

Pawlet Public Library
Regular Meeting of Board of Trustees

DRAFT MINUTES

November 4, 2025

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

Members of the public present:

Linda Welch, Steve Williams, Barbara O'Connor, Gordon Dossett, Noreen Hennessy, Lucy Norman, John Lee, Arena Heidi, Bob Herbert, Hannah Herbert, PEG TV

6:00 Call to order

- Cori reads Operating Norms.
- Agenda –
 - o Lauren wants to add a discussion of FB posting for food pantry (this will be included in library report), Sue wants to include discussion of historical society using the library (this will also be included in library report), Cori wants to remove agenda item 12 (meeting with legal counsel), change #9 to “grants” to include both accessibility & MERP grants.
 - o Lauren motions to approve the agenda as amended, Grace seconds, motion carries.
- Public Comment:
 - o Grace reads comment sent by Jennifer Sullivan (included in addenda). Grace apologizes for not sending a thank you note to the sorters.
 - o Linda – it’s been nearly 2 months since an offer for the directorship was made, why hasn’t a hire been made? A decision needs to be made.
 - o Lucy – spoke last month about adherence to operating norms, body language indicates that these are still not being adhered to, demonstrates lack of respect.
 - o Gordon –
 - Will you introduce assistant librarians?
 - Cori – these are temporary positions, Helen Wood & Heidi Hammell
 - Are these hirings subject to a director’s approval?
 - Cori – the director will be in charge of staffing.
 - There were 2 donations to robotics program, any further donations/movement here?
 - FB page says library no longer accepting books for book sale, why?
 - Linda – the barn gets too cold to sort, this happens every year.
 - Will there be a public comment regarding the petition being circulated about the vote to rehire Ms. Barnes?
 - o Heidi – rehiring has been a divisive decision, mission statement includes unifying, that should be brought to the forefront. Other area libraries have been actively reaching out to expand patronage, including to homeschoolers.
- Board minutes:
 - o Joni would like the record to reflect that Cori was specifically asked if everyone who currently had keys & wanted new ones would be able to get them.
 - o Lauren motions to approve the October minutes with this correction, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- Treasurer’s report:

- Joni asks about salaries in the warrant – previously the town has actually administered payroll, even though the money comes from the library's appropriation. Lauren states that the library treasurer will write payroll checks going forward. The warrant includes \$150 to order checks to do this.
- Joni – does this mean that the library will take over administration of payroll taxes? This is a significant change if the town no longer handles payroll taxes. What about administration of the retirement plan? Do we need to get our own software program?
- Lauren will get clarification about this from the town.
- Sue motions to approve the warrant, Joni seconds.
- \$217 was entire amount for changing the locks.
- Joni – do we have any updates on billing for legal costs? We have asked for this. Cori – no.
- Motion to approve warrant carries.
- Lauren – Newmont Slate donated \$1,000 towards robotics program.
- Sue donated \$1,500 toward general fund.
- Appropriation request for salaries to Select Board is due by November 18.
 - Lauren has generated a budget with a 4% increase across the board, as well a higher salary request, which she has generated from average library salaries in Vermont, taking into account demographics and hours, among other things.
 - Cori – the previous year hadn't included an increased request.
 - Joni – Last year the board voted to give only a cost of living increase to existing staff.
 - Lauren – this is about putting the library in the best position it can be in.
 - Joni – wish we had started talking about this sooner, we won't have another meeting before the meeting with the Select Board.
 - The current salary appropriation is \$57,200, the new ask would be \$73,752.87.
 - Arena – This is not attached to specific personnel? Lauren – no.
 - Lauren motions to request the higher salary appropriation of \$73,752.87 from the Select Board, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- Lauren – we should go over the full budget further, hopefully when there is a director in place. This should include some examination of categories.
- Library operations report:
 - Cori – temporary help is going well, Halloween parade went well. Photo release?
 - We need a photo release for robotics class.
 - Sue – robotics going well.
 - Joni – Ann Marie reports that the new equipment is very helpful, with better functionality.
 - Lauren motions to post Heidi Hammell's announcement re: food pantry on the library's FB page, Joni seconds, motion carries.
 - Library will be closed 11/11 but yoga will still happen.
 - Sue – will open library for Historical Society. Should we charge them? No.
 - Sue – has heard from many that Heidi & Helen are doing great, very welcoming.
- Fundraising –
 - Lauren will include donations in treasurer's report.
 - Cori has gotten access to donorsnap, will update thanks/donation receipts.
 - Joni will do thank you notes for robotics donors & leave at library for board members to sign.
 - Lauren motions to ask Joni to spend up to \$250 for robotics merchandise for donors, Grace seconds, motion carries.
 - Annual Appeal Letters – Joni and Lauren will work on a letter to bring to next meeting.
- Grant updates –
 - Lauren – blow test for MERP grant was done yesterday, she was here to facilitate.

- Rhonda Schlangen has kindly offered to look in to possible hearing accessibility options for the accessibility grant.
 - Linda reports that she has found cost to be prohibitive for a LOOP system for most users.
 - Lauren motions to ask Joni to reply to Rhonda saying we would be very grateful for any information she can give, Grace seconds, motion carries.
- Lauren moves that the board find that premature general public knowledge regarding the discussion of a personnel matter would clearly place the individual or public body involved at a substantial disadvantage, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- Lauren moves that the board enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to discuss the appointment, employment, or evaluation of a public officer or employee, to discuss hiring documents, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 7:36 enter executive session.
- Grace motions to exit executive session, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 8:44 out of executive session.
- 8:45 back in open session.
- Lauren motions to approve the hiring documents with amendments as discussed in executive session, Sue seconds.
 - Cori – yes
 - Sue- yes
 - Lauren – yes
 - Joni – no
 - Grace – no
- Motion carries.
- Security & IT update
 - Lauren talked to Vinnie – he will get here next week.
 - Board members have been subject to a “spearfishing” scam – thankfully no harm done, but beware.
- Report to Select Board – Cori will go to meeting.
- Operating Norms – Cori
 - Grace – there was a lot of disrespect in executive session.
 - Joni – falling behind in transparency in the hiring process. Agendas are concise & timely, but we’re not being responsive and responsible to our community, who have made it clear they would like more transparency and more of a voice in this process.
 - Cori – this meeting has come a long way since the November 2024 meeting.
- Public Comment –
 - Arena – concerned about the more money being asked for considering the previous staff were paid so little, doesn’t reflect well on how people were valued in the past. It would be nice to have more transparency.
 - Hannah – Budget and salary changes have been transparent in this meeting, as have the motivations behind them, & centered around the future of the library.
 - Next regular meeting December 2, 2025 at the library.
- Sue motions to adjourn, Grace seconds, no discussion, motion carries.
- 8:58 meeting adjourned.

Dated November 9, 2025, Grace Larson, Secretary.

Addenda

I find it disappointing—and frankly discouraging—that the Trustees have offered no acknowledgment of the volunteers who made the book sale a success. Many of us, including Linda Welch, Lucy Norman, Jed Rubin, Andrea Bode, Grace, myself, and others devoted considerable time and effort under Janine Seitz’s strong and capable leadership. The event benefited the library in every way. The absence of even a simple thank-you from the Trustees speaks volumes about how volunteer contributions are valued.

Jennifer Sullivan