Bennington Free Library
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes November 17, 2026

Members Present

Brian Cunningham (vice-chair) Jon Goodrich, Michael Munson, David Newell, Deirdre Ryan, Rebecca Sentner, Bruce Smith (chair), Beth Tegart, Ann Thomayer, PJ Venti (attending remotely), Wendy Sharkey (Director) & Jackie Matts (Select Board Liaison)

Members Not Present

Sarah Blizzard, Kelley Legacy

Welcome & Call to Order

Bruce Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00pm

Approval of Minutes

Wendy Sharkey noted a misspelling of Rebecca Sentner's last name. With that correction and no further discussion, minutes from the September 15, 2026 Board of Directors meeting were approved by majority. Motion was made by Michael Munson.

Public Comments/Presentations

Al Dean presented on the Blackmer Law Library and proposed the idea of having the Bennington Free Library host a dedicated public access terminal, which would allow free access to legal information and resources for guests at no cost to the Library. Wendy will follow up with Mr. Dean for more details and discuss on next steps.

Finance Report

A. Annual Fund
   - The annual fund as of today's meeting was at $28,437.30. Wendy Sharkey commented that it was on track towards reaching our goal of $80,000

B. Revenue and Expense Report
   - The town provided the second of three payments to the Library for the FY27 fiscal year
   - After a brief discussion on why the town payments are not amortized, the R&E Reports for September and October were approved without correction. Motion was made by David Newell

C. Third Party Financial Review
   - Only recommendation was to consider diversifying funds across multiple institutions to ensure all funds are insured

Director Report Highlights (full report circulated in meeting materials)

- The Library was honored on the September 19th Riverwalk and Tree of Gratitude
- New internet was installed in September
- Erin Williams is working towards her certification
- Wendy Sharkey applied for a Laura Bush 21st Century planning grant

- Artwork that had been taken down during the HVAC renovation project has been put back up in locations around the Library
- Adult programming includes yoga and scribble sessions

HVAC Update

- Three heat pumps were delivered and are in place awaiting an electrician to complete installation
- New gutters and additional heat pumps are coming in the next week
- Attic fan is installed
- Deadline for reimbursement was extended to the end of December
- PJ Venti suggested a PR campaign upon completion of the project to let the community know of this significant upgrade to the Library

Committee Reports

A. Buildings and Grounds (David Newell)

- Covered by Wendy during HVAC report

B. Finance (Deirdre Ryan)

- FY28 Budget was distributed to Board prior to meeting. The budget was approved by the Board after Wendy explained all adjustments. Motion was made by Michael Munson

C. Strategic Planning & Long-Range Planning (Deidre Ryan and Kelley Legacy)

- No update

D. Policies & Personnel (Michael Munson):

- Michael Munson suggested adding language to all three new policies stating they expire after 5 years and must be revisited by the Board

- Meeting Room Rental Policy: Rebecca Sentner suggested adding time of day and duration of rental to the rental form. Policy was approved with that addition and adding language that the policy will expire after 5 years. Motion was made by Deirdre Ryan

- Opioid Policy: After a brief discussion the policy was approved without further changes (adding only 5-year expiration). Motion was made by Michael Munson

- Social Media Policy: A suggestion was made by Rebecca Sentner to add a statement that the Library will not use photos of people on its social media without their written consent. Ann Thomayer will reference the existing photo consent policy and add similar language to this policy. The updated policy language will be circulated via email for Board approval

E. Nominating

- No update

F. Fundraising (Rebecca Sentner and PJ Venti)

- No book sales this year because the Library was unable to collect and store books during the HVAC renovations

G. Friends of the Library (Beth Tegart and Deirdre Ryan)

- Names were collected during the jewelry sale and at circulation desk of people interested in join a Friends of the Library group. An initial meeting was held on November10, 2026. The next meeting is planned for January 26. 2027 to discuss next steps.

Other Business

None

With no further agenda items, the meeting was adjourned at 6:07pm. Motion made by Rebecca Sentner.