

**Brownell Library Board of Trustees meeting minutes
Kolvoord Community Room
6 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT
Tuesday, November 18, 2025**

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Karen Hergesheimer, Dottie Bergendahl, Jeanne Grant, Helen Donahey, Sheila Porter, Jessica Dow (virtual), Alex Carmical, Venessa Luck
Teen Trustees: Gabby Stevenson
Brownell Staff in Attendance: Wendy Hysko, Tracey Durgan
Other Attendees: N/A

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by Karen.

1. Agenda Changes/Deletions

- Venessa is taking notes, not Jessica. Jessica to take notes in December.

2. Public to be Heard

- No public to be heard.

3. Announcements –

- Linda Costello, past board member, moved back to Vermont in Mansfield Place. Obtained contact information from family member, if board members want to connect with her.
- Jeanne: Announced that she is going to continue to no longer be chair and when considering re-election in Spring 2026, decided to not run again. Opportunity for a resident of EJ to run for open position in April.
- High School performing Chicago this weekend, encouraged others to attend. Tickets available online.
- Request for meetings to be concise on time.

4. Minutes of Tuesday, October 21, 2025

- Dottie moved to approve, Sheila seconded. All approved.

5. Financial Report

- Dottie gave report: Checking account = \$2,034.96, CD= \$2,949.41. Budget report is tending correct, with usual areas are high/low, but on point for 25% of the year. 25% of the year mostly, general supplies are high, building/grounds is high as well (due to summer/fall), and nothing else concerning at this point.
- Title clarification of title of document. Reflective of bills over the last period vs October only.

- Sheila acknowledged report, Jeanne second, all approved.

6. Reports

Library Director and Staff Report

- Individuals using the grounds for sleeping; mostly in October (1-2 people at a time). Does not seem to be as much of an issue in November. How do staff take care of the material left behind? Staff picked up and repackaged, leaving it outside, and it got picked up from others. Reviewed process of how staff handles valuable belongings vs items left and staff safety (particularly around needles).
- Appreciation for Wednesday activities for kids again in the Kolvoord room.
- Acknowledgement of the amount of activity in the library; programming, dealing with social needs, and managing it all as a staff.

7. Committee Reports

- No committees currently.

8. Work groups

100th Planning

100th party:

- Finalizing plans for Kickoff party in January. Gathering information for monthly events throughout the year for that event. Discussed budget ideas; food costs (for January party), inquired about sponsor to provide \$ for the food (around \$300). Library Foundation voiced having funds potentially available to support the ask of money. Reviewed request form for Foundation to release money. Group supported either option (sponsor vs Foundation). Last option is to use program budget from the library.
- Confirmed that the community meal will not conflict with the schedule for the January party.

Sustainability

- No pressure to present, but going to keep on the list to keep it fluid and part of the discussion. Alex working on several factors of sustainability, including trustee job description.

Budget work group:

- Dottie presented: meeting upcoming on Friday November 21st, with goal to review feedback around how savings with employee budget and shift that money into flat level funding to improve the ability to sustain the availability of what people come to the library to get (books/programming, electronic access, references, computers).

- Meeting with City Council on December 5th to support/present the budget in the annual budget hearing.

- Staff have been in touch with finance and hoping to have more information soon.

- Karen working on presentation for this budget meeting for the City Council. Trustees can attend the hearing to support the budget, held at City offices. Karen will communicate with updates on the time on the 5th for members to attend.

9. Foundation Report

- Dottie shared that this past Saturday was donation day, donations were not overwhelming, and had support from Trustees. Members did more purging of the current book collection in the book sale room, with room to add. No donation day in December. Replacement of flooring downstairs and how to organize when this happens- could be a reason to clear the room and offer a sale to clean out more books (summer timing?).

- Book Donation Sign-up Sheet:

- January: Sheila

- February: Alex

- March: Jeanne

10. Staff update/education

(new item on the agenda where staff share about information to teach trustees and to give us some insight into how to communicate with community members)

-Materials budget and funding digital demand:

-FY 2027- a new digital collection line, will help see where the growth and demand is with digital content. Tracey reported that the staff met to determine what will be included in that line item: she reviewed all bills and tracked different things. Parts of the digital collection stayed stable over time (ex: digital magazines, typically same price over the past few years), while other things have been going up (ex: Libby goes up 5% per item over the year). Patrons can now see what is available on Libby and holds on Libby have increased. GMLC agreement to purchase extra copies on high demand items (4 or more holds on one item), which drives costs up. To comply with contract, the library then makes the purchases of those items. These licensure purchases expire after 2 years (metered access).

- 2023: \$5500 (advantage cost- items on hold)
- 2024: \$6800 (advantage cost- items on hold)
- 2025: almost \$12,000 (advantage cost- items on hold) *significant cost increase*

- Average cost of adult e-book: \$50 in 2022, now in 2025 \$60
- Average cost of children/teen e-book: \$40, now \$52
- Cost of e-books are higher than a physical book and has an expiration.

Budget costs = digital cuts, items that were not getting as much use. This includes: Biblio+ movies, comics+, newsbank (local newspapers), and a few other databases (saved \$4,500 in these cuts).

-Have people complained? Not that staff has noticed overall. But staff have heard about folks asking about local newspaper resources and reflecting to patron that this is no longer available.

11. Old Business

- Group norms

Venessa spoke about why this arose and will continue discussions with sustainability, onboarding, check-in opportunities. Themes mentioned to focus on were onboarding, training, mentor/mentee, and formalize the process. SLI: Alex and Erna continue to work on SLI and job descriptions. Could be a place to continue to work on this.

How has the board supported new trustees in the past- Christine and Jeanne are available for consult. Other group Ideas: yearly connection meetings, checking in, and/or trainings.

Ideas for group connectedness, Venessa to email ideas for the group.

12. New Business

Update on Friends Fall Forum:

-Linda and Karen attended a Friends library group in Shelburne. Keynote speaker, Hannah Miller (professor at Johnson campus), writing a book, spoke about the benefit of libraries and what libraries in VT are doing. They went to each library in Vermont, knitting, writing, meeting people, and decided to include educational libraries (107 libraries in Vermont). More libraries per capita in Vermont than any other state. Each library in VT is unique.

-Special Speakers: lawyer who spoke about non-profit work, President of VT Library Association spoke about hiring their first state lobbyist, and panel of libraries who held Friend's book sale events (held book sales 1x a year, some 2x a year).

Friends reboot update:

-Reviewed past discussions about friends vs foundation (and the original intent). Karen continued her research and found the original friends and re-instated the "Friends of the Brownell Library." Next step

is the tax-exempt status with the IRS, but due the government shutdown, delay in response. Karen is currently the head of the Friends.

-Hoping to get more folks in the community engaged, but needing to wait on the IRS. Plan is to get things started in January 2026.

Train Hop

-December 12th: 5:30pm-8pm

Event with Brownell Library, EJP and local businesses: ask for trustees to staff train stations within the library. Email will be sent to trustees for timing/# needed. Be aware of parking if arriving later. Rain, snow, or bitter cold.

Santa Letters: space available for kids to write, but staff are not required to write the response letters.

13. Adjournment

Sheila moved to adjourn, Dottie seconded. All approved.

Minutes submitted by: Venessa Luck

Note on Vermont Open Meeting Law - minutes must be taken at every public meeting and must include at least the members present, active participants, motions made, and votes taken. And posted on website and be available by request within 5 days of meeting.

****Minutes should be provided to the Library Director and Assistant Library Director for posting by Friday afternoon of the meeting week to adhere to Vermont Open Meeting law. ****