

**Bennington Free Library
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes March 17, 2026**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bruce Smith (Chair), Kelley Legacy, David Newell, Brian Cunningham, Jon Goodrich, Beth Tegart, Deirdre Ryan, Rebecca Sentner, Sarah Blizzard, Mike Munson, PJ Venti, Wendy Sharkey (Director), Karson Kiesinger (Reference and Adult Services), Jim Sullivan (Select Board Liaison)

MEMBERS ABSENT: N/A

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- With one correction to the spelling of a Board member's name, minutes from the January 20, 2026 Board of Directors meeting were approved unanimously and moved.
- With no further discussion, minutes from the March 4, 2026 Board of Directors meeting were approved unanimously and moved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS:

- There were no public comments or presentations at the March 17 meeting.

FINANCE REPORT:

A. Annual Fund

- The Annual Fund gift balance as of March 17, 2026 was \$68K; or 97% toward our fundraising goal for the fiscal year.

B. Revenue and Expense Reports

- The Revenue & Expense Reports for January and February were circulated for discussion and reviewed. Wendy noted that we are on track for the year at 60% of the expense budget.
- Out of an abundance of caution pertaining to the soaring fuel prices, the Board was asked to consider increasing the budget line for oil for 2026-2027.
- With no further discussion, the Revenue and Expense Reports were accepted.

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

- Erin Williams, the new Head of Youth Services, has had a busy few months in their new position introducing new programming for the Children's Room and successfully securing grant funding from the VT Humanities VELI (\$750) and the VT Dept. of Libraries Summer Programming (\$350).

- Adult program offerings continue to remain popular with a strong turnout for the Third Fix It Fun community repair event and steady attendance for the Gentle Yoga series. The crowd-pleasing Craft Supply Swap is slated for April 24.
- The first program for the year-long reading challenge, *Turn the Page in 2026, A Call to Read* is scheduled for March 22. Our goal is to encourage readers to read widely, beyond their usual reading habits and share recommendations. Programs focusing on reading and discovery and related activities will take place throughout the year.
- Community conversations and summer reading planning continue with the Dorset Village Library, John G. McCullough Free Library, Manchester Community Library, Martha Canfield Library, and Solomon Wright Public Library.

CAPITAL PROJECT FUND GRANT

- The B&G Committee continues to meet every two weeks to advance the HVAC systems upgrades and meet the grant funding and reporting deadlines.
- At a special Board Meeting on March 4, it was agreed to terminate negotiations with Russell Construction Services for the HVAC systems upgrades in order to stay within budget and meet grant funding deadlines; and a letter was sent to John Russell stating our intention.
- A meeting with Centerline Architects was also scheduled to review the new scope of the project and Wendy's role as project manager on behalf of the Library.
- As the project scope has now changed, requests for bids have been posted for each of the three projects: the 1865 building HVAC system, the 1936 HVAC system, and the insulation for the buildings.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Strategic Planning & Long Range Planning
 - No new business to report; additional time to be allocated at a future Working Group meeting to confirm key initiatives and establish a timeline for a final document of the Plan.

- B. Finance Committee
 - The next Finance Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25 at noon.
 - We are still in discussion with a donor for a potential gift to establish a named endowment designated to support the Children's Room. PJ to re-circulate questions/concerns to consider in preparation for meeting with the donor.

- C. Buildings and Grounds
 - The Board reviewed a detailed Infrastructure Repair List to help prioritize projects and stay within budget for FY26 and FY27.

- The Board approved authorization to the Director to pay the \$500 deductible, and up to \$2,000, to move forward with the insurance claim for the outstanding window repair.
- It was also discussed and agreed that all other future repairs would require supporting documentation with pricing and need approval by the Board prior to moving forward.

D. Policies & Personnel

- Final updates to three policies—Snowshoe Agreement and Waiver, General Release and Indemnity Agreement, and Acknowledgement of Receipt of Document—were circulated and reviewed. With no further discussion, the three policies were unanimously approved.
- Further discussion is needed on where and how these policies will be stored.

E. Nominating Committee

- It was agreed to extend a formal invitation to a proposed new board member and request a Letter of Intent and resume for nomination approval.

F. Ad Hoc Friends of the Library

- No new business to report; research and exploration of other Friends groups (i.e. mission statements, membership, etc.) continues to help in the formation of a renewed Friends of the Library.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Call for applications to be considered as a beneficiary of the 2026 Coggins Classic Charity Golf Tournament to be held Friday August 28th at Mount Anthony Country Club is now open. Although it was noted that this tournament is worthy of the Library's attention, it was agreed that our focus should be on the HVAC systems upgrade and capital grant requirements; and consider submitting our application in future years, perhaps in collaboration with the John G. McCullough Free Library
- It was agreed to formally acknowledge Linda Donigan's retirement from the Library with a framed proclamation. Draft language was agreed upon and a final layout for signatures by the Board of Directors will be forthcoming.
- With no further agenda items, the regular meeting was adjourned.

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE: (Third Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.)

- April 21, 2026 - Working Meeting
- May 19, 2026 - Full Board of Directors Meeting
- June 16, 2026 - Full Board of Directors Meeting

Respectfully submitted, PJ Venti