

Brownell Library Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 7:00 pm

Minute recorder: Helen Donahey

In person: Brownell Library Kolvoord Community Room. 6 Lincoln St Essex Junction

Trustees Present: Alex Carmichel, Helen Donahey, Jessica Dow, Karen Hergesheimer, Linda Hasan, Venessa Luck, Christine Packard, Sheila Porter, Helen Donahey. Teen Trustee: Rhiannon A. Staff: Wendy, Alison

Public present: Jeanne Grant (former trustee); Liz Villa (Foundation), Marcus Wilson (Friends)

Chair Karen Hergesheimer opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

1. Agenda Changes/Deletions – remove trustee photo (photo was taken prior to this meeting)

2. Public to be Heard – none; public will be invited to comment later in the agenda

3. Announcements

- Thanks to our teen trustees Rhiannon A. (present) and Gabrielle S. (absent, sent a card of thanks).
- Trustee Beth Custer has resigned her elected position, so there is a vacancy to be filled.
- The Public – film screening with Howard Outreach - tomorrow May 20 at 5:30

4. Minutes of Tuesday, April 21, 2026 – Sheila moved acceptance as written. Venessa seconded. No discussion. Passed unanimously.

5. Financial Report - Venessa: The CD has been cashed out. With the redemption of CD, the bank account balance is now \$5,104.57. The library budget is at 80% now with 2 months left in the fiscal year so we should be on track with our regular budget. The buildings budget is more of a challenge this year. Sheila moved that we acknowledge the financial report. Christine seconded. No discussion. Passed unanimously.

6. Reports Library Director and Staff Report: It's been busy, especially after school. More challenging patrons means staff are spread thin. A "No Loitering" sign has been installed in the vestibule. Karen asked how trustees can support staff. Wendy said that if we want to talk with any staff member it's really helpful to make an appointment as everyone is so busy it's hard to have an in-depth talk on the fly.

7. Committee Reports: we have no committees.

8. Work groups 100th Planning - 100th party - July 100th party is a Trustee led event

Sheila reported that there will be a Sign Up Genius going out for the July party. Trustees are encouraged to sign up. Sheila reviewed the food planning – burgers, hot dogs, veggie options, GF options, chips and soda. She will be pricing food and supplies at Costco for budgeting purposes; Helen will help with the actual purchasing trip. We're planning for 200 attendees tentatively. Venessa suggested we make sure there are adequate trash and recycling facilities. Memory Book project: Alex found a file of correspondence with Mr. Brownell around the design and construction of the library and has shared a digital file with Wendy so the library now has the on file. Wendy shared it with the trustees. Helen will reach out to EHS Hive editor Sam Houghton to try to connect interested students to help with the book project.

9. Staff bimonthly education - Circulation Librarian Alison spoke about her role as Volunteer Coordinator. Alison meets with interested people, finds an appropriate role for them, schedules volunteers, and oversees recognition cards and events. Ideally she'd love to have job descriptions for the various volunteer roles. Alison's other roles include "Calendar

Queen” which involves coordinating the staff vacation and weekend scheduling, and she also has a lot of institutional knowledge so is a great resource on a wide range of topics.

10. Old Business

Mentor work group - Venessa has a draft she is working on. She will send it to the group next and then hopes to have it ready for the Trustees at the June meeting.

Nonprofit policy – recognition of non-profit groups Friends recognition Foundation recognition

Karen reminded the group that we needed to recognize any nonprofit organizations that wish to be affiliated with the Brownell Library under our nonprofit policy, and that at last month’s meeting it was determined that we would allow additional time for groups to provide the needed documentation, and that we would vote on recognition at the May meeting. Karen noted that any decision to recognize or not recognize an organization is not irreversible, and can be addressed when circumstances change. Karen then brought up the recognition of the Friends of Brownell Library and noted that she needed to recuse herself from the vote.

Wendy reviewed that the Friends of Brownell Library have worked with Wendy to provide an MOU. The MOU provided by the Friends of Brownell Library meets the requirements of the library policy and the guidelines. Wendy was asked about the conduct of the Friends towards staff and Wendy confirmed that there have been no concerns. Christine moved to recognize the Friends of Brownell Library. Jessica seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with Karen H. recusing herself.

Foundation recognition (Linda Hasan as Foundation Chair and Karen Hergesheimer as Friends President recused themselves from vote)

Wendy received some documents from the Foundation but not the items that are needed. One ongoing issue has been that there is no transparency regarding what funds are available. There are no procedures or formal process to apply for funds. The only documentation is a check request form that does not clearly state requirements for funding projects or what range of funding is available. There have been efforts from the trustees and staff to put processes in place and those attempts have not been fruitful. The MOU that was provided had not been updated with the items requested by staff including budget procedures. These efforts have taken a considerable amount of staff time over a period of years.

Karen then opened the floor for public comment. She asked that comments be limited to 1 minute.

Liz Villa – shared that Foundation members are not trying to be difficult but were not understanding what is needed. She stated that requests may have seemed clear but were not. Liz thought they had covered everything. She asked for time to have a one-on-one discussion to understand what the issues are.

Karen noted that this is a difficult conversation and that this has been challenging. Recognition can change depending on circumstances. This is about are the trustees doing our job to support the library and staff.

Jeanne Grant – spoke about several instances when she was a trustee when the staff felt they were treated rudely and disrespectfully by Foundation members. In order to support the library and staff we must be respectful to them.

Sheila Porter – feels that as a trustee it is our job to support the staff. It feels as if continuing to recognize the Foundation when they are not respecting the staff and not following the policy we would not be doing our job as trustees. Sheila moved that we no longer recognize the Foundation. Christine seconded.

Alex noted that the organization is failing to fulfill the requirement to maintain current governance documents and provide an updated MOU.

Karen noted that there is also a failure to align with the library’s mission. The organization has not acted in a manner that is supportive of the library and its staff and the mission.

Jessica noted that staff need to feel safe, supported and valued, and staff retention is something they should prioritize as Trustees.

Wendy noted that this has been a long and difficult period.

In response to a question regarding holding a vote while a trustee on leave, it was noted that we have quorum.

Following discussion, the motion passed unanimously (Hasan and Hergesheimer recused). Karen will follow up with an email to the Foundation, and Wendy will follow-up with the Foundation about next steps due to the vote to no longer recognize the Foundation as a supporting non-profit of Brownell Library.

Meeting time review – There was discussion about start and end times for the meeting. It was determined that 7 pm is the preferred start time. End time – Sheila noted that historically the scheduled time was 7 – 9 pm. After discussion, no end time was proposed. We will continue to work to be efficient and end as early as possible while allowing for full discussion of the agenda.

11. New Business - Jeanne shared some samples of the new t-shirts purchased by the Friends that will be for sale at upcoming events.

12. Adjournment – the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Donahey