting Opening & Minutes Approval

- Meeting unanimously called to order at 9:10a
- Previous meeting minutes approved unanimously
- Non-public portion to be printed separately, sealed and stored in locked cabinet downstairs in the library.
- All approved minutes will be finalized as PDF to prevent changes

Financial Reports

- Treasury report: 57.8% of budget expended through August - on track
- Book line managed conservatively at ~\$700/month vs typical \$1,200
- Staff resignation creates salary savings opportunity for additional book purchases but must be balanced against potential costs for substitutes.
- Trustee funds: \$50 donation received from Kathryn Swain Williams who provided the estate planning seminar

Summer Reading Program Results

- 167 participants read 1,359 books (slight increase from last year)
- ~52 Northwood patrons attended Shire Fest (up from 13-14 previous year.) This was a very successful event in drawing more people to a library event, pointing to the value of maintaining this as an annual, traditional event
- 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program
 - 10 children completed program this year
 - Creating family reading time is the goal of the program. Participating children have been engaged with a book on a thousand occasions before kindergarten. They may read a special book many times, read alone or read with family.
 - Honor system tracking via charts or mobile app

Director's Report Updates

- Staff chairs purchased. They have made a significant difference and have been well-received
- Public computer chairs purchase reviewed and approved: 4 chairs at \$44.98 each (\$179.92 total)
- AED electrode replacement completed by Fire Chief Mark Tetro (no cost to library)
- Flag maintenance is an ongoing issue and Devin researching better clip solutions

Brief Overview of 9/9/25 Board of Selectmen Meeting

- All board members attended with three BOS members and Neil Irvine, town administrator
- Everyone understood that the town and the board share responsibility for building maintenance and that both entered a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2023 outlining these responsibilities
- With the MOU as context, the trustees presented our current project list, included in the pre-meeting documents for the BOS. This served as a focal point for discussing timelines, identification of town employees responsible for project items, and trustee responsibility

for quick feedback if projects are not getting completed as agreed. This may happen at BOS meetings, as needed, or through contact with Mr. Irvine

- The trustees are particularly concerned about safety inspections that have been delayed. We all agreed we were discussing inspections done by town employees or through existing town contracts in accordance with town safety standards
 - Coordinating the annual inspection of the library furnaces with the town's provider is a good so our inspections are not being done unnecessarily by a separate provider
- Everyone agreed that continued direct contact between the BOS, town administration, and the trustees is the best way to address outcome issues in support of the library and our library director
- A Joint Loss meeting with Mr. Irvine in October to review the trustees project list is currently scheduled
- Mr. Irvine raised questions about whether the 2023 MOU covered the Bryant Library buildings because of inconsistencies in the wording of the document. He asked that the library director review documents in the library's possession that might clarify this and forward them. Official deeds and details of bequests have traditionally been held by the town, so the library may not have them, but the director will review what we do have and determine if it adds to records the town would have
- See the Addendum below provided by Dana Hochgraf for more detail. She volunteered to take notes during the meeting to support the trustees in focusing on the discussion

Major Capital Projects

- Historic preservation consultant
 - Five potential consultants were contacted by the library director. Ms. Mae Williams, highly recommended by other libraries who have used her services, presented the best proposal and the lowest price. She quoted \$5,600 for both libraries (vs \$12,000 from competitor)
 - 50% matching grant potentially available through NH Preservation Alliance
 - Work would begin spring 2026
 - We reviewed and discussed the value of this document and unanimously agreed that it was essential to our future planning and projects lists. The trustees unanimously approved a plan for the library director to send a letter of intent with an offer to make an earnest money deposit to insure our place on Ms. Williams's spring schedule
- Solar energy system
 - Listed in town's Capital Improvement Plan at \$61,840 (high priority, 2026)
 - Separate grant opportunity still being pursued
- Knotweed removal
 - Pat Savage has volunteered to take on cutting out the growth and bagging it for a sufficient period as a first step. Completely eradicating the growth may be impossible, but Pat and the trustees will continue to explore options that meet our needs
 - The town had been mowing the growth back on a regular basis and then stopped. Mr. Irvine wanted to know how that happened, but it wasn't clear. This is another good example of responsibilities and outcomes that the trustees need to directly address with Mr. Irvine or the BOS

Staff Changes

- Katherine Marino resigned as Technology Librarian (last day Sept 29)
 - 30-hour position, \$19.95 starting wage, no benefits
 - She two-year tenure was the longest of any recent holder of her position
 - It will continue to be a challenge to attract qualified candidates for this valuable role due to the part-time status constraints with low pay and no benefits required to meet the default budget
- Open house/farewell party planned Sept 29, 3:30-5:30 PM
- Job posting strategy: Indeed online posting, state library job line, town website, UNH Handshake program

Upcoming Events & Operations

- Estate planning seminar scheduled for October (evening session)
- Opioid rescue kit has arrived (training with Fire Chief Mark Tetro pending.) The best location for the kit was reviewed and discussed
- Garden maintenance transition from Toby family to potential new Northwood Garden Club partnership
- Budget work session scheduled: Tuesday Sept 23, 2-4 PM
- Friends of Library fund raiser Saturday 9/20 at 7pm.
- Adjourned at 1115am by unanimous vote.

ADDENDUM

Contemporaneous notes from the 9/9/25 BOS meeting

1. Neil requested a copy of the bequests and any other documents that explain the guidelines for the Town's acceptance of the gifts and responsibilities for both Chesley and Bryant. If there's information about the land the Lane family gave to extend the property behind the Bryant, that would be helpful. If Donna has access to these documents/agreements, Neil asked if she would please forward them to him.
2. Regarding the memo of understanding for the buildings and grounds maintenance, Neil will research the BOS minutes that resulted in the memo signed and dated 7/25/23. The first paragraph mentions the Chesley Memorial Library but fails to specifically mention Bryant. Betty pointed out that the title of the memo includes the plural "Northwood Libraries Memo of Understanding."
3. Neil offered to attend the Library Trustees' meeting in October when he hopes to address many concerns on the project list.
4. Neil and Tim asked to further explain what is meant by a "safety inspection." Pam suggested that Devin (building inspector) might have some of the items on his "to do" list already. Neil said we should use our police, fire chief and building inspector to determine if aspects under their purview could be reviewed for each building.

5. There was discussion about the importance of maintenance on all the town buildings and in particular on safety aspects of HVAC systems. Pam suggested that a professional could be hired to inspect the safety of all of the Town buildings including the two libraries.

6. Neil questioned whether the fence in need of repair around the parking lot at Chesley is something new. He thought it had been repaired after the plow damaged it.

7. Tim asked when the library was last painted inside. Both he and Pam thought it was fairly recent. Maybe Donna could address that question.

8. Regarding the knotweed, Neil said he has been in touch with Keep It Native to mitigate invasive plants in other areas on town property. Maybe the area along the property boundaries around Chesley could be reviewed. Pam, Tim and Neil said the Library Trustees might need to work out a plan with the Cemetery Trustees and the commercial property next door since they are abutters.

9. Pam, Tim and Neil encouraged and welcomed the Trustees to be on the BOS agenda on an as needed basis instead of waiting to attend on a quarterly basis.

Matt and Dan were absent. Jim made no comments except to say he was "all set."