

Pawlet Public Library
Regular Meeting of Board of Trustees

MINUTES

October 7, 2025

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

Members of the public present:

Lucy Norman, Jennifer Sullivan, Heather Thomas, Gordon Dossett, John Lee, Bob Schoenemann, Martha Schoenemann, Arena Heidi, Barbara O'Connor, Amy Thebault, Noreen Hennessy, Judy Lake, Linda Lynton, Steve Williams, Are W. Harris, Hannah Herbert, Bob Herbert, Ruth Lampi, Patti Winpenny, Kat Zimmel, Allison Herbert, Quinn Herbert, Monika Kravitt, Martin Kravitt, Carl Deitholm, Fred Stone

6:00 Call to order

- Cori reads Operating Norms.
- Agenda –
 - o Lauren wants to add a discussion of having Vinnie Covino check computer compliance with Windows & Excel, Cori wants to remove agenda item 13 (meeting with legal counsel), add executive session (replacing #11) to discuss support staff, with possible motion to follow.
 - o Arena –emailed Cori twice last week with a request to be included on the agenda, with no reply. Cori states this is what public comment is for. Lauren asks about residency.
 - o Cori would also like to add discussion of locks & keys to item #15.
 - o Lauren motions to approve the agenda as amended, Sue seconds, Joni & Grace abstain, motion carries.
- Public Comment:
 - o Grace reads a letter from Edgar & Sally Cleveland – included in the addenda.
 - o Martin – how much has the dismissal of Lyndsi cost the town in terms of legal fees, Cori – we don't have that information.
 - o Lucy – the board should re-write the operating norms, the board violates them all the time.
 - o Barbara – agrees that what has been should be put behind us and support the board going forward, please be nice & support each other.
 - o Arena – reads statement (included in the addenda). She has started a petition, please contact her to sign or get more information.
 - o Martha – donors & volunteers have pulled back, staff have quit, this indicates that they do not want to work with Ms. Barnes.
 - o Barbara asks if Arena lives in Pawlet.
 - o Fred – Does not support the decision of the board, there is a perception of back door decisions being made, which will last.
 - o Monica – board members were elected, let them do their job, don't reelect them if you don't like what they are doing.
- Board minutes:
 - o Grace – would like to strike a sentence about the library access grant that was a hold-over from a past meeting, and correct a name spelling.
 - o Sue motions to approve the September 9 minutes with these corrections, Lauren seconds, motion carries.
- Treasurer's report:

- Lauren thanks Amy Theabault for her generous donation to the robotics program, which has been matched by Judy Lake.
 - Sue motions to approve the warrant, Grace seconds, motion carries.
- Library report:
 - Cori, Lauren and Sue have been keeping the library open for regular hours.
 - Robotics class is going well, students are being dropped off by the Mettawee bus.
 - Lauren mentions that she has gotten help and advice from directors throughout the state.
- Robotics program:
 - Joni has sent out 15 fundraising letters 2.5 weeks ago, with a follow up one week ago.
 - One business bowed out because of the controversy surrounding the library.
 - Joni will send a list of the 15 people contacted to the board.
 - Lauren thinks this should be expanded, sent to a wider audience.
- Work plan:
 - Cori distributes an old one from the Pawlet library as well as an example from the Stowe library.
- Board mediation:
 - Lucy has an option she will send Lauren, Lauren has recommendations from Andy Robinson, she will compile and send to the board.
- 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 personnel matters, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 6:45 enter executive session.
- Lauren motions to leave executive session, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 7:13 out of executive session. No decisions made.
- 7:14 back in open meeting.
- 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 temporary hiring, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 7:15 enter executive session.
- Lauren motions to leave executive session, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- 7:35 out of executive session.
- 7:36 back in open meeting.
- Cori – the board has discussed appointing Cori & Sue as a hiring committee to hire temporary staff.
- Lauren motions that the board approve Cori & Sue to take action for hiring temporary personnel only. Grace seconds.
 - Joni – no.
 - Grace- yes
 - Sue – yes
 - Cori – yes
 - Lauren – yes
 - Motion carries.
- Lauren motions to enter executive Session pursuant to 1 VSA s313(a)(10), discussion of security systems and access to library systems, Sue seconds, motion carries.
- Lauren motions to exit executive session, Sue seconds, motion carries.

- 7:50 out of executive session.
- 7:52 reenter open meeting.
- Lauren motions to ask Vinnie Covino to work on windows 11 update, advise re: accounting software and help with email login, Sue seconds.
 - o Vinnie does work for the town office, has worked for the library before.
 - o Motion amended to add \$500 cap for miscellaneous tech work, motion carries.
- Lauren motions to hire a locksmith to change the locks on the library, capped at \$900. Grace seconds, motion carries. There is a list of people who have keys and will need new ones. Cori clarifies that everyone who has a key & would like a new one will get one.
- Library report to Select Board:
 - o Update on hiring process
 - o Internet extender in the basement is working.
- Operating Norms: Cori
- Public Comment –
 - o John – Lucy talked about operating norms, respecting others’ point of views and opinions, there were times when there was scoffing, mutterings, a vote is an expression of opinion and doesn’t need that.
 - o Rhonda – about 2 years ago I raised questions to the then board about commitments in the strategic plan, which included specifics about governance and policies, accountability and transparency, and commends the board for the difficult work that has been done since then. It’s easy to slip into comfortable casual ways of working which run the risk of undermining the integrity of the institution. It’s exciting to see a new day.
 - o Ruth – where will the job posting be? Cori – the same places the director position were advertised.
 - o Gordon – any updates on the director hiring? Cori – lawyers are in talks, there is no timeline.
 - o Arena – there appears to be no influence from public comment, it seems to be an echo chamber. It feels disrespectful.
 - o Lucy – please reread the operating norms, they are not being followed.
 - o Hannah – thanks to the board for respecting operating norms, more so than previous board. There is a lot of respect from the town.
 - o Next regular meeting November 4, 2025 at the library.
- Sue motions to adjourn, Grace seconds, no discussion, motion carries.
- 8:15 meeting adjourned.

Dated October 11, 2025, Grace Larson, Secretary.

Addenda

We have several questions regarding the Pawlet Public Library and what is happening with the re-hiring of Lyndsi Barnes. We hope that you will be able to honestly answer our questions.

1. Has anyone past or current ever verified her resume regarding contacting previous employers and checking that she attended schooling that she claimed she attended.
2. Has she accepted the position? If that is a yes, is she asking for back pay, dropping the lawsuit against the Town of Pawlet, the lawsuit against Harley Cudley and asking the town to pay for her lawyer? If any of these are yes, I believe that the people of the Town of Pawlet deserve public notice of such and the cost to the taxpayers.
3. What will be her salary, how much vacation time, and sick and/or personal time will she get? Will she be considered full or part-time?
4. We were under the impression that the State of Vermont is a without cause firing state. So, our question is why can't she be fired without cause? We heard that it's because she is a municipal worker but on the news a police officer was fired without cause, and one would think that they would be a municipal officer. Just saying!

Thank you for your time.

Edgar and Sally Cleveland

The Pawlet Public Library is a public library not a private one. Public libraries ought to be places where everyone feels welcome and included. Good public libraries promulgate values such as equality and unity. The job of a public library trustee is to implement that which is best for the library community. A large number of staff, volunteers, donors and patrons are not being heard and represented by your recent decision to rehire a previously fired director who has been litigating the town. Free speech and knowledge about the decision and why many oppose it has been actively suppressed. How many people have to sign a petition, write a letter, or speak out for you to realize that you do not have a significant portion of the public's support? Public libraries are intended to be for everyone, not just for those who agree with you. Most trustees of public libraries support their staff, volunteers, patrons and donor base instead of driving them out and looking for others to replace them.

Trustees are supposed to put personal agendas aside when making decisions. You appear to be holding tight to your personal agenda even at the expense of gutting this library of its worker and donor base. The town and library are thus losing significant sums of money. Will all the lawsuits be dropped? If the lawsuit against the former board chair continues, the town's insurance rates are still likely to rise and this particular vendetta will continue. Has the Pawlet Select Board been made aware of and already approved the complicated contract agreements that you are negotiating?

Your highly polarized decision to rehire someone controversial incites conflict and division. So many people are weary of this long drawn out ordeal and yet you chose to continue it when there was a better option favored by many. If the other well qualified candidate who you interviewed had been hired, then this mess would not be happening. We would have united together in welcoming and celebrating a brand new director. Given the level of public outcry, the internal disruption, and the ongoing lawsuit, it is difficult to see how your decision to rehire serves the library's mission or its community. At minimum, you owe the public a clear, transparent explanation of why this candidate is being reappointed over the strong objections of staff, volunteers, donors, and residents. I hope that you will reflect upon and reconsider your decision and do what is best for the public as a whole.

Arena Heidi
Danby, Vermont
October 7, 2025