

FINAL

**LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Kilton Library Conference Room OR  
Remote Via Virtual Platform  
LebanonNH.gov/Live  
January 27, 2026  
7:00 PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Francis Oscadal (Chair); Renee Dunn; Ann Sharfstein; Emma Wunsch; Jeff Damren; Leonee Derr (alternate); Samantha Milnes (alternate); Adam Ali (alternate)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kim Rheinlander; Ellen Hubbell

**STAFF PRESENT:** Sean Fleming (Library Director); Amy Lappin (Deputy Director)

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**1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Oscadal called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM**

**2. Open to the Public**

Doug Whittlesey, Mayor, explained that the Library is a public entity under RSA and therefore covered by New Hampshire law. A key point is that the Library is not a City department and the City cannot direct the Library on programming, policy, or other operational decisions. Only the Library and its Trustees have that authority. The City Manager's directive does not directly apply to the Library and its Trustees. He apologized for any confusion that may have caused. The City continues to want to cooperate and work collaboratively with the Library, and to make it aware of any issues that may affect it. The City does not have the authority to direct the Library to discontinue any programs, initiatives, or training. Further, an initial legal review by the City's legal counsel determined that the Library's programming and circulation does not focus on achieving a specific demographic outcome. The City has received a request from the New Hampshire Department of Justice requiring it to attest that the City has conducted a review of its contracts for language subject to the new RSA. The City has to certify that it is done the review. The City has provided the Trustees Chair with copies of the letter and the associated memo. The City Council will be taking up discussion of this RSA, the request, and its response on February 4<sup>th</sup>, along with a consideration of any action the City Council shall direct the City to take. As a private citizen, he expressed his deep appreciation for the Lebanon Public Libraries and the role they play in the community. The library is for everyone, and it is an important part of what makes Lebanon special. He expressed appreciation for the Library staff and Trustees. He urged the Library not to change anything they do in response to the law. It is overly broad, poorly written, and potentially an unconstitutional infringement on people's rights. He advocated for the Library to continue to provide the same broad range of programs and circulation materials.

Clyde Watson, children's author, stated that the current situation with DEI restrictions and controversy is very troubling, especially when applied to libraries. Banning certain books and banning certain people from presenting programs are restrictions that do not fit the mission of public libraries. In 1962, a beloved children's book was published, which has recently been banned in certain places. The book, *The Snowy Day* by Jack Ezra Keis, was the first children's

book to feature, very visibly, a black child as protagonist. The book has managed to stay in print for over 60 years. It is troubling to think that there may be a time when books such as this, which help people, cannot be found on the shelves of public libraries.

Miriam Osfsky, Hanover NH, stated that the preliminary injunction means that, with virtually with no consequence, the Library can continue DEI programs. The most important values are at stake.

Kathy Shepherd, Granite State Organizing Project, stated that the group is united in the belief that the Upper Valley's diversity of people is what makes it a great place to live. Libraries that are open to the diverse interests of a community are essential to democracy. When Lebanon refuses to comply with an unjust law that was halted in last October's preliminary injunction, it paved the way for bravery in other towns and cities. Libraries have a central function of serving everyone. Lebanon libraries serve a much wider community than just Lebanon. She personally would be harmed if this Library, for example, disallowed a film series from Upper Valley for Palestine. She thanked the Trustees and asked how the public can continue to support them.

Natalie Golden, Ward 1, stated that, should things come to a place where the Library loses funding for any reason, there is financial support in the community.

Lindsay Dearborn, Ward 1, stated that in December, she saw a film, *The Librarians*, which is a documentary about librarians in Texas and Florida fighting against and opposing banning books. This suggestion from the legislature is essentially a ban.

Adley Oscher, Norwich VT, spoke on behalf of the Jewish voice for Peace and Upper Valley Democratic Socialists of America. He urged the Trustees not to accept the Town Manager's suggestion to eliminate DEI initiatives. The Library is for everyone. The current injunction on the law makes it moot legally and there is a moral imperative to say no to that sort of law. Also, no other library in the State has decided to comply with this law.

Tracy Hill, Ward 1, thanked the Trustees and volunteers. The community has its back.

Lynn Hill, Grantham NH, stated that she loves New England, but it needs the most diversity it can get. It needs color. It needs different sexualities. Nobody in the federal or state government has defined DEI in a practical, applicable way. The Library should be a safe haven to discuss issues.

Robert Greene, Ward 3, stated that today is Holocaust Remembrance Day and the idea of not complying in advance was one of the biggest lessons that came out of the Holocaust. He stated that he hopes the Library does not comply with the DEI regulation and that it is overturned. He would like to preserve the freedom to be exposed to and to find information that people have a right to look at, learn from, and grow from.

Sarah Chamberlin, Ward 3, stated that the Library system has provided methods of inclusion for everyone. She works with retirees who appreciate the fact that there is a mail delivery service to access books and materials. The thought that this could be ended because it could potentially fall

under the classification of a DEI compliant program worries her. She urged the Trustees not to comply, and to continue to be inclusive and diverse.

Patrick L. stated that his and all of the kids who go to his son's school deserve the chance to be able to walk into the Library and read about different kinds of people who they do not necessarily see around them every day. It would be a great disservice to the children to comply with this suggestion.

Mary Ann Haagen, 3 Green Street, stated that the librarians are essentially social workers serving the community. They have compassion and know what people need. She asked that the Trustees not comply.

A resident spoke to the importance of pushing back on DEI initiatives as a way to allow children to continue growing their critical thinking skills.

Lizann Peyton, White River Junction, stated that this is the most welcoming library she has ever experienced. The welcoming conversations she has had with staff make her feel part of a community.

Ernst Oidtmann stated that each person is an immigrant either directly or indirectly. The DEI issue is a slippery slope. The next step will be book burnings in the center of the City.

Joy Conley, Ward 1, stated that she has been running the Queer Book Club at the Library for about two years. The law is a threat intended to sow in the community.

The Board agreed to extend the public comment period for an additional 15 minutes.

Laura Sokoloski stated that the Library is a supportive, safe space for many.

Alex Langsner asked for a clear explanation regarding the current proceedings. He asked why the City Manager has ordered the City to follow a law when there is an injunction preventing the enforcement of the law. Mayor Whittlesey stated that this will be a topic at the City Council's February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mr. Langsner stated that this issue is not about DEI, but the broader issue of saying what people can read. It is unclear who would go through the books in the Library to determine if they are DEI related.

Tony S. stated that the Library is a safe space where knowledge is integrated.

A resident stated that giving aid to fascism, gives into a fascist system which is designed to create an authoritarian future. This is simply a way to take away rights.

Morgan Brophy, Claremont NH, asked that people attend the City Council meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> and repeat their comments.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

A. Approve the November 25, 2025, minutes

**Ms. Sharfstein MOVED to accept the meeting minutes of November 25, 2025, as amended. Seconded by Mr. Damren.**

**\*Vote on the MOTION passed (5-0-0).**

**AMENDMENTS:**

**Line 121: Add Ms. Derr to those abstaining.**

**4. New Business**

**A. Approve the Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Dunn explained that the heat pump project is wrapping up on the City side of the budget. The Library is currently under budget, having spent less than 100% of the budget so far. There will be a surplus for the end of the year, approximately \$18,000. In terms of the Trustee assets, the interest bearing account has earned approximately \$5,700 in interest this year.

**Mr. Damren MOVED to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Seconded by Ms. Sharfstein.**

**\*Vote on the MOTION passed (5-0-0).**

**B. Approve the Display Policy, AI Policy, and update the Circulation Policy**

The Board reviewed the Display Policy. Director Fleming explained that this is being proposed to get ahead of any complaints that may come to the Board. There have been some verbal complaints regarding some items previously displayed.

**Ms. Sharfstein MOVED to approve the Display Policy as presented. Seconded by Ms. Wunsch.**

**\*Vote on the MOTION passed (5-0-0).**

The Board discussed the AI Policy. Director Fleming explained that this came from certain restrictions that the City has in their own AI Policy, which was implemented approximately a year ago. This limits the number of AI platforms that can be utilized. A less restrictive policy for the Library may be preferred.

There was some discussion regarding definitions and details in the Policy. There was agreement to work through some of these items and bring the policy back at a future date for review.

The Board reviewed the Circulation Policy. Deputy Director Lappin explained that, currently, patrons can renew items up to three times on their own. Past that time, renewals are at staff's discretion, and this may be a bit too subjective. At some point, an item needs to become overdue. The proposal is to allow for patrons to renew items up to five times on their own, and for the items to then become overdue.

**Mr. Damren MOVED to approve the Circulation Policy as presented. Seconded by Ms. Sharfstein.**

**\*Vote on the MOTION passed (5-0-0).**

### C. Discussion on RSA 21-I:112–116 (“Prohibition on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”)

Director Fleming reviewed that the Trustees would make the decision on this item and does not need to report to the City Manager for it. The injunction only covers public schools and some universities, so the Library is still subject to the law, along with other City departments. The judge who issued the injunction was strident in her language, saying that the law is a mess. The Trustees need to determine how they will respond to the AG’s memo.

Chair Oscadal reviewed a document that the New Hampshire Municipal Association issued which links to the preliminary injunction and also states that, because of the injunction, municipalities do not need to take any action relative to compliance with the new provisions of RSA 21-I. The New Hampshire Municipal Association states that the injunction does apply to municipalities and their departments. He does not want the Library to self-censor books or programs. The Library should be able to describe its actions and purposes in ways that satisfy any concerns.

Ms. Dunn noted that the Department of Justice has requested a response by February 28<sup>th</sup>, at the end of the AG's letter. Chair Oscadal stated that the City Council discussion will help with this item.

The Board agreed to wait to hear an update from the City Council and any pending legal updates before having further discussion at its next meeting.

## 5. Committee Reports

Ms. Dunn stated that the Revo Casino was able to raise approximately \$55,000 for the Foundation. A big check picture will be taken on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:20pm.

## 6. Other Business

### A. Approve the Confidentiality of Patron Records Policy update

The Board discussed this policy update. There were suggestions regarding making some of the language around the process more robust, along with additional stipulations. There was agreement that this item would be tabled for additional discussion at the next meeting.

### B. Library Director's Report

Director Fleming stated that funding was approved for the proposed second IT Library position. This gets the Library back to its staffing in 2024. The position is part of the Union, and the pay range is not yet known. He noted that the hours at the Lebanon Library now match the Kilton Library. Public Works also took over the mowing and plowing at Kilton and clear the walks of both libraries. He explained that there were some questions from City Councilors during budget discussions on the funds that the Trustees hold, which currently sit at significantly over \$100,000. There were questions as to whether most of those funds were from the Library surpluses. The perception seemed to be that the Library is over budgeting and then squirreling

away any surplus. He explained to the City Council that the Trustees have interests from savings, fees and fines, and are also beneficiaries for some trusts, which were significant last year. It may make sense for the Trustees to consider how to spend down some of the money.

Ms. Dunn noted that the Trustees have approximately \$160,000 between checking and savings. The outside trusts brought in approximately \$20,000 this year.

Director Fleming noted that there are some problems with the newly installed heat pumps in the Kilton Library, and it has been difficult to heat the building. This is being looked into. He also brought to the Trustees attention House Bill 1214 in which the legislature is considering giving municipalities the right to takeover governance of a library.

#### C. Deputy Library Director's Report

Deputy Director Lappin noted that there was one resignation due to availability. A new substitute custodian has joined the roster. She noted that Lebanon is conducting its Citizens Academy again. She and Director Fleming will be presenting on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. She passed along a thank you from the Clerks regarding the approved one-time raise to their position.

#### 7. Future Agenda Items

As discussed during the meeting

#### 8. Adjourn

***Ms. Wunsch MOVED to adjourn at 9:15PM. Seconded by Mr. Damren.***

***\*Vote on the MOTION passed (5-0-0).***

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude  
Recording Secretary