

**Bennington Free Library**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Meeting Minutes January 21, 2025**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mike Munson, David Newell, Kelley Legacy, Norma McShane, Bruce Smith, Brian Cunningham, Susan McKenna, Deirdre Ryan, Beth Tegart, Sarah Blizzard (virtually), PJ Venti, and Wendy Sharkey (Executive Director)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jon Goodrich, Jeannie Jenkins (Select Board Liaison)

**WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- With no further discussion, minutes from the November 19, 2024 Board of Directors meetings were approved unanimously and moved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS:**

- Administrative and student members of the Alliance for Community Transformations (ACT Bennington) were invited to speak to the board on the needs of area youth as it relates to library services and access.
  - ❖ Students identified transportation as one of the major challenges in accessing the library.
  - ❖ Students also recognized that most teens read books on their phones or tablets or via YouTube, and have little need for borrowing physical books.
  - ❖ Wendy shared that the library offers many free e-books as well as computer access and equipment (but not noise cancelling headphones) and tech resources to card holders which students didn't know. Wendy also clarified that anyone in the community over the age of 12 can have their own individual library card with no parental or guardian oversight.
  - ❖ Other ideas circulated such as offering more teen-focused events such as arts & crafts activities, gaming nights, and a book club for YA; a dedicated space for teens with comfy chairs, white board, and posters creating a feeling of acceptance and inclusivity.
  - ❖ However, the major takeaway from the conversation was that barriers exist on both sides as to what services the library offers and how we get that information out. It was agreed by all that the library needs to greatly improve its social media outreach with daily posts on Instagram (used by teens) and Facebook (used by older people), and a dedicated teen librarian would be a great asset. We also discussed the possibility of a teen social media outreach summer/after school intern.
  - ❖ This was a very informative discussion and we thanked ACT for their candid comments and shared insights.

**FINANCE REPORT:**

A. Annual Fund

- As of January 6, 2025, the Annual Fund drive balance was \$54,922 from 242 gifts, or 91.5% of our 2024-2025 goal of \$60,000.

B. Finance Reports

- The Revenue & Expense Reports for November and December were circulated for discussion and review.

- With no further discussion, all Revenue and Expenses Reports were accepted.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:** (full report circulated in meeting materials):

- The December Holiday Book & Craft Sale was successful and netted \$1,241.
- Matt Harrington of Harrington Brands conducted a SWOT analysis with library staff.
- Harrington Brands also conducted a full day Strategic Planning Retreat with the Board of Directors.
- The Children's Room continues to be a hub of excitement and activity, including a grant for *Dungeons & Dragons* role play and free kits for playing.
- A new Monday night book club for adults met on Dec. 9 to discuss the first book selected. The event is hosted and run by library members with free room use and promotional support. Eight people attended the first meeting, and the next book club meeting was held on Jan. 6 at 5:30pm to discuss the second book selected.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Board Committee Members

- A full list of board committees and members was included in the board materials.

B. Buildings and Grounds

- Dave Newell reported to comply with the ARPA grant, a RFP for the work must be publicly posted; this has been completed.
- Dave is also recommending that we hire an independent consultant to evaluate all proposals and contracts.
- Lastly, Wendy reported that we are actively seeking proposals for removal and repair on the former entry steps on Main Street. There is a fire egress and must be repaired and include a handrail. Wendy is applying for a \$10,000 1777 Historic Preservation Grant which will cover approximately 50% of the repairs needed.

C. Fundraising

- The November 17th reading of Louise Penny's play "Murder by the Book" was a success with a sold-out audience. The BFL divided the proceeds from ticket sales, bake sale and raffle with the Bennington Center for the Performing Arts and the John G. McCullough Free Library in North Bennington, and each collaborating partner netted \$1,840.35.
- As noted in the Director's Report Highlights, the Holiday Book & Craft Sale netted \$1,241

D. Strategic Planning & Long Range Planning

- Continued work to develop our Visions and Values needs to be done; Deirdre and Mike will share the recommended language at our next board meeting in February.

E. Personnel and Policies

- Wendy and Mike shared that five policies the library does not currently have in place are needed to comply with the ARPA grant requirements.
- The P&P Committee presented four policies for approval: Allowable Cost Principles Policy, Conflicts of Interest Policy, Procurement Policy, and Property Management Policy. After discussion and review, these four policies were accepted.

- The Financial Management Policy was held over for further review and recommendation by the Finance Committee.

F. Finance

- No report; the Finance Committee has plans to meet in February

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

- It was recommended and accepted to schedule monthly board meetings through the calendar year 2025.

With no further agenda items, the meeting was adjourned.

**BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE (FY 2024-2025):** (Third Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.)

- January 21, 2025
- February 11, 2025
- March 18, 2025
- April 15, 2025
- May 20, 2025
- June 17, 2025

Respectfully submitted,  
PJ Venti