

GREENWICH FREE LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JANUARY 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Regular Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

6:30 pm

Main Library

Attendees: Patrice Abate, Paul Thurston, Cliff Oliver, Aaron Northrup, Mary Ann Spiezio, Sarah Murphy (Library Director), Suzanne Seay, Lynne Weygint, Brie Gaynair, Sandy McReynolds (Gill Room)

1. Call to order 6:30 pm
2. Board Action Items
 - a. Approval of proposed December 2025 Minutes (separate document).
Cliff made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes. Paul seconds. Board approved.
3. Board Committee Reports
 - a. Facilities Committee (Aaron, Paul, Patrice, Brie) – Aaron reported that the project manager for the audiovisual equipment gave us a delivery date of 1/20. They will test before coming on site to install the system on or around 1/27. The new system should allow some people to join remotely for the meeting if necessary, but Patrice cautioned that due to the Open Meetings Law an in person quorum was required.

Since our last meeting, the hardware for the doors was installed. We are still waiting on cabinets from Trevett. We are also waiting for the contractor to come fix the lights as the occupancy sensor is not working and after some adjustments they no longer turn off. Sarah will also ask him to raise all the lights to eliminate the shadows appearing on the walls where the art is being displayed.

We did receive replacements for the hanging hardware that was discarded by the contractor, but Cliff didn't feel it was suitable for our needs. ASA let us borrow their hardware and we will purchase our own to be used going forward. There has been no word from Lisa Hayes regarding the sign for the room. Sarah is working on decal signage for the front door with the Library hours. If this is attractive and simple, we may use this for the signage for the Fort Miller Community Room as well.

One of the artists expressed concern that there are three outlets in the kitchen and only one is a GFI. Since they are all connected on one line they are all GFI and we need to let people know that. We agreed that a sign is not needed.

We were notified by SALS that we were approved for \$70,249 from NYS for the lower-level project. Some of that has already been spent on the lighting for downstairs. The next stage is for shelving and displays in multiple areas downstairs. We are supposed to spend the money by June 2026 but they usually extend this. There is a match of 25% required from us, some of which we have already spent and would qualify. Sarah will reach out to the gentleman who did our space audit for suggestions. Sarah

suggested that she really want us to be a two-story library and not a library with a basement that people use.

Since our last meeting, the new windows have been installed and the deep clean has been done.

- b. Finance & Fundraising Committee (Mary Ann, Suzanne) – We may have a new memorial fund. Cliff was approached by Veronique de La Bruyere, whose mother (Solange Herter) has recently passed. She wants to establish a fund for art study, possibly for senior citizens, though Cliff felt it could be open to anyone. She expects that she would have several family donors and that this would not come from our normal donors, which was a concern that we discussed at our December meeting when this was first mentioned. We will establish a fund that will be earmarked for art and cultural programming, named The Frederic and Solange Herter Memorial Fund. It will operate much like a restricted grant. There was the possibility that we could have an annual Bastille Day fundraising. Tony will work on the agreement to establish the fund in the amount of \$10,000 and describe what the funds may be used for.

Patrice made a motion to establish the above-mentioned fund. Cliff seconds. Board approved.

- c. Material Review Committee (Aaron, Brie, Suzanne) – No report.
 - d. Policy & Audit Committee (Tony, Lynne, Brie) – The Board reviewed the proposed Security Camera Policy. There was discussion about the decision to share footage being left to only the Director or a designated representative. Ultimately it was decided that if someone disagreed with the decision made by the Director, the individual could come to the Board. It was brought up that the policy states that signage will be posted at the entrance to the library. There was discussion surrounding the need for signage as there is no expectation of privacy in a public space and there would be no legal requirement to post a sign alerting the public to the presence of cameras outside the library. The Board agreed to the deletion of the first sentence under Regulations and the correction of a typographical area. **Paul made a motion to approve the policy with those changes. Patrice seconds. Board approved.**
 - e. Board Recruitment (Cliff, Patrice) – No report.
 - f. Personnel & HR Committee (Cliff, Lynne, Mary Ann, Paul) – Paul will modify the performance appraisal after Sarah's annual report. He also mentioned that he found some sample 360-degree review documents online and it was confirmed that we would do this in the spring.
- 4. Gill Room Report (presented by Sandy McReynolds, Historian) – Sandy presented her annual report to the Board. There were 9 information requests related to property, 11 related to genealogy and 23 general history inquiries. Sandy attended 10 meetings/programs, gave 4 presentations and led 4 tours. Wallace has continued to volunteer in the Gill Room and has continued collecting and indexing obituaries. Sandy has one of the new cabinets assembled and plans to assemble the second cabinet this weekend.
 - 5. Treasurer's Report - **Aaron made a motion to approve the December Transaction Detail. Cliff seconds. Board approved.** Sarah pointed out that on page four of the final budget they increased the after-school programming to \$800 due to a donation that we received.

Our accountant expressed concern about any entities that promised reduced pricing for QuickBooks. Mary Ann will ask Tara Nolan if she knows of any discounts for not for profit. We would only need one license for QuickBooks online.

6. Friends of the Greenwich Free Library Update – Lynne presented the notes from the last meeting of the Friends, which she was unable to attend. There was more discussion regarding holding an event in March to recruit volunteers for the Library as well as members of the Friends and it was decided to move forward with that event. Mary Ann and Brie agreed to attend to help, as long as it isn't on a Thursday night.
7. Library Director's Report – Sarah presented her annual report to the Board in lieu of a December report.

Part 1: 2025 Statistics and Performance on 2026 Goals

	Visitors to the library	Community space use	Community attendees	Library programs	Library program and event attendees	Early Childhood programs (Targeting 0-5)	Early Childhood program attendees	Volunteer hours	Farm 2 Library participants	Pounds of waste diverted
TOTAL 2024	45108	717	4469	323	5891	140	3724	1711	3651	7892.6
TOTAL 2025	43830	570	3916	400	6095	131	3071	1717	2974	11,662.1

	Check outs	Borrowers	Holds satisfied	New cards issued	Computer sessions	WiFi uses	Libby checkouts	New Libby Users	Kanopy plays
TOTAL 2024	28112	4733	5496	177	2068	7153	4576		1149
TOTAL 2025	29711	5240	5975	140	1994	8837	6264	61	1506

I set the following goals at the beginning of 2025:

- Increase Libby eBook and audiobook use, especially targeting new users.
 - o The vast majority of our circulation continues to be for physical items, and I don't expect that to change. But many people aren't taking advantage of digital resources, not because they have no use for them, but because they don't know enough about them. In 2025, we added 61 new users to our Libby circulation, and our total borrows rose from 4,576 in 2024 to 6,264 in 2025, representing an increase of 31%. I hope that two factors will help us continue to see increases in digital circulation in 2026: Now that we have added Hoopla, we will be making an effort to promote all of our digital holdings. As we reduce our CD audiobook collection, we hope to help more patrons explore the audiobook choices on Libby and Hoopla.
- Do our best to maintain programming and event numbers, even when our in-house space may be temporarily unavailable or reduced.

- o We expected to lose access to our community room for 5-6 weeks, but it was closer to five months. Given that disruption, I think we should be very pleased with our programming numbers this year. Emily and Kris pivoted all their programming to alternative spaces, making the best use possible of our downstairs and outdoor areas. We also took advantage of offsite programming and outreach as much as possible, particularly in the summer and early fall.
- Continue to grow the Early Learning programs in a sustainable way, with an eye towards staffing and space needs
 - o Early Learning is one of the cornerstones of our mission. Serving young children and their families leads to increased usage across all demographics and creates good will. Under Emily's stellar stewardship, the growth of the early learning program attendance was massive between 2023 and 2024. My concern was that continued growth of that nature would put a strain on Emily, as the program coordinator, and on the building, particularly during a construction year. The 2025 numbers are more in keeping with sustainable growth (lower than 2024, but higher than 2023 by 386 participants), suggesting that either 2024 was an anomaly, or that the construction and displacement of the programs had an effect on attendance. Emily successfully recruited and trained a teen homeschooler who began supporting many of the weekly programs and special events starting in late 2024. The community repeatedly shows their appreciation for the Early Learning programs through positive feedback and donations.

Part 2: Strategic Plan Goals and Analysis of Success Measures

Public Promotion, Programming, Partnerships, Place, Preservation.

The report below analyzes performance on the success measurements that were identified as part of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. I have included information on the first four of the goals above. Preservation goals are addressed in Sandy McReynold's report.

Public Promotion Success Measures

Library visitors

- Between 2024 and 2025, we experienced a decrease in visitors of about 2.9%. Given the disruptive construction in one of our most visited spaces, this decrease should not be cause for alarm.

Press coverage

- In 2025, we sent 21 separate press releases to 18 individuals at 13 media organizations. We could count on our events appearing in the Greenwich Journal and the Cambridge Eagle with regularity. Our calendar items appeared in the Chronicle, and occasionally in other places.

Online sharing and engagement on social media

- Facebook: In 2025, we published over 200 pieces of content, which were viewed a total of 206,825 times. We received 2,814 interactions (likes, comments, shares, replies), up 14.2% over 2024. Our top posts based on interactions include a photo of snacks donated to our after-school programs by an anonymous donor, the new Pride Night flyer, a post featuring the portraits of adoptable dogs created by kids at a summer workshop, photos from the DinoMan event at GCSD, and a series of photos from the July Music at the Library concert. Typically, our best performing posts are those that include multiple photos.
- Instagram: In 2025, we published 222 posts and 136 stories, which reached 3,757 people or accounts, up 12.4% over 2024. Views over the last six months of 2025 (Instagram does not save views data before July 1) were 38,229. Top performing posts by reach include the adoptable dog portraits, a National Library Week post about asking Congress to save library funding, the post about Little Saints, the September Music at the Library band, a National Library Workers Day post featuring a photo of four staff members, and the Pride Night Flyer.

- In 2025, I sent out 10 email newsletters, averaging 937 viewers each.
- In 2026, I will begin to collect monthly data about social media and newsletter performance in an effort to maximize viewers and increase communication.

Community members talking about the library

- Most of the examples are all anecdotal, and I'm not sure how to quantify this metric, but I do think that the community is aware of the work we do. I believe people talk to each other about services we offer; I know that people spread the word about our events, and it's been reported to me that people comment on the depth and breadth of our programs, comparing us favorably to other organizations.

New patrons and patrons returning after an absence

- I am confident that we made good progress on the goal to encourage patrons to return after some stopped coming because of reduced services during Covid, and when the library was closed for renovation in 2021. In 2025, we added 140 cardholders, and I think this is an area where we can do better. A goal for 2026 is taking action on long-discussed ideas about welcoming new families to the area and promoting the library to portions of the community who are not already visiting regularly.

Additional Public Promotion highlights

- Sydney Nichols helped with a National Library Week communications and social media strategy, and we tied it into the loss of IMLS funding. These posts generated more engagement than usual on both Instagram and Facebook.
- I represented the library at three professional development sessions in fall 2025: two webinars for New York State Library and a live presentation at the New York Library Association conference in Saratoga
- I presented at the DAR Meeting at the Coila Church on October 4 and the local Mason's Lodge on October 5.
- The library participated in a number of local outreach opportunities including BCS Touch-a-Truck event, Union Village Festival, Battenkill Valley Pride Festival, the Washington County Fair, and the Eastbound Throwdown Music Festival.

Programming Success Measures

Number of events

- The library hosted 531 events in 2025, close to a 15% increase
- In 2026, I think this is a good number to aim for.

Attendance at events

- Participation at events was down slightly over 2024, by about 4.6%
- In addition to our space concerns, other factors that may have contributed to the decrease include: 2024 may have been an anomaly; it feels harder and harder to get the word out to the public as social media algorithms do not always favor us and fewer print options exist (the end of the Free Press has certainly made a difference); we are competing with many organizations and businesses for the same small pool of people.
- In 2026, I will feel satisfied if our participation numbers are similar to the 2025 numbers.

Meaningful patron experiences at library programs

- Patrons for all ages expressed enthusiasm for the programs we offered. I hear positive feedback at nearly every event for which I am present. Patrons went out of their way to express enthusiasm and thanks, particularly at the DinoMan event in the fall, at the Music at the Library events all summer, and at the Tractor Parade event. Parents and caregivers who attend the early learning programs are effusive in their praise of Emily's work, and I have heard sincere gratitude from parents whose teens participate in Kris's Dungeons and Dragons program.
- Because Reading Buddies was a grant-funded program in 2025, we surveyed all of the registered participants at the end of the spring session. The response was universally positive. Of her two kids, one parent said, "They have really enjoyed spending time with

their peers at the library,” and, “It is also helping us build good [reading] habits/expectations as a family.” Another parent remarked that, “I have noticed a difference in her confidence in reading, and she does seem a bit more confident interacting with kids of all ages.” All of the parents and the teen mentors indicated that they would like to participate again.

- In 2026, we should be building in more opportunities for patrons and event participants to provide feedback, either through follow-up emails, or day-of paper surveys.

Press coverage of events (beyond listings)

- This is an area for growth. Although we send press releases about a number of events and new initiatives at the library, we haven’t had luck getting the media to follow up with questions, or send reporters or photographers to our events. We do make good use of the space we are allotted in the Journal Press for the library column, and frequently hear that members of the community read and follow the column.
- In 2026, we should identify 2-3 bigger events or series and target press outlets such as Hill Country Observer or the Chronicle to try and get a wider reach.

Additional Programming Highlights

- We had another successful year of summer reading, with 192 participants of all ages reading 238,967 pages. We concluded summer reading with our annual Endless Summer party.
- We participated in the Big Read, sponsored by the NEA and Arts Midwest, along with many other SALS libraries. We gave away copies of Mary Roach’s book, Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law and cohosted a virtual visit with the author.
- We hosted regular programming for children and teens all year long. During much of the year, there are morning programs for early learning four days a week, after-school programs three to four times a week, and two designated teen programs a week.

Partnerships Success Measures

Number and scope of collaborative partnerships

- We partnered with sixteen non-profit organizations, eight local businesses, and four government or municipal agencies in 2025.
- Of those 28 collaborations, about 10 of them were either new or renewed (since 2021) partnerships.
- The scope of these collaborations ranged a great deal. Long-standing partnerships with organizations like the Greenwich Youth Center, Greenwich Central School District, Comfort Food Community, and WMHT yielded events and programs that reached hundreds of community members, especially children. Singular events such as the MoonBee collaboration with the MoonCatcher project brought a mix of regular and new attendees, resulting in 40 MoonCatcher kits completed and sent to Kenya, along with 624 disposable products donated to help respond to local period poverty. Our ongoing relationship with Battenkill Community Services expanded last year to include a movie matinee series, which we plan to continue in winter 2026. Other series of programs that we collaborated on included the crochet club led by the folks of Idleknot in Greenwich, and the Aging in Community series, which includes support meetings and speaker events.

Number of co-produced or collaborative programs and events

- We co-produced or collaborated on approximately 52 events in 2025, at least 14 of which were offsite.
- We also hosted three art shows, and hosted eight events featuring guest artists or instructors.

Response from partners indicating that collaboration with the library has been beneficial

- Longtime partners have continued or renewed their collaborations with us over many years, suggesting that they find the partnership to be mutually beneficial.
- Guest organizations frequently thank us for giving them access to our patron base and our communications reach.

- Collaborators often cite our facility as being impressive for a library of our size.
- In 2026, we should more formally survey collaborators to ensure that our partnerships are thriving.

Additional Partnership highlights

- Partnering with the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society is a continuing delight. The speakers that they arrange are excellent, and the events we co-host always attract a combination of our patrons and the local Audubon fanbase. In 2025, they helped us organize two great events: one on Beekeeping and one on Moose in New York.
- The second annual Bluey Earth Day event was a great all-ages opportunity to partner with local organizations such as Battenkill Conservancy, Battenkill Community Services, Betterbee, the Youth Center and the Greenwich Gardeners.
- Because of a grant from Poets & Writers, we were able to host a writers workshop at Dionondehowa Wildlife Sanctuary & School with Bonnie Hoag.
- We partnered with Lucky Puppy Rescue and Great Beginnings Adoption Center in Argyle for a children's program, Paint an Adoptable Dog. Carol Throop and Naomi Meyer donated their time as art instructors.

Place Success Measures

Public and internal usage of all physical areas of the library

- Losing access to the Community Room forced us to be creative and expansive in our space usage, and many patrons reported never having been to our lower level before. We wanted to make the lower level feel more inviting and accessible, and while there is still a lot of work to be done, the mural by Kendra Farsted in the stairwell has achieved its goal of creating a visually welcoming entry to the downstairs. In 2026, we will refine our plans for the Large Meeting Room, officially rename it in honor of Claudia Blackler, and we will work on moving a small number of physical collections to the lower level lobby. Our goal is for patrons to think of that space as a vital part of the library's space.

Clean, safe, organized, and efficient facilities inside and out

- With Easton Property Services working on snow removal and mowing and the incredible garden volunteers working on our front gardens, our outdoor space is consistently neat and attractive.
- Adding Bill O'Brien as an official handyman has been beneficial to our indoor upkeep. With Emily continuing to take the role of cleaner, we benefit from having our facilities tended to by someone who is here regularly and can identify and act on issues as soon as they arise.
- Organization and storage are areas we have identified as having room for improvement. The near completion of the Community Room renovation and changes to the nonfiction room provide us with the perfect opportunity to work on storing and organizing items more efficiently and neatly. As projects continue downstairs, we need to be mindful about keeping objects contained and organized in various closets.
- In 2026, I would also like to examine the recommendations about our circulation area that came up in the 2024 Space Audit.

Outdoor WiFi usage

- There is no way to monitor exactly how many WiFi connections result from outdoor use, but our WiFi connections are up overall (about 24% over 2024), so it is reasonable to believe that some of that increase comes from outdoor and parking lot use. Anecdotally, I have observed somewhat frequent phone and computer use on our back porch, in the parking lot, and in the yard, and I believe many residents are aware of this service.
- In 2026, I hope to upgrade our WiFi speeds and connections.

Additional Place Highlights:

- With a grant from SALS we were able to replace the old humidifier, helping to ensure the safety of our Gill Room collections and greater comfort during the summer months.

- We have replaced old and cumbersome display shelving in the main library area with retail-style displays, as recommended by the 2024 Space Audit.
- Hannie Varosy donated a sculpture created by her late husband Gyula Varsoy

Part 3: Fundraising and Financial Reflection

- We raised \$47,799.74 for the 2025 annual appeal, which exceeded our budgeted goal of \$45,500.
 - In July 2025, we hosted a Cheers to the Library garden party and raised \$1,765.25 through ticket sales, which went towards our annual appeal.
 - In August 2025, we raised \$306 for the Annual Appeal from a Paint and Sip.
 - In November, we raised \$481 from the Tractor Parade event, which went towards our annual appeal
- Other fundraising included \$651 at the Wallie's Rooftop event, \$250 from the tabletop trees, and, thanks to KC, the Plant Sale was once again our most successful fundraising event, bringing in \$3,120.
- Fundraising expenses in 2025 were \$526.
- In 2025, we were awarded the following grants:
 - Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council (LARAC), 2 Grants totalling \$3500
 - SALS Challenge Grant, \$2,500
 - Dollar General Literacy Grant, \$3,725
 - Stewart's Holiday Match: \$700
 - Awarded: Washington County Home for Aged Women, \$2,500
- We also received word that our 2024 application for NYS Library Construction was approved in the amount of \$70,249, but we have not received the funds yet.
- In 2025, we also submitted the following applications that are still pending:
 - \$360,650 from NY Forward
 - \$10,000 from Libraries Transforming Communities
 - \$1,200 from Better World Books

8. Period for Public Expression – None

9. Old Business – None

10. New Business – None

11. Dates of Future Board Meeting Calendar – The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 6 pm.

12. Adjournment – **Aaron made a motion to adjourn. Patrice seconds. Board approved.** Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Digitally signed by Mary Ann Spiezio