

Brownell Library Board of Trustees meeting minutes
Kolvoord Community Room
6 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT
Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Brownell Trustees in attendance: Karen Hergesheimer, Sheila Porter, Christine Packard, Jessica Dow, Venessa Luck, Alex Carmical, Linda Hasan

Teen Trustees: N/A

Brownell Staff in Attendance: River, Wendy Hysko

Other Attendees: Liz, Marcus Wilson, Jeanne Grant, Diane Clemens

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm by Karen.

1. Agenda Changes/Deletions

- Additions to agenda:
 - Sign-ups for meeting minutes and Foundation Book Days
 - Add Executive Session
 - Add Permanent Board Meeting after meeting ends

2. Public to be Heard

- Karen welcomed public members in attendance.

3. Announcements

- Linda joined the board after recent election. Board introduced selves and welcomed her to the board.
- Alison wanted to update board about ice cream appreciation on May 2nd and asked to fill out the survey form so that they have an accurate number to plan for supplies/ice cream.

4. Minutes of Tuesday, October 21, 2025

- Sheila gave positive feedback on minute notes.
- Sheila moved to accept as written, Venessa seconded. Motion passed.

5. Financial Report

- Building repairs continue to be high, but hopefully will not incur any more charges for the year
- Checking balance \$2,106.78, Porter/Frost Fund \$3,057.18, CD \$2,966.42.
- Sheila moves to acknowledge, Christine seconded, motion passed.

6. Reports

- Staff reports:

+ Marketing: newsletter and other promotional areas will improve/change in the next few months.

+ Staff working hard to rebalance programming needs. Sheila noticing that cutting back is currently focused on school aged kids (which impacts families, grade school kids). Sheila voiced concerns around how this will impact community gaps of services for this age range- particularly around encouraging connection to the library beyond electronics. She encouraged staff to think about ways to create sustainability and continued support for this age group. River shared clarity on how cutting back refers to staff focused activities, and that there will continue to be volunteer-based activities and/or passive staff led activities (pre-prepared stations/activities). They also explained that staff face to face time is needed to keep overall library functioning in the afternoons. Board and staff agreed to continue to talk it out and see how this next year goes to use as information for future planning.

+ Staff evaluations; Wendy reported that staff evaluations are changing to a standardized deadline of July 1st. Previously it was expected to be completed based on a staff member's anniversary of their state date. Wendy and River reported that this requires a lot of time, paperwork, and administrative work, particularly given that spring is a busy time at the library.

+ The library served 209 people for tax support.

+ Jeanne asked for clarity on timing of staff salary negotiation. Wendy and River reported out that it typically starts a year before salary changes, and will likely start soon to account for timing of the fiscal year.

+ Pilot group started with transfer of interlibrary loans for patrons (groups within groups). Use of courier system and slowly growing.

7. Committee Reports

- No active committees at this time

8. Work groups

100th Planning

- Important Events:
- Saturday May 30th: 20's themed event, with costume, games, and light snacks provided.
- Friday July 17th 100th Party: BBQ, sidewalk chalk, Big Blue Trunk, games, ice cream truck, use parking lot for event space (ask people to walk or park elsewhere).
- 100th book: Alex Intended to raise funds through a collection of memories from community members. Information on the website. Hannah is in charge with managing the book and putting it together. Patrons need to sign a release. Essex Reporter articles are approved to use. Stories,

memories, poems, and drawings. Due in October. Alex will table during the 100th party to gather submissions and work on the history of the library including lost letters from an architect to Brownell Library. Board members should be reaching out to community members to encourage submissions. Karen recommended adding a usable google doc link to easily upload submissions (and signed release form). Example, flyer with QR code.

Sustainability

- Erna recently gave a presentation that the library passed 50% of SLI goals. Hannah will continue the work that Erna and the SLI group has started.

Budget work group

- The news is that the budget passed on election day! The city also voted to move voting/town meeting day to the same town meeting day in March (as most of the state does) and therefore budget process will start earlier this year, likely after July 1st. Reflected on the smooth process of the past budget work this year.

9. Staff update/education

- No staff education this month. Planning summer reading and staff changes. Full-time position (replacing Erna) will be posted in May.

10. Old Business

- Mentor Work group:

- Working on creating a digital and hard copy of an onboarding process for new trustees. Goal is to have a draft for the committee to review and then bring to the board to review. Karen shared details on hope of this process.

- Nonprofit Policy:

- Discussed current process of initial approval of non-profit groups, including Friends and Foundation. Requested Foundation to finalize have paperwork completed by May 1st. Foundation member Liz, asked for clarification on timeline. Wendy shared details on process and timing requests. Karen reported that Trustees should be prepared to vote next meeting on MOUs of both groups.

- Friends were initially approved last meeting. Foundation could be voted on tonight, if the board agrees to vote. Sheila moved that the board gives the Foundation initial approval until a written MOU is given by next meeting May 19th. Jess seconded. Karen and Linda recuse self from the vote. Wendy checked bylaws due to 5 members being eligible to vote. It was determined that the board does have a quorum based on bylaws, with Karen double checking after the meeting. Motion passed pending final approval that the vote was valid.

-Trustee photo update

- Taking picture next meeting May 19th for updated webpage.

11. New Business

- Dottie is on leave for 3 months and asked for the treasurer role to be replaced. Venessa expressed willingness to take over the treasurer role. Sheila nominated Venessa for treasurer. Christine seconded. Motion approved.

- City administration suggested that the board change voting for the trustee with the fiscal year (during the June meeting). The city expressed that it aligns with the City Council officers, election, and would match the year of appointment as the elected trustees. This might have help with old members leaving and new members joining. Karen recommended that the board think about this in a future meeting.

- Sign up for Meeting Minutes: May- Helen, June- Sheila, August – Jess

- Board Donation Days (10am-Noon): May 16th: Venessa, June 20th: Alex

12. Executive Session

- Karen moves that the Library Trustees enter into executive session to discuss a personnel evaluation, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 313 (a) (3) to include the Library Trustees. Sheila seconded. Motion passed and executive Meeting started at 7:26pm.

- Sheila moved to end Executive meeting, Jess seconded, motion approved.

- Executive Session ended at 7:49pm

13. Adjournment

- Sheila moved to end Trustee meeting, Christine seconded, motion moved. Meeting ended 7:50pm.

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. ***