

MEETING MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY DIRECTORS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025

Bristol Public Library, 5 High Street, Bristol, CT 06010

ATTENDEES: Valina Carpenter, Eric Frenette, Nicholas Jakubowski, Elizabeth Kanachovski, Andrea Kapchensky, Kimberly Ploszaj (Zoom), Danielle Rivard, and Pina Salvatore.

Library Director Deborah Prozzo, Assistant Library Director Scott Stanton, and City Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto (arrived at 6:47 p.m.)

Item 1- Call to order

Chairperson Salvatore called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Item 2- Public Participation

Rose Ann Chatfield, President of the Friends of the Library, and Holly Bouchard, the Publicity Chairperson, spoke about some changes to the registration process for the 2026 Author Luncheon. They will streamline the process and eliminate long in-person lines by accepting registrations only through the mail or by drop-off at the Circulation desk. After the registration period closes, they will review the forms, assign seating, and distribute tickets through the mail or by pickup at the Circulation desk. They will redesign the registration form to list a primary contact, names, and addresses. This will give the Friends more control and help prevent splitting groups. As long as a person or group has their form and money in on the day that they open the envelopes, they will be accommodated. Director Kapchensky asked if the envelopes will be numbered as the mail comes in. Rose Ann said that they are still working on that. Director Kanachovski asked if they were going to give consideration to Bristol residents first. Rose Ann explained that all Bristol residents who had their forms and money in on the first day were accommodated last year and everyone on the waitlist was called. Some groups have both Bristol and non-Bristol residents. There will still be Library Board and Book Bites tables. The Author Luncheon is wonderful publicity for the Bristol Library. It is not a fundraiser. Chairperson Salvatore thanked Rose Ann, Holly, and the volunteers for working so hard to make the Author Luncheon successful and trying to make registration as fair as possible.

Item 3- Approval of Minutes

Director Kapchensky MOVED to approve the minutes from the October 6, 2025 Regular Meeting. Seconded by Director Frenette. Director Rivard and Director Ploszaj abstained. Six in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

Item 4- Communications

Chairperson Salvatore reminded everyone that Barbara O'Neill resigned from the Library Board last month. She sent Barbara an email and copied the Board thanking her for her service. Chairperson Salvatore read part of Barbara's reply: "I've absolutely enjoyed my tenure on the Board and I thank everyone for being so involved. The Bristol Public Library is truly one of the best in the state and it's only because of all the hard work of staff and volunteers."

Item 5- Reports and Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

No Report.

b. Property Committee

Director Kapchensky reported that the Cawley garden at Manross was completed in September. Mr. and Mrs. Cawley visited in October to see the result. The Friends are planning on sponsoring a dedication and program in the spring when everything is in bloom. They were provided with a list of the plants and the watering instructions.

Director Kapchensky stated that the Friends would like to improve the entranceway garden at the Main Library since the head custodian passed away and he was the key person in keeping it up. She and Rose Ann met with Peter Wojtusik a week and a half ago and discussed having a 2.5-to-3-foot strip all the way around the garden and putting in crushed stone. Plants will be selected in the spring. The plan right now is to get rid of all the tall grasses that are taking over the bushes. The financing will come from the Friends' Memorial Honor Wall so it will not impact the library budget in any way. Director Kanachowski asked if the Garden Club would participate. Rose Ann stated that the Garden Club does some planting, but no big projects. Some of the Friends are very active gardeners and want to help both at Manross and the Main Library with the weeding and very basic work. Wojtusik's will do the digging and take out the old landscaping fabric sheet as part of the first stage. Chairperson Salvatore added that this garden is meant to be a tribute to past and present members of the library staff, Library Board, and Friends of the Library.

c. Policy Committee

No report.

d. Strategic Planning Committee

Director Jakubowski stated that they had an informal meeting just prior to this meeting. They discussed high-level goals for the library going forward, including ways to reach 20,000 library cards.

e. Library Director's Report

There were no questions regarding Library Director Prozzo's Report, the September Statistics, or the Year-to-Date Budget which were included in the meeting packet.

- 1) Staff News: Both the Computer Lab and the Supervisor of Information Services positions will be manned on November 10th. A custodial position will become vacant at the end of this week.
- 2) Circulation Handout: Library Director Prozzo provided everyone with a sheet of circulation figures to date for this fiscal year. It's like the annual report for the state. You can see what the higher circulating items are, physical versus digital content, breakdowns by age level, etc. July and August are traditionally the two highest months for circulation because of the summer reading programs. In September we usually see a slight drop-off. The drop-off in October could be significant because of the Baker & Taylor bankruptcy which has impacted our ability to get books in a timely fashion. We signed up with Ingram and have proceeded with our first orders. We've also been able to order items on Amazon. It's been very time-consuming for me and the Technical Services Coordinator. We are still running a negative in the Program Supply accounts because the Baker & Taylor POs are still open, perhaps because the last checks we sent have not cleared. The Comptroller's Office and the Purchasing Department are aware and will hopefully provide some clarification. We have lost close to \$40,000 on the leasing side, so we cannot open another PO to get on board with another leasing company. Normally, we would lease multiple copies of the bestsellers and have sufficient stock on hand, but we can't do that. This will have an impact on our circulation. It's been a difficult time not only for staff, but also for our patrons who are looking for new items. The holds lists are very long. Other libraries are in the same boat. Eventually we'll get caught up with the backorders.
- 3) Frederick Manross Trust Fund: This trust fund is managed by Main Street Community Foundation. We share it with the Bristol Hospital. The library's 50% portion is held by the city. There's \$1,064,645.88 in the account right now. This is all of the interest that's been deposited annually. The Board has appropriated funds to do the elevator project at Manross, the parking lot project, and the heating units. In response to Director Jakubowski's question about accessing the money, Library Director Prozzo explained that it takes a couple months to appropriate money from this account for a specific purpose. First, the Library Board has to approve the appropriation. Then it goes to the Board of Finance for

approval. It then moves on to the Joint Council, and finally it goes to the City Council for approval. It then takes a couple weeks to get moved into an expenditure account. If Manross Library ceases to exist, our portion goes to the Historical Society and the American Clock and Watch Museum. It does not go to the Bristol Hospital. Discussion followed regarding what would happen if the Bristol Hospital closes or joins UConn.

f. City Council Liaison Report

Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto thanked everyone in attendance for their service and time volunteering. He stated that the library's got an important mission that he believes in. He'd like to see the library stay a vital part of the town. He will continue to visit the library. Chairperson Salvatore thanked Sebastian for his four years of service to the City Council and the Library Board. She recognized him for always showing up, offering his support, and helping us reach our goals. We wish him all the best.

g. Friends of the Library Report

Chairperson Salvatore reported the following:

The donation bins are full. The Friends are unable to accept donations at either library from November 1, 2025 to March 16, 2026. The staff at the Circulation desk have information on other locations that accept donations. The Friends will continue to sell books at the Friends' bookstore, the Friends' Café on the second floor, and in the lobbies of both libraries.

The annual winter used book sale will be held from February 25, 2026 to March 1, 2026. We have a very active core group of volunteers who will come out and help with all aspects of the sale.

The holiday mini-sale will be held in the lobbies of both libraries for the whole month of December.

The Friends were able to recruit enough new volunteers to open the bookstore on Thursday evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. beginning on November 6th. The bookstore will be open 4 days a week: Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Assistant Library Director Stanton stated that it's excellent that the bookstore hours have been expanded to include evening hours, especially for folks who can't come during the day.

The Friends have provided prizes for the "What You're Reading" winter reading program for adults which will run from December 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026.

h. Community Outreach Committee Report

No Report.

Item 6- Old Business

a. FY27 Budget Draft

Library Director Prozzo distributed copies of the preliminary draft of the FY27 Budget. She noted that it's too soon to put in projections for the revenue accounts. Regular wages, overtime, and other wages were not included because they are still to be worked out. Part-time wages show a 3.7% increase in case minimum wage goes up. Hopefully, the professional fees line item will go up 4% for additional programming. Splitting the LCI assessment with Manross might help. We are looking at a 2-4% increase for the security guards to cover a 50 to 79 cent per hour raise. Their contract is up at the end of June. The repairs and maintenance line item has a 36% increase of \$16,000. Debbie met with Don Jannazzo, the representative from Bibliotheca, regarding our RFID technology (hardware and software) for circulation. The gates are over 10 years old now and it's difficult to find parts. Don explained that they're not going to support the old technology much longer and that we're on borrowed time. They discussed leasing versus purchasing equipment. The service agreement on the hardware we purchased goes up every year. It's up around \$7,000 just here at the Main Library. The up-front cost for leasing is significantly less. It would be a 5-year lease. In year 6, you've paid a little more than if you purchased the equipment outright, but because it's a lease, you get new upgrades automatically. If we were to purchase in the first year it would cost \$57,710 up front with the annual renewal starting in year two of \$9,890. If we lease, it will cost \$22,639 with the maintenance included. At the end of 5 years, the total cost to purchase would be \$100,337, whereas the total cost to lease would be \$113,195. By the end of 5 years, the annual maintenance on purchased equipment is estimated to be \$11,449. It makes more sense financially to lease and not get tied into old technology. With a lease, we can budget for 5 years out. Manross only has one gate. We're looking to update our self-checkout and add a self-checkout in the Children's Department. If we wanted to add one self-checkout to the Manross package, the up-front year one purchase price would be \$24,003. Leasing would be \$9,673. At the end of 5 years, the cost would be \$42,494 for purchasing or \$48,365 for leasing. Debbie suggested to the Library Board that Manross Trust Fund money be used to cover some of the cost because Manross doesn't have that big a budget for repairs and maintenance. Last year, the non-wages total was \$390,915 and now, with a 5.5% increase on the Main Library side of \$21,300, the non-wages total is \$412,215. We don't know yet what the economic forecast will tell us about natural gas rates and public utilities. There are no changes to the Children's budget. Manross

has just a slight increase on their professional fees and utilities because they don't have the solar option. Last year, Debbie asked for a very slight increase in the program supply budget, but the city did not fund that. In fact, they reduced the line item by \$2,000 so she left it at \$130,000 but we don't know yet if the price of books will increase. Debbie will make changes to this rough draft based on any further information and recommendations from the Board. She will have a proposed budget ready for the Board to vote on at the December meeting. We will need a quorum. She'd like to have the budget reviewed by the Comptroller's office earlier rather than later.

Director Jakubowski asked about requesting more than a 5% increase of \$22,000. Library Director Prozzo replied that the amount may change because the cost of things, like the telephone, keep going up.

Director Kanachovski asked Library Director Prozzo to provide a dollar amount that would be needed from the trust funds for projects that the city won't fund. Discussion followed.

Item 7- New Business

- a. **Director Carpenter MOVED to close the library on Wednesday, November 26, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. for Thanksgiving Eve. Seconded by Director Frenette. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**
- b. **Director Kapchensky MOVED to approve the 2026 Library Board Meeting Calendar. Seconded by Director Kanachovski. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**
- c. Chairperson Salvatore reviewed and summarized the "Attendance at Meetings" memorandum sent from the Town & City Clerk which references Bristol Code of Ordinances Sec. 2-9. Chairperson Salvatore requested that she, Debbie, or Ruth be notified of any change of address so that it can be reported to the Town Clerk's office so they can update their files. Chairperson Salvatore noted that when a board member resigns, state law requires that they submit their resignation in writing to the Town Clerk.

Item 8- Adjournment

There being no further business, **Director Frenette MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m. Seconded by Director Rivard. All present voted in favor and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Vontell

This meeting was digitally recorded.