

Pawlet Public Library
Special Meeting of Board of Trustees

MINUTES

February 11, 2025

Present: Trustees in attendance: Lauren Herbert, Grace Larson, Joni Lee, Cori Rail, Sue LaPorte

Members of the public present:

Annie Nash, Bob Schoenemann, Martha Schoenemann, Fred Stone, Jed Rubin, Steve Williams, Barbara O'Connor, Jessica Van Oort, Ruth Lampi, Linda Lynton, Hannah Herbert, Sheree Foster, Elizabeth Torak, Nori Hayes, Heather Thomas, William with PEGTV

5:32 Call to order

- Cori reads Operating Norms.
- Agenda – no additions or deletions.
- Public comment:
 - o Fred – Has a dog story, found a highly trained, pedigreed dog and a mutt, they each had different flaws but made the best team together.
 - o Gordon – October '23 Lyndsi Barnes filed a harassment claim, she was dismissed, he has heard different versions of what has happened, that the suite was dropped, that the harassment claim was taken out because of the lawsuit. The public should know what happened. Someone should be able to sift through the stories and make a judgement. It's going to be important because of the lawsuit that has been filed. It's in the public interest to know the outcome of that harassment claim, especially when talking about how the chair responds to staff.
- Secretary's report:
 - o Grace has noticed a typo (d instead of p) in the January 30th minutes, so with permission will correct that.
 - o Martha points out that Heather Thomas's comment was recorded but she was not listed in the members of the public present.
 - o Sue motions to approve the January 30th minutes with these two corrections, Joni seconds, motion carries.
- Treasurer's report:
 - o Grace motions to approve the warrant, Sue seconds, motion carries.
 - o There is a discussion about the new payment method for library staff – the town is currently paying employer taxes, the estimated amount for these is included in the lump sum the Select Board has allocated to the Library going forward. This is why the amount in the Town Report differs slightly between the two years.
 - o The credit card has been approved, we are just waiting for the card.
- Loop Grant status –
 - o Joni reached out to the ALA about the grant we received. She received an email stating that we are able to keep the funds, we need to have some more community meetings and figure out how we should use these funds, then formulate a plan in communication with the ALA. We need a point person. They have a lot of resources.
 - o Lauren – subcommittee is a good idea.
 - o Joni - we will be in the pool with the current grant round, so while we have the funds, we will be acting as if they are new funds and submitting new information on how we plan to use the

grant. We can continue in the hearing accessibility vein or find another way to make the library more successful.

- Cori will ask Nina to see if there are community members that would like to be involved. Any applicants would email Joni and Grace.
- Lauren motions to form a committee of Joni and Grace to work on this, Joni seconds, motion carries.
- Joni – There is an AARP accessibility grant due March 3rd, \$25,000-\$50,000 for improving existing structures for improved accessibility. Joni would like to write a grant to see if we qualify for this. Front steps are a possible use.
- Jessica – asks about timeframe, Joni – 3 months for decision, money needs to be spent by 2026.
- Jessica – the town might need to write a letter of support since the town owns the building. Could this money be piled on top of the grant money we are already getting? The timing would fit.
- Joni will send out the scope of the grant to the Board.
- Lauren motions to have Joni pursue this on behalf of the Board, Sue seconds, motion carries.

- Energy Grant:

- This hasn't been on the agenda yet.
- Jessica goes over the MERP grant, status is that the Select Board is working with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to put out an RFP. It is unclear whether Pawlet will put out its own request or if it will be grouped with all 8 towns that have all gotten this same grant, which might give us economy of scale.
- This is a federal grant. The funds have been disbursed to the state, so hopefully a possible freeze will not impact it.
- There's not a committee yet, but the library should have a representative on it when that happens. The original RFP will be broad initially, once a firm is hired the details will be worked out. Grant should be completed by end of 2026 (though extensions may be allowed).
- Lauren would like to be on the committee when it happens.
- Jessica – if there are going to be community meetings on accessibility relative to the Loop Grant, that might be a good time to get community feedback on this as well.
- Ruth – old plans for elevator/ramp should be included in this discussion.

- Hiring Process, job descriptions, policies for hiring and evaluation:

- Building Better Boards seminar led by Andy Robinson - Lauren gives an overview of the seminar, discussion of what we can take away from this.
- March organization meeting with newly elected Board will be a good time to recalibrate.
- There are policies/paperwork for hiring process, job descriptions, etc. We should review these ahead of time to come prepared to take action next meeting, Sue will make copies for the Board.
- First thing to tackle – job descriptions, how to staff the library. We will reevaluate the ones we have. This should include descriptions for volunteers, currently there isn't structure for them. We will discuss and possibly adopt these next meeting, including the evaluation sheets.
- Next to tackle will be the hiring policies.
- We need a timeline and a work plan for seasonal tasks, including things like revisit bylaws/policies once a year (Cori will bring a copy of the School Board's as an example).
- Sue brings up binders for Board members with information such as calendar, norms, policies, etc. This is something we should reinstitute, starting with the organization meeting in March. Sue can help guide this.

- We should look at the State of Vermont's and the Vermont Department of Libraries' hiring practices, and go over these in April.
- Sue will send an email with an overview of the binders to start with.
- Martha asks that Lauren's overview of the Building Better Boards seminar be included in the minutes (see addenda).
- Director's report:
 - Cori had productive meetings with Nina and Adelle, she has sent an overview of her discussion with Nina to the Board. She will continue to do this.
 - Lauren – can we have a cheat sheet for Board members who step in to staff in an emergency? Cori will ask Adelle. In the future we would like to have a training session as well.
 - We should also have a list of volunteers who can operate/open/close the library.
 - There should be a list of who has keys/passcode. Also should be set up so individuals have their own passcode. Cori will ask Adelle about this.
 - Once there is a Director we should have a volunteer training.
- Reflection on Operating Norms – Cori goes over these.
- Public comment:
 - Ruth – commends the Board for working hard and together.
 - Annie introduces herself, she is running for a place on the Board.
 - Heather – this meeting had a very different tone from the last, after which she circulated a petition asking for the resignation of some Board members.
 - Jessica – The library is very important, as a place that isn't home and isn't work, where the community can gather, applauds everyone working hard to keep it open.
 - Barbara – echoes what Jessica said.
- Next regular meeting is March 11, 2025, 5:30pm.
- Joni moves to enter Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B) to discuss labor relations agreements with employee, Lauren seconds, motion carries.
- 6:54 Executive Session.
- 8:05 leave Executive Session.
- Sue motions to adjourn, Grace seconds, motion carries.
- 8:06 meeting adjourned.

Next regular meeting: March 11, 2025, 5:30 pm at the Pawlet Library.

Dated February 16, 2025, Grace Larson, Secretary

Community Conversation 2025

"Building Better Boards"

On February 5, Cori, Sue and I attended a seminar given by Andy Robinson. Andy has his own consultation business primary for non profit board work. There were many people in attendance, from a variety of boards, such as Land trusts, private schools, international non profits, library boards, community centers, and more.

We were given prompts, and asked to break out into groups. It was very insightful and also supportive to be able to speak with so many individuals with similar needs and questions. It was also helpful to speak with people who have much more experience who were able to share ideas or solutions that have worked for their boards.

We were given a handout with diagrams on different types of organizational development as well as worksheets that included Board recruitment spreadsheets. This was extremely validating for Cori! and also, very helpful.

These worksheets gave us a framework that provides more clarity for what to expect as a board member, as well as what to expect in return from the organization. Andy shared with us a model for a board member agreement that describes expectations ahead of time and that are agreed upon by both the board member and the board itself. It was also very clear that every board should have a training session that includes written information on the organizations mission statement, policies, bylaws and committees. It was also made very clear that it is good practice for everyone on the board to have some understanding of all the different roles on the board. For example, we should all be knowledgeable about what the budget is and how it works.

Andy provided us with a sample agenda that was very insightful. It delineates between the topic, who is responsible, whether or not it needs a decision made at the mtg, if follow up is necessary, by who, and if there is a deadline or not.

For me, this template has the ability to enable a board and their meetings to be much more clearly and effective.

At the end of the meeting, we discussed alternative governance models. One example of this is a board that has rotating responsibilities for jobs like the chair, treasurer and secretary. Very interesting.

In conclusion, Andy helped us understand the importance of best practices, timelines for getting things done, having responsibility charts and having evaluation processes. Overall, I left the seminar feeling very inspired and excited to move the Pawlet Library Board forward with productive and transparent methods.